

Gender Assessment

FP013: Improving the resilience of vulnerable coastal communities to climate change related impacts in Viet Nam

Vietnam | UNDP | B.13/23



GREEN
CLIMATE
FUND

Viet Nam: Improving the resilience of vulnerable coastal communities to climate change related impacts in Viet Nam

Brief Gender Assessment

I. Introduction

This assessment aims to provide an overview of the gender situation in Viet Nam, identify gender issues that may be relevant to the project, and to examine potential gender mainstreaming opportunities. The assessment was based on available data from studies conducted by the Government of Viet Nam, UN and civil society organisations, and multilateral development banks.

II. Gender and Climate Change Related Risks in Viet Nam

The Government and people of Viet Nam, as well many other stakeholders, have long recognized the risk and severity posed by natural hazards to the country. These include flooding, unpredictable rainfall, typhoons, extended droughts, heat waves and cold fronts, sea level rise and saline water intrusion. The country is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. A large percentage of the population will be affected by climatic changes and related hazards. For example, with around 70% of the population living in low-lying lands, within deltas or along the coastline, without any further actions, sea level rise will affect a significant number of people¹. These climatic changes have an impact on the lives and livelihoods of the people of Viet Nam, particularly, the poor and other vulnerable groups.

Climate change and its impacts are not gender neutral nor are its policies and actions. Due to their gender-defined roles in society and traditional patterns of marginalization, women are amongst those that are likely to carry the heaviest burdens from these changes and benefit less from the policies and programmes that address these.

Rather than being seen as 'victims', women are crucial actors in CCA and DRR – and their needs and knowledge should be used to inform the design, implementation, and monitoring of climate change and DRR policies.²

II. Existing Gender Inequality in Viet Nam

Women play a crucial role in the Viet Nam. Not only do they comprise almost half of its population, but they also play important roles at household level, in the rural and urban economies and in society as a whole.

Although remarkable progress has been made in Viet Nam to close gender gaps over the past years, particularly in the areas of poverty eradication, education and health, important gender differences still remain.³ These differences are reflected in women's and men's contributions

¹ MoNRE, 2011

² Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training. Routledge, London; Sen, A., 1999. Development as Freedom. Oxford University Press, Oxford; UNISDR Terminologies (2009) see <http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology>.

³ Gender and Development. Routledge, London; Moser, C., 1993.

to productive and reproductive work, formal and informal employment and salaries, poverty levels, literacy rates, their access to and control over natural resources, migration patterns, and women's participation and representation in decision-making at different levels.

One major concern is the rise in sex ratio at birth (SRB) from 106 male births for every 100 female births in 1999 to 111 in 2009. SRBs are highest for higher income groups with better access to ultrasound technique and sex selected abortions. This is clearly linked to a culturally based preference for boys. In addition, although the improvement of health indicators for women has been remarkable, problems of HIV/AIDS and gender based violence are still significant.

As poverty is measured at the household – and not at the individual – level, only a small gender gap in poverty is visible in official assessments. Older women, however, especially widows living in rural areas, are overrepresented among the poor. Control over assets and resources, including land, is one very important factor in this respect. Women have made major gains in educational enrolment but are still highly segregated into particular disciplines and sectors, which is connected to significant segregation in terms of occupation and employment. The only gender education gap that still exists is among certain ethnic minority groups. However, some educational materials still promote gender stereotypes⁴.

Women's wages are about 75% of men's according to the 2009 Labour Force Survey (LFS), not taking into account differences in education or job experience. Data from the 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS) suggests that agriculture accounts for 64% of working women in rural areas compared to 53% of working men. Overall a trend of feminization of agriculture is visible in the country. Similar patterns of segregation between men and women are found in urban areas.

Women are overrepresented in the informal sector in more vulnerable jobs, such as self-employment and unpaid family labour. Lower wages and worse working conditions prevail in small, informal family-run enterprises. Another aspect that has not changed over time is the gender distribution of unpaid work. Data from the 2008 VHLSS suggests that men continue to contribute significantly less to housework than women, leaving women with the 'double burden' of household activities and income generation. These gender differences that remain in work, employment and wages may put women at risk.

Political participation is another important area where gender differences emerge. Even though representation of women in the National Assembly is high by regional standards and there is a woman member of the Politburo, there are signs that women do not have an equal voice in the public sphere. In fact there are some indications that women's representation in some areas has worsened slightly, for example, from 27.3% for 2002-2007 to 24.4% for 2011-2016 in the National Assembly. Participatory poverty monitoring points out that many of the barriers that women face higher up in participation and decision-making in the public sphere are also encountered at grassroots level.

