



Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy and Social Safeguarding Action Plan 2026-2030



INSTITUTE OF FORESTRY
TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY
NEPAL
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Foreward

Nepal has made constitutional and policy commitment to social justice, equality, and inclusion. As a signatory and stakeholder of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we stand at a critical juncture, with key milestones fast approaching. Achieving these goals requires concrete institutional actions that address persistent inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind.

The Institute of Forestry (IOF) has upheld the values of inclusive education since its inception in 2004 B.S. Over the decades, IOF has played a pivotal role in producing forestry and natural resource professionals who are socially responsible and sensitive to Nepal's diverse social, cultural, and ecological contexts. While notable progress has been made in expanding access and participation, we acknowledge that systemic and often hidden barriers continue to affect women, and people from marginalised and historically excluded communities. This strategy serves as Tribhuvan University's first guiding policy aimed at strengthening responsibility toward Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy and Social Safeguarding Action Plan 2026-2030 (GEDSI and SSAP) in academic communities.

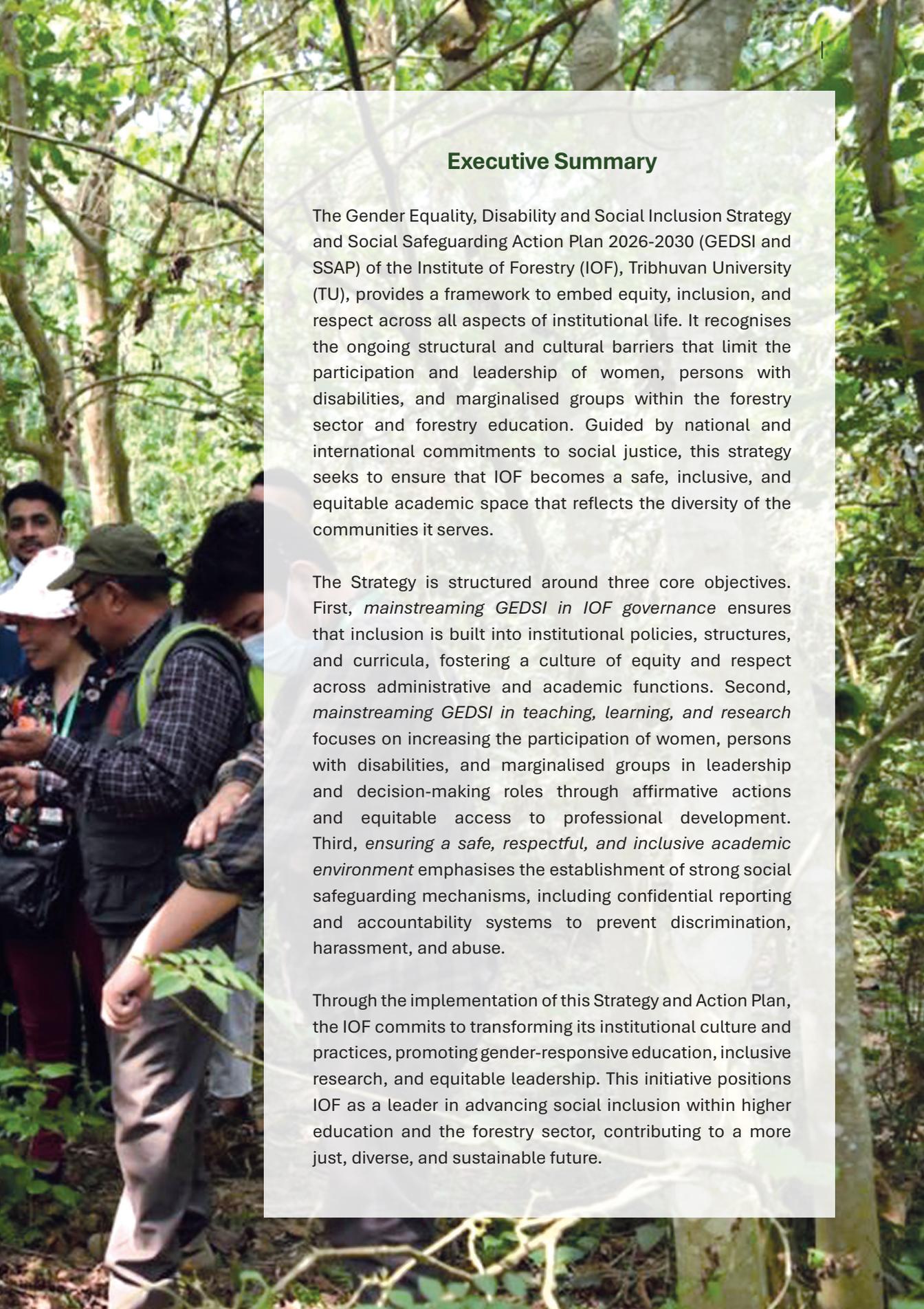
As a public academic institution, Tribhuvan University bears a fundamental responsibility to ensure that its campuses are safe, dignified, and enabling spaces for all students and faculty that is free from discrimination and exclusion. The GEDSI and SSAP represents a decisive step toward fulfilling this responsibility. This strategy provides a framework to strengthen institutional mechanisms for inclusion, and foster a culture of equity, respect, and accountability within the IOF.

