Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) aim to field and include a broad range of perspectives in decision-making processes on land and resources. But women and particularly Indigenous and local community women often lose out on meaningful representation in these platforms.

This happens for several reasons, including:

**Social norms:** Embedded social structures discourage or even prohibit women from speaking in groups, especially in front of men.

**Gender roles:** Women are often over-burdened with household duties, childcare and resource collection, leaving little time for meetings.

**Restrictions on mobility:** Women either cannot travel because of household demands or lack of resources, or men will not let them.

**Lack of access to technology:** This prohibits online engagement.

**Low literacy and education levels:** Lack of information and capacity keep women from engaging in the issues and undermine their confidence.

**Low confidence:** Many women stay silent through fear, even though they have important knowledge and opinions (Evans et al., 2021).
To boost women’s participation in MSPs, there are a number of steps that organizers can take (see Evans et al., 2014 and Evans et al., 2021), such as:

- Identify and invite women leaders who represent a constituency and are considered legitimate by other women in the landscape
- Meet with these representatives to strategize about how the MSP can better serve their interests and needs
- Invite a critical mass of women to form a constituency in the MSP
- Provide separate spaces for that constituency to meet, discuss and identify collective needs, including capacity building needs to participate more effectively in the platform
- Facilitate networking between the constituencies and other participants in the platform who can serve as strategic allies
- Provide resources for women representatives to report back to their constituencies
- Consider holding meetings closer to the residences of these actors, such as rotating the location to facilitate participation
- Choose times for meeting that are suitable to women’s schedules

During meetings, the following measures may be helpful (Evans et al., 2021):

- Provide childcare. Making provisions for childcare – in a culturally acceptable way – is one of the most effective ways to improve women’s participation. Not only does childcare free up women to participate, but it also sends the message that their participation is important
- Use experienced, gender-sensitive facilitators
- Ensure dialogue is carefully mediated to allow women to speak and influence decisions

**Members of the Amarakaeri Communal Reserve MSP (Madre de Dios, Peru) during the implementation of How are we doing?** Photo by Pavel Martiarena/CIFOR
Beyond explicit efforts to include women in MSP processes, broader measures such as capacity development can also help to build the foundations for women’s effective participation (CIFOR and ONAMIAP, 2020; Ratner et al., 2022), but those capacities needed should be defined with the women themselves. Investing long-term in the development of women leaders can be particularly significant – even with just one or two dynamic women leaders, the environment can change. Working with men to encourage them to become allies is equally important (Evans et al., 2021).

It’s also crucial to monitor how well your attempts to promote gender inclusivity are working – see ‘How are we doing?’ (Sarmiento Barletti et al., 2020) for more ideas. Another useful tool is the Gender Avenger Tally app – it’s an interactive way to monitor in real time how much speaking time women, men, and other groups get in meetings.

References

CIFOR and ONAMIAP. 2020. ¿Cómo vamos? Una herramienta para reflexionar sobre la participación de las mujeres indígenas u originarias en la gestión y gobernanza de sus territorios. Lima: CIFOR and ONAMIAP.


Further tools
Gender and Social Inclusion, CIFOR-ICRAF

Gender Training Resources, CGIAR
https://gender.cgiar.org/cgiar-training-materials/

Gender Resources, FAO

The Gender Box, CIFOR
https://www.cifor.org/knowledge/publication/4026/

Gender Evaluation Criteria – International Land Coalition

MORE INFORMATION
CIFOR-ICRAF’s research on MSPs
https://www.cifor-icraf.org/research/topic/multi-stakeholder-platforms/

More tools for inclusive MSPs
https://www.cifor.org/toolboxes/tools-for-managing-landscapes-inclusively/

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CIFOR-ICRAF’S TOOLS FOR INCLUSIVE MSPs
How are we doing?
https://www.cifor.org/knowledge/publication/7796/

Getting it right
https://www.cifor.org/knowledge/publication/7973/

cifor-icraf.org
cifor.org | worldagroforestry.org

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