Gender inequalities contribute to different vulnerabilities and therewith also to differentiated impacts of disasters and climatic change.⁵ On the other hand, women and men have diverse capacities - knowledge, experience, skills and visions – in dealing with these challenges and impacts. Not all women are the same; they do not form one large homogenous group. There are, of course, important differences according to other social and economic differentiators such as age (women and girls), social status (rich vs. poor), and livelihood, urban and rural, ethnicity (majority vs. minority women).

⁴ The World Bank, 2011, Viet Nam Country Gender Assessment

⁵ Irene Dankelman (ed.) (2010), Gender and Climate Change: An Introduction. Earthscan, London.

In rural areas, 64% of women vs. 53% of men are engaged in agricultural production and face high risks of loss from drought and uncertain rainfall. Climate change adds to water insecurity, which increases the work load of women involved in small scale farming, as they spend more time and effort on land preparation, fetching water, watering and protecting crops from disease. A high dependency on land and natural resources for livelihood generation makes some women more vulnerable. Women contribute significantly to local and national markets and economies. More women than men work in household, micro- and small-enterprises⁶

Women however, are often worst hit and least able to recover as a result of disasters. Disasters cause both men and women to lose jobs. However, women may, as a consequence of a disaster, often have to work longer to maintain household responsibilities to respond to and recover from the disaster event. The conditions of their work may deteriorate more than those of men, as many poor women – in both rural and urban areas - work more in the informal sector, under worse working conditions and generally with less pay.

Women carry a wide range of caring responsibilities in the household, for children, spouses and other relatives, but also for neighbours, elderly and sick people in their communities. Women often face more difficulties in feeding and caring for others when resources are scarce. More time and effort may, for example, be spent on collecting biomass fuel and water and increased domestic care. As a result, women's and girls' tasks and responsibilities often reduce their opportunities to enrol in education and to engage in income generating activities and decision-making processes at the community level.⁷

Women hold title on 20% of Land Tenure Certificates (LTCs) compared to 62% of men and 18% for joint land holders. (VHLSS, 2008) Female only land holders have fallen in urban areas since 2004, whereas the proportion of joint holdings remained steady. (VHLSS, 2008) Having less land rights limits women's access to credit for diversifying income sources and for recovery from loss. Less access to resources, credit, markets and extension services seriously disadvantages poor women and men and limits their coping strategies.

Because of their different socially-defined roles in households, communities and the market, different strategies are adopted by women and men in response to disasters: women are more likely to use income diversification and community support, while men are more likely to seek financial support as an adaptation strategy. Migration is emerging as an important coping strategy for people facing hardship and environmental changes. Male migration often worsens the situation for women and children left behind. Women migrants often earn less and are often in more vulnerable positions than men. Pre-existing vulnerability to disasters and slow-onset environmental problems means that women are among the most at risk and least able to cope. In general, many poor women living in rural and urban areas have less decision making power regarding family businesses and the way that household income is spent.⁸

Attending village, ward or commune meetings is commonly considered a man's task. Women tend to go only to public meetings regarding CCA/DRR when men are busy or absent. Women's participation in local People's Committee Councils is significant but still limited: 23.8% at provincial, 23.2% at district and 20% at commune level.⁹ Women's involvement in local Committees for Flood and Storm Control is often limited to child-care and food distribution; women tend not to be involved in decision-making.

Almost 14 million women - from the central to the grassroots level - are organized in Viet Nam's Women's Union, that has branches in every province and village of Viet Nam and a

⁶ The World Bank, 2011. Viet Nam Country Gender Assessment

⁷ UN Redd Programme Gender Analysis, Viet Nam, 2013

⁸ UNDP Gender and Climate Change Policy Brief, 2012

⁹ World Bank, 2011

wide range programmes for the advancement of women. The Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU), has created a vast network of members from the central to the grassroots level, with branches in every province and commune. The VWU implements an array of programs in a range of sectors, including health, education, credit, and training, to support women's development. Women have to become members of the VWU to receive support, which pays special attention to the poor. The VWU is thus an effective mobilizing force for gender equality, but uneven capacity among VWU officials constrains effectiveness, particularly in ethnic minority areas.

Through the years, there were several indices developed to quantify the concept of gender inequality. UNDP uses Gender Inequality Index (GII) and Gender Development Index (GDI).¹⁰ GII is a composite measure that shows inequality in achievement between women and men in reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market while GDI measures achievement in human development in three areas: health, education, and command over economic resources. The GDI considers the gender gaps on human development between men and women.