I am confident that the successful implementation of this GEDSI strategy and social safeguarding action plan will align IOF with national priorities and global commitments. I call upon all stakeholders- the students, faculty, staff, and partners of IOF to actively engage in this collective effort to build a more inclusive, safe, and equitable academic environment. I would like to thank School of Forestry & NRM, Pokhara and Hetauda campus faculties for reviewing and providing their feedback during the document's preparation.

Last but not the least, I would like to acknowledge RECOFTC Nepal for providing financial support for expert engagement and the workshop.

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Thakur Silwal, PhD
Dean





Executive Summary

The Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy and Social Safeguarding Action Plan 2026-2030 (GEDSI and SSAP) of the Institute of Forestry (IOF), Tribhuvan University (TU), provides a framework to embed equity, inclusion, and respect across all aspects of institutional life. It recognises the ongoing structural and cultural barriers that limit the participation and leadership of women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups within the forestry sector and forestry education. Guided by national and international commitments to social justice, this strategy seeks to ensure that IOF becomes a safe, inclusive, and equitable academic space that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.

The Strategy is structured around three core objectives. First, *mainstreaming GEDSI in IOF governance* ensures that inclusion is built into institutional policies, structures, and curricula, fostering a culture of equity and respect across administrative and academic functions. Second, *mainstreaming GEDSI in teaching, learning, and research* focuses on increasing the participation of women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups in leadership and decision-making roles through affirmative actions and equitable access to professional development. Third, *ensuring a safe, respectful, and inclusive academic environment* emphasises the establishment of strong social safeguarding mechanisms, including confidential reporting and accountability systems to prevent discrimination, harassment, and abuse.

Through the implementation of this Strategy and Action Plan, the IOF commits to transforming its institutional culture and practices, promoting gender-responsive education, inclusive research, and equitable leadership. This initiative positions IOF as a leader in advancing social inclusion within higher education and the forestry sector, contributing to a more just, diverse, and sustainable future.

Abbreviation

BPFA	–	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	–	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CERD	–	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
GEDSI	–	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GESI	–	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GRB	–	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GRM	–	Grievance Redress Mechanism
ILO	–	International Labour Organization
IOF	–	Institute of Forestry
LGBTQ	–	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
M and E	–	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOFE	–	Ministry of Forests and Environment
PhD	–	Doctor of Philosophy
SDGs	–	Sustainable Development Goals
SSAP	–	Strategic Social Action Plan
TU	–	Tribhuvan University
UGC	–	University Grants Commission
UN	–	United Nations
UNDRIP	–	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
GOs	–	Government Organizations
NGOs	–	Non-Governmental Organizations
INGOs	–	International Non-Governmental Organizations

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Introduction

Gender inequality remains a persistent structural challenge in Nepali society, where it is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideologies and cultural norms. Discrimination and inequality based on gender, age, ableism, and similar intersectional identities persist despite concerted efforts. Such systemic inequality is the main cause of women's poverty, abuse, violence, and stunted career progression.

Within the higher education sector, these disparities are particularly evident. Women are significantly under-represented as both students and faculty members in Nepali higher education (Reinders et al., 2020). While Nepal's Gender Parity Index shows more women than men enrolling as undergraduates, with females outnumbering males by 28,000, their presence sharply declines in graduate education and academic careers. According to the [University Grants Commission \(UGC\) Report on Higher Education \(2018/19\)](#), out of more than 1500 PhD candidates, only 340 were women. Similarly, out of more than 1000 students enrolled in the MPhil program, only 167 were women. This gender gap reflects challenges faced by women students such as gendered labour expectations as they bear the burden of combining academic responsibilities with extensive domestic duties, impacting their academic and career performance.

The drop in women's numbers continues within university faculty. The same report from UGC highlights that at Tribhuvan University (TU), there are no female professors in Political Science, and just one in English. Kathmandu University fares a little better, with one of 23 professors being a woman. Representation of women is similarly low among lecturers and assistants. Among women who make it to these higher positions, most belong to dominant castes, while Dalit and indigenous women are virtually absent. Despite strong female enrolment in primary and secondary level education, systemic barriers prevent women, especially those from marginalised groups, from advancing and leading in Nepal's academic institutions. People with disabilities face particular barriers to accessing university education. These start at an early age, with children with intellectual, hearing, visual, or multiple disabilities often denied basic educational opportunities. The challenges are compounded for girls, limiting their ability to enter professional roles (Acharya and Yang, 2022).

Women in Nepali academia, both those aspiring to and already holding academic positions, face significant barriers to career advancement. They contend with an uneven playing field in a male-dominated environment, limited access to professional networks, sexism and unsafe workplaces, internalised biases, and unequal expectations compared to their male colleagues (Buchy et al., 2023). This cultural and institutional context has created an environment where discrimination, harassment and other forms of harm can occur. These factors collectively contribute to the underrepresentation of women across intersectional identities in leadership roles within Nepali universities.

The situation in academia reflects broader equity issues for women and marginalised groups in natural resource management in Nepal. These persist despite efforts to mainstream gender in national policies, including within the forestry sector (Wagle et al., 2016; Shrestha et al., 2025). Institute of

Forestry (IOF), with its central role in education, has an important part to play in addressing issues in the sector. To address the equity gaps, a protective measure is needed to help women and other marginalised groups to thrive within academia. This Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy and Social Safeguarding Action Plan 2026-2030 (GEDSI and SSAP) is designed to that end.

The document aims to address such gaps specifically within the IOF and its affiliate campuses. It aims to address the persistent inequalities by fostering an inclusive teaching and learning environment that promotes gender equality, disability rights, and social inclusion and also establishes a robust safeguarding mechanism. These mechanisms are crucial to protect students and staff from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse, ensuring a safe and supportive learning and working environment. In doing so, the IOF can equip future forestry and NRM professionals with the knowledge and tools to advocate for equitable and sustainable practices and foster a culture of inclusivity.

National Policy Landscape on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Nepal has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), particularly through progressive legal and policy frameworks. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) provides a solid foundation for inclusive governance by enshrining the principles of equality and non-discrimination and recognising the rights of historically marginalised communities. The constitution is guided by the principle of inclusion, with the preamble pledging to eliminate ‘discrimination based on caste, class, region, language, religion, gender and all forms of untouchability’. The Fundamental Rights section ensures special protection for women, children, Dalits, senior citizens, and people with disabilities. It also explicitly includes women’s rights and provisions for affirmative action, including specific measures in education for women and socially marginalised groups. Article 38(3) guarantees protection of women from all forms of violence: physical, mental, sexual, psychological, or any other, based on origin, religion, caste, ethnicity, sex, economic status, language, region, ideology, or similar grounds. Similarly, Article 38(4) guarantees proportional representation of women in all state bodies as a fundamental right, while the clause on *Right to Social Justice* ensures participation of socially excluded groups including ‘socially backward women, Dalits, indigenous people, Madhesis, Tharus, minorities, persons with disabilities, marginalised communities, Muslims, backward classes, gender and sexual minorities, other marginalised or economically disadvantaged communities. In addition to constitutional provisions, sectoral laws reinforce inclusivity.

The Local Governance Operation Act (2017) translates the constitutional provisions into practice by requiring local governments to formulate social security plans and ensure inclusive participation in mid- and long-term development planning. The Act mandates the inclusion of experts, professionals, marginalised groups, endangered ethnicities, women, Dalits, children, youths, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens in local planning processes, thereby institutionalising GEDSI at the grassroots level. Similarly, the Civil Service Amendment Act (2014) institutionalises affirmative action by reserving 45% of civil service positions for marginalised groups, distributed as 33% for women, 27% for Adivasi Janajatis, 22% for Madhesis, 9% for Dalits, 5% for persons with disabilities, and 4% for other excluded groups.

These domestic initiatives are reinforced by Nepal's international commitments, including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), ILO Convention 169, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize women's empowerment, protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, environmental protection, and inclusive sustainable development (UN, 2015; MoWCSC, 2019).

Beyond legislation, the Government of Nepal has institutionalised gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming through GESI focal units across ministries, and through Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB). The Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE) is among the ministries with a dedicated GEDSI policy and operational guidelines, focussing on the representation, participation, and decision-making of women, marginalised groups, and persons with disabilities in forest governance (MoFE, 2020). Similarly, the Ministry of Education identifies gender as one of the eight critical dimensions of equity to be addressed within the education sector. Despite such provisions, gender parity remains a distant goal as the effective implementation of such policy provisions remains a major challenge.

Policy Overview on GEDSI in Higher Education

The Education sector has been the government's primary sector of intervention and investment. The gender gap within higher education teaching and learning has been constitutionally recognised. Specific articles within the Constitution of Nepal address equitable opportunities in education. Article 18 ensures equal access to state services, Article 31 provides equitable educational opportunities for persons with disabilities and economically disadvantaged groups, and Article 40 ensures free higher education for Dalits with scholarships. With federalisation, some responsibilities for education are decentralised. Local governments are mandated to manage early childhood through to grade 12 under Article 11(8) of the Local Government Operation Act, while undergraduate and university-level education is overseen jointly by the federal and provincial governments.

The National Education Policy-2019 acknowledges persistent challenges in the education sector. It emphasises inclusion of socially, economically, and culturally disadvantaged groups, encourages state investment in inclusive education, and calls for professional codes of conduct. Despite these legal frameworks, structural inequalities stemming from socio-economic status, geographical location and disability are persistent in the education sector. While the National Education Policy-2019 seeks to promote inclusion, empowerment, and capacity development for socially marginalised groups, its scope is limited to primary and secondary levels. One notable intervention is from the UGC, whose PhD guidelines (2073) emphasise inclusivity in doctoral education, reinforcing access and opportunities for underrepresented groups (UGC, 2017). Such intervention is however severely limited in its effect since representation of women and marginalised communities in graduate education remains nominal compared to men. Equity interventions need a more grounded approach to enable women and individuals from marginalised groups to pursue higher education. A key strategy is ensuring adequate representation of marginalised groups within the university faculty.