Viet Nam's GII for 2013 relative to selected countries and groups¹¹

	GII value	GII Rank	Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Female seats in parliament (%)	Population with at least some secondary education (%)		Labour force participation rate (%)	
						Female	Male	Female	Male
Viet Nam	0.322	58	59.0	29.0	24.4	59.4	71.2	72.8	81.9
Thailand	0.364	70	48.0	41.0	15.7	35.7	40.8	64.4	80.8
Philippines	0.406	78	99.0	46.8	26.9	65.9	63.8	51.0	79.7
East Asia and the Pacific	0.331	—	72.0	19.7	18.7	54.6	66.4	62.8	79.3
Medium HDI	0.502	—	186.0	42.8	17.5	44.7	53.2	38.7	80.0

Viet Nam has a GII of .322 (2013) and ranks 58th out of 148 countries, suggesting that about 32% was the combined loss due to gender inequalities on achievement to reproductive health, empowerment and labour market participation. Due to a lack of relevant data, there is no official GDI value which can indicate the gender gap in human development in areas of health, education, and command over economic resources (represented by estimated earned income) for Viet Nam for 2013.

The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) of the World Economic Forum examines the gap between men and women in four categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival; and political empowerment.¹² Out of 142 countries, Vietnams rank based on GGGI in 2014 is given below:

Description	Score	Rank
Economic participation and opportunity	0.72	41
Educational attainment	0.97	97
Health and survival	0.97	137
Political empowerment	0.12	87

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Reports. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>.

¹¹ Explanatory note on the 2014 Human Development Report composite indices Viet Nam; HDI values and rank changes in the 2014 Human Development Report, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/VNM.pdf

¹² World Economic Forum. The Global Gender Gap Report 2014. Country Profiles. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CountryProfiles.pdf.

GGGI TOTAL	0.69	76
Source: The Global Gender Gap Report 2014	Inequality = 0.00 Equality = 1.00	

IV. Legal and Administrative Framework Protecting Women and Promoting Gender Equality

Viet Nam has a solid legislative basis with regard to gender equality. The Law on Gender Equality (2007) and the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020 oblige all sectors and ministries to mainstream gender in their work. According to the National Strategy on Gender Equality, ministries and provinces are responsible for building and issuing Action Plans on gender equality to implement the Strategy. To date, 37/63 provinces and 10 ministries have adopted such action plans¹³.

Viet Nam is strongly committed to gender equality and women's empowerment, as reflected in the Law on Gender Equality, 2006 which guarantees equal rights to women and requires gender strategies at the ministerial level. The Gender Equality Department was created in the Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs to help implement the Law on Gender Equality.

In 2007, Viet Nam passed the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and subsequently launched a public awareness campaign targeting men. The government adopted the National Program on Gender Equality 2011-2015. Other important legislation adopted to protect women's rights includes the Law on Anti-Human Trafficking, 2011. The penal code provides the legal framework for prosecuting crimes of rape, including marital rape under the domestic violence law.

The awareness about climate change impacts are reflected, to differing extents, in the National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change¹⁴, the National Strategy on Climate Change¹⁵ and the 1002 Community Based Disaster Risk Management programme¹⁶, as well as in the activities of the Disaster Management Working Group (DMWG)¹⁷, the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG), the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU), UN organizations and others. These documents aim to mainstream gender however implementation on the ground is uneven.

In the area of climate change the National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change (NTP-RCC, 2008) underlines the importance of gender equality as a guiding principle, along with sustainable development. The NTP-RCC also stresses the need to conduct vulnerability assessments at sectoral, regional and community levels, and it underlines that potential climate change impacts on women can undo the achievement of the MDGs. In addition, the National Strategy on Climate Change (December 2011) mentions gender equality (once) within one of the specific objectives. However, the Action Plans for the NTP-RCC developed by line ministries and provinces are, as yet, not specifically mandated to address gender equality in CCA/DRR.

The National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 (2007) identifies that: "Natural disasters cause negative impacts on vulnerable groups such as the old, disabled people, women and children". It outlines the following approaches:

¹³ MoLISA, December 2011

¹⁴ December 2008

¹⁵ December 2011

¹⁶ July, 2009

¹⁷ With Oxfam, Plan, Care, IFRC a.o.

promotion of community awareness raising and information dissemination; building resilience to disasters and promotion of the tradition of mutual support in disaster situations; organization of self-response forces in communities for active emergency search and rescue; and promoting the role of social organizations and associations in disaster response and recovery.