Currently, women and other minorities hold only a minimal presence in leadership positions at institutions such as TU. While TU is increasingly recognising its role in promoting a GEDSI-responsive education sector, a concrete action plan remains to be formulated. The nascent steps undertaken by TU in embedding GEDSI principles into teaching, research, and institutional practices by forming a task force to develop a safeguarding policy signify a growing recognition of inequality that persists with higher education institutions. Such focus on social safeguarding also aligns with the UGC's [Grievance Redress Mechanism for Addressing Environmental and Social Safeguard Issues \(GRM\)](#). The GRM lays out a strong foundation for promoting a safe, inclusive and accountable higher education system. With GRM the UGC has enabled students, faculty, staff to raise issues related to social risks, equity, and wellbeing without the fear of retaliation. For IOF, such initiatives from the UGC and TU open important possibilities to not only address persistent inequalities but also proactively develop safeguarding measures to protect students and staff from potential harm.

GEDSI in Forestry Sector and IOF

Although awareness of women's roles in forestry began to emerge in the 1970s, the systematic integration of GEDSI considerations is a more recent development. Historically, forestry programs paid little attention to the needs of poor, marginalised groups, or persons with disabilities. This has begun to change with the introduction of the *Forest and Environment Sector Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan (2020–2030)*, which provides a comprehensive framework for mainstreaming GEDSI within the forest sector. However, the Action Plan is limited in scope. It focuses primarily on the operational aspects of the forest sector and does not extend to forestry education. While the existence of such a framework reflects a growing recognition of the specific needs of marginalised groups within the sector, it stops short of establishing benchmarks for how forest professionals are trained within academia or how an inclusive academic environment can be fostered.

Nepal is internationally recognised for its participatory community forestry model, which has often been highlighted as a pioneering example of inclusive natural resource governance. However, beneath this success, leadership and technical positions within the forestry sector remain largely inaccessible to women, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities (Buchy et al., 2023; Wagle et al., 2016). While reservation policy has ensured opportunities for women to lead, deeply rooted socio-cultural norms such as patriarchal ideologies, traditional cultural values, and entrenched institutional biases continue to shape decision-making processes and limit equitable access to opportunities for marginalised groups (Gupta et al., 2021; Khadka et al., 2023; Dhakal, 2021). The *hidden and invisible forms of power* often restrict meaningful participation and sustain discriminatory practices (Buchy et al., 2023).

Similar patterns are reflected in higher education and research institutions in the sector, such as IOF and its affiliate campuses. Although IOF was formally recognised under Tribhuvan University in 2029 B.S., forestry education in Nepal had already begun in 2004 B.S. Since its inception, IOF has maintained reservation policies for women and marginalised groups to ensure equitable access to forestry education. As a result, in 2026 more than 60 percent of the students enrolled

in Bachelor's and master's programmes come from marginalised communities of the Nepali society. Despite a long history of inclusion at the learning level, women and marginalised groups remain underrepresented in teaching and decision-making positions within higher education institutions. As noted earlier, structural and invisible barriers, such as the absence of institutional support, gendered expectations, and limited representation, hinder the participation and progression of individuals from marginalised groups (Reinders et al., 2020). Women remain underrepresented in Nepali higher education and encounter a 'glass ceiling' that constrains career advancement (Reinders et al., 2020; Buchy et al., 2023). Addressing these systemic inequities requires deliberate and sustained efforts to build an inclusive and equitable forestry education system that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.

Recognising *hidden* and *invisible* barriers is central to this process. Hidden barriers encompass structural and cultural norms such as the perception that certain roles are more appropriate for men that subtly shape institutional behaviour and decision-making (Buchy et al., 2023). Invisible barriers, on the other hand, involve unconscious biases and internalised beliefs that affect individuals differently depending on gender and social position (Buchy et al., 2023). Together, these barriers restrict recruitment, retention, and leadership opportunities for women and marginalised groups and can create environments where discrimination and harassment persist. Addressing these barriers is therefore not only a matter of fairness but also of institutional excellence. When women and marginalised individuals are represented in leadership roles, they help to embed gender-sensitive recruitment and retention practices and ensure that GEDSI priorities inform decision-making (Guragain, 2024).

Although various policy interventions in Nepal have sought to promote gender equality and social inclusion, significant gaps remain in translating these commitments into transformative practice, as is the case with forestry education (Shrestha et al., 2025; Buchy et al., 2023). The Institute of Forestry currently lacks a formal GEDSI strategy. Developing one would be a crucial step toward systematically identifying and addressing the structural, cultural, and institutional barriers that hinder inclusion. Moreover, as an academic institution, IOF has the potential to advance GEDSI-focused research, generating evidence to inform both policy and practice. Through such efforts, IOF can promote GEDSI sensitisation among staff and students and cultivate a more inclusive institutional culture.

Rationale for GEDSI and SSAP

A GEDSI and SSAP at the IOF is indispensable to address persistent inequalities, both in forestry education and broader sectoral practice. Despite national education policies promoting inclusivity, women, people with disabilities and socially marginalised groups remain underrepresented in forestry education, especially in leadership roles and decision-making processes. TU, in its *Vision 2030: Strategic Priorities and Action Steps (2024-2028)*, has not yet addressed the need for a gender responsive and socially inclusive higher education. This gap underscores the urgency for targeted institutional practices that promote equitable access, participation, and leadership opportunities for women, people with disabilities, and socially marginalised communities within higher education and the forestry sector.

Therefore, a dedicated GEDSI and SSAP at the IOF would ensure an inclusive learning and teaching environment, equitable participation in forestry education, and the development of professionals equipped to lead sustainable and socially inclusive forestry practices.

Through the development and implementation of a dedicated GEDSI and SSAP, IOF can take a leading role in:

- Identifying and addressing structural and cultural barriers within its systems.
- Building a more inclusive and equitable academic and working environment.
- Aligning with national laws and constitutional mandates.
- Contributing to policy and practice through research on inclusive natural resource governance.

Ultimately, the development of a GEDSI strategy represents more than a policy obligation. It is an opportunity for academic innovation and leadership in creating a forestry sector that is not only environmentally sustainable but also socially just and inclusive.

GEDSI and SSAP Formulation Methodology

To ensure the development of a robust, relevant and most importantly an executable GEDSI and SSAP for the IOF and its affiliate campuses, a participatory and inclusive methodology was employed. This approach prioritised the co-production of the document through collective engagement of all stakeholders. The processes commenced with direct and extensive consultation with faculty members across the IOF and its affiliate campuses. These initial dialogues were crucial for understanding existing problems and perceptions, identifying specific challenges and opportunities related to GEDSI, and gathering valuable insights into the IOF's institutional culture and everyday operational realities.

Following the initial consultations, a preliminary draft of the GEDSI and SSAP was developed. This draft was then widely circulated among faculty and staff for comprehensive feedback, which was instrumental in refining the document's scope, objectives, and proposed strategic actions. It also ensured that the document accurately reflected the diverse perspectives and needs of the IOF community. A pivotal step in this methodology involved a dedicated writing workshop where key strategic actions were thoroughly discussed, debated and finalised with the active participation of relevant staff members. This collaborative workshop facilitated a deeper understanding of the proposed interventions and fostered a commitment among the participants for their successful implementation.



For further enriching the evidence base for the strategy, a survey was administered to both staff and students of the IOF and its affiliate campuses. This survey provided quantitative and qualitative data on experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding gender equality, social inclusion, and safeguarding issues within the IOF's institutional environment. The insights thus generated were critical in identifying priority areas and formulating strategic interventions that are evidence-informed and impactful. Ultimately, this multifaceted, coproduced methodology was designed to create an executable strategy that not only promotes a culture of respect and inclusivity but also positions the IOF as an exemplary institution within Nepali academia, leading by example in fostering a safe, equitable and enabling environment for its students and staff members.



GEDSI Strategy and Social Safeguarding Action Plan (2026-2030)

VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

Vision: A responsive and inclusive Institute of Forestry shaping equitable futures

Mission 2030: Foster an inclusive, equitable and safe academic environment by taking collective action against gender and social discrimination at all levels.

Strategic Objectives:

1. Mainstream GEDSI in IOF governance
 - a. Ensure that gender, disability and social inclusion considerations are embedded in IOF institutional policies as well as in the curriculum.
 - b. Foster a culture of respect and inclusion as an institutional norm, both in the teaching-learning environment and in administrative functions.
2. Mainstream GEDSI in teaching, learning and research.
 - a. Promote women, people with disabilities and marginalised groups in leadership roles and decision-making bodies through affirmative actions.
 - b. Enhance the career progression of underrepresented staff and students by promoting them in professional development programs.
3. Ensure a safe, respectful and inclusive academic Institutions
 - a. Develop and implement robust social safeguarding mechanisms to prevent and deter discrimination, harassment and abuse.
 - b. Establish clear but confidential reporting, monitoring and accountability systems to protect students, staff and research participants.

Guiding Principles

This strategy is based on the following principles, co-developed through participatory engagement with faculty and staff:

- **Equity, Inclusion, and Non-Discrimination**

Promote fair treatment and equal opportunities for all, with special attention to under-represented gender minorities and persons with diverse abilities.

- **Transparency and Accountability**

Establish clear mechanisms for reporting, monitoring and addressing grievances, ensuring ethical governance and institutional trust.

- **Institutional Capacity Building**

Strengthen the knowledge, skills and attitudes of faculty, staff, and students to integrate GEDSI and safeguarding principles in teaching, research and professional practice.

- **Gender-Responsive Research and Learning**

Mainstream GEDSI principles across curricula, pedagogy, fieldwork and research, ensuring that forestry and higher education practices are inclusive and socially just.

- **Participation and Representation**

Ensure meaningful involvement and leadership of women, marginalised groups and persons with disabilities in decision-making processes at all institutional levels.

- **Continuous Learning and Adaptation**

Regularly review, update, and improve strategies and practices based on feedback, emerging challenges and evolving social contexts.