These approaches are considered to be an important basis for mainstreaming gender in DRR. The implementation guidelines of the National Program on Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) mention: "Gender equality - gender mainstreaming and promoting women's participation/women's empowerment in the activities of disaster risk management and adaptation to climate change will bring greater efficiency to the community

The 2013 Law on Disaster Prevention and Control also aims to mainstream gender equity and mandated the participation of Women's mass organisations as key actors in disaster risk management. In 2014, the Viet Nam Women's Union was formally invited to join the Central Steering Committee for Disaster Prevention and Control.

V. Recommendation

Specific recommendations to enhance project implementation include to:

- Ensure that the project documents and related action plans tend to have clear reference to gender equality and included specific actions to promote equal and meaningful participation.
- Include elements of gender and climate change and gender equity analysis in capacity building actions at different levels in recognition that understanding of gender roles in the context of climate change and DRR is still limited;
- While recognising women are in need of targeted assistance in areas such as housing selection, the project should make clear efforts to ensure their role in leadership and managerial roles during implementation.
- To date, research, analysis and evaluation of gender equality and mainstreaming in CCA/DRR from which appropriate solutions can be formulated, is limited. The risk information component of the project should include specific actions to strengthen in the disaggregation of data by gender and to promote further analysis and actions to better track gender progress in climate change adaptation in Viet Nam.
- The project should also take active efforts to avoid potential, unintended effects of CCA/DRR policies and actions that may increase gender inequalities and poverty.
- The project should aim to reinforce mutually benefiting links where CCA and DRR programmes and actions can empower women and improve living conditions and livelihoods of women, their families and whole communities; gender equality programmes and actions can contribute to DRR, CCA and climate change mitigation.
- The project should also encourage the participation of women and of the Viet Nam Women's Union in CCA/DRR at all levels within relevant government ministries, departments, institutes and civil society organizations.
- The capacity of trained trainers on knowledge and methodology for gender mainstreaming in DRR/CCA should be promoted and full implementation of this objective in the government programmes should be ensured.
- Prior to implementation of the project, MARD/PMU should collect available secondary data from past and on-going projects in target areas to establish baseline and in setting targets to address gender equality particularly on access to services, training, and other benefits.
- During project implementation, qualitative assessments should be conducted on the gender-specific benefits that can be directly associated to the project. This can be

incorporated in the annual Project Implementation Report, Mid-Term Report, and Terminal Evaluation.

- Indicators to quantify the achievement of project objectives in relation to gender equality may include men and women who had access to affordable capital for energy efficiency retrofits, number of men and women employed from the jobs created by the project, training opportunities, knowledge management and information dissemination.
- Good practices and experiences of promoting gender equality in DRR/CCA evidenced through the project should be used as evidence-based information to inform future policy/decision-makers in their own organizations and future programmes of the Government at national and sub-national levels.

Key Terminology applied in proposal

Gender: Refers to socially ascribed roles, responsibilities, rights and opportunities associated with men and women. Gender relations are dynamic, change over time, and are context-specific – just as societies can change over time, so too can the different gender-defined roles of women and men in households, communities, the work place, and other formal and informal decision-making institutions and structures.

Gender differentiation: Men and women can have different socially-defined roles, responsibilities, functions, levels of participation, access to and control over resources and assets, levels of education, actual rights and opportunities. In many societies, women and girls in particular can face traditional patterns of marginalization and discrimination because of these gender defined roles, rights and opportunities.

Gender equality: Similar rights, potentials, assets and chances for women and men (in all their diversity). Often women face specific obstacles to attain their full development potential, such as lack of decision-making power, poverty, limited access and control over resources (natural, financial, credit, education, and training). Despite the disadvantages they often face, women are also crucial actors, particularly at the community level with knowledge, experience, expertise and skills and vision.

Gender mainstreaming: *“...is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, [financing,] implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes (in all political, economic and societal spheres), so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality”.*

Gender analysis: Gives us an understanding of how, the social-defined roles of women and men determine different vulnerabilities and capacities to deal with climate change. Gender analysis is essential to better informed, and more equitable, efficient and sustainable climate change and DRR responses.

Vulnerability: The characteristics and circumstances of [an individual], community, system or asset that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard.

Resilience: The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.

Capacity: The combination of all the strengths, attributes and resources available within a community, society or organization that can be used to achieve agreed goals.