Strategic Action for GEDSI and SSAP Mainstreaming at the Institute of Forestry

Objectives	Actions	Target	Measures of success/ Means of Verification	Responsible entity	Year of Completion	
					Year II	Year V
1. Mainstream GEDSI in IOF governance and institutional culture						
Integrate GEDSI and social safeguarding into all IOF's Policies	Implement the GEDSI Strategy and SSAP within IOF and affiliated campuses	IOF and affiliated institutions adopt the GEDSI strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of orientation workshops on GEDSI Strategy and SSAP Participation by diverse people in orientation workshops 	Campuses	Regular	Regular
	Ensure that internal plans and policies of IOF are gender and diversity-sensitive and inclusive.	All existing policies revised to integrate gender and diversity consideration. New decisions routinely consider GEDSI (policies, new staff positions, infrastructure development, major grant processes).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised policies of IOF and affiliated campuses Exam composition; Research committees; Scholarship; Class Representative; School focus training; Nomination) 	IOF Dean's Office and Campuses	Regular	Regular
	Advocate for and ensure the planning budget follows the principle of gender-responsive budgeting	Gender-responsive budgeting guidelines adopted within the first year. Advocate to integrate in the RED BOOK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEDSI-related expenses are tracked in the fiscal reports related to expenses Resource mapping for gender responsive fund 	Planning and Finance	*	*
	Establish a GEDSI committee and train them regarding the strategy to ensure GEDSI mainstreaming in IOF and to implement the GEDSI Strategy and SSAP	Ensure 50 per cent representation of socially marginalised groups in the GEDSI committee and sub-committees, where possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focal persons from affiliate campuses identified and GEDSI committee formed. 	Dean Office and Campuses	*	*
Incorporate GEDSI in the delivery of relevant teaching and research	Periodically revise, monitor and update the GEDSI Strategy and SSAP through consultations with stakeholders.	First review completed within 12 months of committee formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GEDSI committee meets periodically, with the planning division and subcommittees, as required 	GEDSI Committee		*
		All faculty are trained on gender and diversity-friendly teaching norms and practices All staff and students are oriented on the Code of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedagogical training Number of orientation events and attendance 	Planning and campuses Dean Office Planning and campuses	*	*

Objectives	Actions	Target	Measures of success/ Means of Verification	Responsible entity	Year of Completion	
					Year II	Year V
	Include a statement encouraging applications from women and marginalised groups in all job vacancy descriptions.	Increased number of applications from women and people from marginalised groups	– Proportion of vacancies with gender and diversity statements in any projects or internal calls, as applicable	Dean Office Planning and Campuses and Administration	*	*
	Ensure additional points for GEDSI consideration in the performance review	Revised performance review criteria across all departments in IOF and affiliate campuses	– Proportion of managers reporting on GEDSI in their performance reviews	IOF Dean's office/ Campuses and Administration	Regular	Regular
2. Mainstream GEDSI in teaching, learning and research						
Increase all aspects of education and research within IOF by adopting the GEDSI principle.	Advocate to incorporate GEDSI in IOF curricula and develop an appropriate teaching manual and resources.	Curricula revision to ensure GEDSI consideration	– At least one compulsory GEDSI-related course after curriculum revision	IOF Dean's office/ Campuses	*	*
	Train teaching staff on GEDSI Pedagogy.	Organise training events for faculties in IOF and all affiliate campuses	– Number of attendees at training	GEDSI Committee	*	*
	Encourage research projects and theses that incorporate the GEDSI theme	Faculty and staff are equipped with GEDSI analysis skills through training on research methodology	– Number of theses and research projects with GEDSI analysis	IOF Dean's office/ Campuses	*	*
	Prioritise the endowment fund for GEDSI-related research for faculty and students.	Endowment funds follow the norms of Gender-responsive budgeting	– GEDSI-related publications- journal articles and thesis	IOF Dean's office/ Campuses	*	*
	Collaborate on interdisciplinary GEDSI Projects with relevant institutions	Network with relevant institutions	– Number of collaborative internal and external projects with a GEDSI focus	GEDSI Committee	*	*
	Disseminate research findings through publication and workshops, through multi-media (social media, website)	Increased visibility of GEDSI-related research within IOF and the affiliate campuses	– Recognition awards – Number of publications and workshops, Organise/participate at least one GEDSI-related seminar or webinar	IOF Dean's office/ Campuses	Regular	Regular
	Prepare system for recognition award					

Objectives	Actions	Target	Measures of success/ Means of Verification	Responsible entity	Year of Completion	
					Year II	Year V
3. Ensure a safe, respectful and inclusive academic environment.						
Institutionalise a tolerance policy for all forms of discrimination and establish a grievance redressal mechanism.	Develop an institutional safeguarding Code of Conduct against any form of physical, mental, or sexual abuse, cyber bullying as well as social discrimination, in speech and behaviour.	All faculty and staff are student-oriented and familiarised with IOF's Code of Conduct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code of conduct displayed in a visible area of IOF, affiliate campuses, Dean Office, School and institutions' websites Code of Conduct reviewed and revised periodically. 	GEDSI Committee	Regular	Regular
	Integrate mandatory orientation for staff and students to familiarise them with the safeguarding Code of Conduct and grievance redressal mechanisms.	Orientation to the Code of Conduct is integrated into the annual staff and student orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orientation sessions organised annually 	GEDSI Committee	Regular	Regular
	The IOF leadership champion the GEDSI Strategy and SSAP to set it as institutional culture by following the principles by using the language of dignity and respect. Collaborate with respective institution for participation in the events	GEDSI principles integrated into all leadership communications, policies, circulars and institutional statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEDSI champions (women and men-ally) identified, IOF leadership participate in at least one GEDSI events annually. 	IOF and all affiliate campuses	*	*
	Enforce professional boundaries by maintaining a zero-tolerance policy on romantic and intimate relationships between faculties, staff and students.	All staff and students are annually oriented on professional boundaries and the safeguarding policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code of Conduct disseminated among all staff and students of IOF and affiliate campuses 	IOF Dean's office/ Campus administration	Regular	Regular
	Embed the Code of Conduct into recruitment and admission procedures to guarantee that all staff and students acknowledge and adhere to it.	The admission letter and recruitment letter revised by incorporating the code of conduct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code of conduct adopted as a part of the recruitment letter for staff, and the admission letter for students Code of conduct discussed before tours, field excursions and external internships to emphasise safety and dignity at all times 	IOF Dean's office/ Campus administration	Regular	Regular
	Form a safeguarding subcommittee within the GEDSI committee and train them with representation of socially marginalised groups within staff and students.	Safeguarding subcommittee formed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding committee members identified in compliance with the ToR Safeguarding committee liaison with the GRM committee at UGC, where in applicable. 	GEDSI Committee	*	*

Objectives	Actions	Target	Measures of success/ Means of Verification	Responsible entity	Year of Completion	
					Year II	Year V
	Establish an accessible and confidential reporting system	Train and ensure a confidential reporting system is established and all staff and students are informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anonymised reporting system built within IOF's and affiliate campuses' websites 	Safeguarding sub-committee	*	
	Establish clear mechanisms for the timely handling and resolution of safeguarding complaints.	All safeguarding complaints are acknowledged within 48 hours if they are critical and resolved within 30 working days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Number of reported cases addressed within the defined timeline 	GEDSI Committee and safeguarding sub-committee	Regular	Regular
	Periodically, monitor, evaluate and revise safeguarding practices	Safeguarding M and E is incorporated within the annual M and E of IOF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Annual reporting of safeguarding complaints made through the reporting channel to the IOF leadership 	GEDSI committee and safeguarding sub-committee	Regular	Regular

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Annex 1

Code of Conduct

1. Purpose

This Code of Conduct sets expectations for ethical, respectful, inclusive, and professional behaviour by all members of the Institute of Forestry (staff and students) to ensure a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for learning and work.

2. Who Must Follow This Code

This Code applies to:

- Academic and administrative staff (permanent, contract, visiting)
 - All students (undergraduate, postgraduate, PhD, and exchange staff/students)
 - Non-academic support staff, contractors, and volunteers
 - Visitors, guests, and external partners participating in university activities.
-

3. Core Commitments

All members of the university community must:

- Treat everyone with respect, dignity, and fairness
 - Uphold gender equality, non-discrimination, and inclusivity in language, behaviour and action.
 - Maintain professional boundaries in all relationships.
 - Ensure physical, emotional, and psychological safety.
 - Act with integrity, especially in positions of power or trust.
 - Protect confidential information related to students, colleagues, or investigations on safeguarding issues.
-

Code of Conduct

	Do's	Don't
Respect and Inclusion	<p>Use inclusive, non-discriminatory language</p> <p>Respect diverse identities, opinions, and beliefs</p> <p>Promote a welcoming environment for women, Dalit, Janajati, LGBTQ+, and disabled individuals.</p>	<p>Use derogatory language, slurs, or jokes targeting someone's identity</p> <p>Tolerate bullying, exclusion, or harassment in classrooms, offices, or hostels</p>
Gender and Power Dynamics	<p>Recognise and acknowledge the power imbalance in faculty-student and supervisor-supervisee relationships.</p> <p>Declare any conflict of interest (e.g., intimate relationships, favouritism)</p> <p>Address gender-based discrimination or misconduct when witnessed.</p>	<p>Use authority to intimidate, coerce, or manipulate students or staff</p> <p>Engage in intimate or romantic relationships where a power imbalance exists (like staff-students, or student-research participants)</p>
Safe and Ethical Teaching, Research, and Supervision	<p>Obtain informed consent in research involving human participants</p> <p>Avoid discriminatory grading or feedback</p> <p>Ensure supervision is supportive, fair, and transparent</p>	<p>Use academic evaluations or opportunities to solicit favours</p> <p>Exclude students or staff based on gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual orientation</p>
Safeguarding and Reporting	<p>Report any safeguarding concern or policy violation immediately</p> <p>Cooperate with investigations and maintain confidentiality</p> <p>Attend mandatory training on gender equality and safeguarding</p>	<p>Ignore or dismiss complaints or warning signs</p> <p>Retaliate against anyone who makes a report in good faith</p>
Disciplinary Consequences		
<p>Violation of this Code may result in:</p> <p>Written warnings or reprimands</p> <p>Suspension or dismissal (for staff); academic sanctions or expulsion (for students)</p> <p>Legal action if the conduct constitutes a criminal offence under Nepali law</p>		
Compliance with the Code of Conduct		
<p>All university members must sign a declaration of compliance during:</p> <p>Recruitment (for staff)</p> <p>Admission or orientation (for students)</p> <p>Contract initiation (for consultants/partners)</p>		

Annex 2

Glossary of Terms

- **Gender equality** is the concept that all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.
- **Social Inclusion** is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society, improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged based on their identity.
- **Gender Mainstreaming** is a way of integrating women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.
- **Gender Analysis** is a systematic way of looking at the differential impacts of development, policies, programmes and legislation on women, men and other genders that entails, primarily, collecting sex disaggregated data and gender sensitive information about the population concerned.
- **Gender Responsive Budgeting:** GRB is an approach to budgeting that **integrates a gender perspective into the budget cycle: policy-setting, spending, monitoring and evaluation to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment through public resources. Under the Government of Nepal, all government expenditure is categorised into three groups.**
 - Directly responsive: More than 50% of the allocation benefits women
 - Indirectly responsive: Between 20-50% benefits women
 - Neutral: Less than 20% of the allocation benefits women
- **Gender-sensitive design** is a process of drawing upon research, analysis and experiences to design projects that advance gender equality.
- **Sex-disaggregated data** is a systematic collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data to understand if and how issues affect females, males, and people identifying as other genders differently.
- **Safeguarding:** Measures to protect individuals, especially vulnerable people, from harm, exploitation, and abuse.
- **Harassment** includes any improper and unwelcome conduct that has, or that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to, cause offence or humiliation to another. Harassment may be present in the form of words, gestures, or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, or cause personal humiliation or embarrass another, or that cause an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work environment.
- **Sexual Misconduct:** Any unwanted sexual attention, coercion, or exploitation.

Annex 3

Sample Terms of Reference (ToR) for a GEDSI Committee

Terms of Reference Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Committee Institute of Forestry

Background

The Institute of Forestry (IOF), as an academic institution under Tribhuvan University, is committed to promoting inclusive education, research and practice. In alignment with the constitutional mandates and institutional policies on equity and inclusion, the GEDSI committee has been formed to guide, promote and mainstream gender equity, disability and social inclusion across all IOF institutions and functions.

Purpose

The GEDSI committee shall serve as the institutional mechanism to ensure that GEDSI principles are effectively integrated into IOF's policies, programs, teaching, research and administration.

Roles and responsibilities of the committee

The committee will,

- Principles and Values
 - Uphold and embody the principles of equity, respect, dignity, inclusiveness, and confidentiality.
 - Ensure decisions and actions of the committee reflect the commitment to fairness and social justice.
- Mainstream GEDSI in IOF
 - Actively promote and integrate GEDSI principles in institutional policies, research, training and curriculum, where appropriate.
 - Advocate for equitable participation of students and staff from socially marginalised groups in all IOF activities.
- Grievance Redressal and Confidentiality
 - Establish a subcommittee on grievance redressal consisting of staff and student representatives.
 - Provide a safe, confidential and accessible mechanism for reporting and addressing grievances related to discrimination or misconduct (including sexual misconduct, harassment or abuse)
 - Oversee the subcommittee to ensure fairness, impartiality and non-retaliation in grievance handling.
- Liaison and Networking
 - Liaise with other departments/institutions within and outside Tribhuvan University to foster synergy and learning on GEDSI-related issues
 - Collaborate with external partners (government, universities, NGOs/IN-GOs, /donor agencies) to leverage knowledge and resources to advance

GEDSI in forestry and natural resources management education and practice.

- Monitoring and Review
 - Periodically appraise the status of IOF's GEDSI strategy and SSAP
 - Identify priority areas requiring active intervention and propose action
 - Prepare and submit reports on progress made, challenges faced and recommendations to IOF leadership
- Capacity Building and Succession
 - Foster GEDSI awareness and capacity-building initiatives among staff and students
 - Mentor and prepare potential successors to serve on the GEDSI committee by the end of tenure to ensure the sustainability of the committee's work.

Committee Composition

1. The committee shall consist of faculty members, administrative staff, and student representatives.
2. Representation of socially marginalised groups will be prioritised in committee membership.
3. For each meeting, a chairperson and secretary will be selected on a rotational basis from among the committee members.

Membership Tenure

1. The committee shall serve for a fixed tenure of 2 years, renewable as per IOF guidelines.
2. Membership succession should be ensured before the end of the tenure

Meeting and Reporting

1. The committee shall meet at least quarterly or as required
2. Meeting minutes and decisions shall be documented and archived for institutional memory

Declaration

As a GEDSI committee member, I shall maintain strict confidentiality on sensitive issues, especially those related to staff/student personal information and grievances.





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