

GENDER ACTION PLAN

A. Introduction

1. The Periodic Financing Request 3 (PFR3) finances seven water supply companies (WSCs) in the provinces of Nghe An (3), Quang Nam, Bac Giang, Thanh Hoa and Thai Nguyen. In the project area, women make up more than 50% of customers. Social Assessments reveal that women within households (HHs) have greater responsibility for ensuring water supply for all HH needs. Yet women are poorly represented in management and technical positions in WSCs (up to 20%) and are less able to participate in public debates on issues like community-level water supply. Given the project's large scale and complexity, focus will be on technical design features enhancing water supply coverage but simultaneously promoting greater women's participation in the project. PFR3 is categorized as EGM.

B. Key Strategies

2. Key strategies for promoting gender equality will be in the areas of Staffing (S), Finance (F), Training and Capacity Building (TCB), and Community Involvement (CI). The strategies address gender disparities in water supply and management within the project:

- (i) Increase women's participation in key decision-making and implementing structures like Resettlement Committees, PMUs and Community Supervision Boards (CSBs), and tools like Citizens Report Cards and Customer Service Contracts, so their needs and priorities are not overlooked. (S)
- (ii) The Project will support water companies to appoint more women to technical and leadership positions, through targets for women's employment and capacity building opportunities. (S)
- (iii) Ensure involvement of Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) whose members can make valuable contributions to issues and policies on supplying the poor and pricing. (S, F)
- (iv) Improve knowledge and skills of women, including in CSBs. Provide training and capacity building activities for all but specially target women for technical skills, e.g., scheme O&M; NRW reduction; meter reading, billing & collection (MBC); water quality testing. (TCB, CI)
- (v) Communicate with men and women separately, through appropriate channels and at suitable times. Matters to consult include network design. Separate awareness materials should be developed to target women, for example about pricing and water conservation. At meetings, women should be invited to speak. (CI, TCB)
- (vi) Increase income opportunities for women in unskilled labor; and in technical (field and laboratory), community liaison and managerial roles. (TCB, CI, S)
- (vii) Improve gender awareness at all levels in WSC, the Subproject steering committee, and among consultants. Focus on increasing the understanding of national gender policy, relative needs of men and women vis-à-vis the existing water supply situation, climate change, and gender issues in their provinces, institutional gender issues, the proposed social strategies of the Project, and ADB gender policies. (TCB)

3. Additionally, collect sex-disaggregated data essential for planning and monitoring, and preparation of bi-annual GAP Progress Reports (using ADB GAP Progress templates). From the

start of the Subprojects, systems for recording data in this format will be established and adopted by the WSCs. Such sex-disaggregated databases will be integrated in the Project Performance Management Information System to facilitate analysis of issues by gender.

C. Project Impact

4. While men and women will gain from an improved and reliable water supply delivered by the Project, women stand to profit more because they have primary domestic responsibility for obtaining, paying for and using water. Any improvement in the availability and cost of water will be an immediate gain. There are no affordability issues for women and women headed HH from the social assessment. The Viet Nam Women Union advises the People's Council endorsing water tariff increases. Approximately 640,000 women will have access to better quality and reasonably priced water within their homes, thus saving time spent in collecting water of doubtful quality or money spent buying bottled water at exorbitant rates. About 165,000 women who are already piped water users will benefit from improved pressure, water availability, and security of supply. Better knowledge of pricing, conservation and quality issues will benefit women more than men, since they deal with these issues on a daily basis.

5. Women will be empowered in making decisions about water through participation on CSBs and in project management. Women will have more balanced representation on water decisions that potentially affect them. Men and women in WSC will be more sensitive to gender issues in the sector. In combination with strategic targeted skills acquisition in technical matters (see 2 (iv) above), the project will have the wider benefit of changing the perception of WSC and encouraging more women to work in the sector.

6. Negative impacts for women are only related to resettlement and these will be mitigated through social support programs, GAPs and Resettlement Plans. Resettlement impacts, especially permanent ones, have been avoided where possible and those remaining minimized.

D. Summary Gender Action Plan

Table: Gender Action Plan

Project Outputs	Proposed Actions and Targets
Output 1: Increased coverage	
Planning and construction of water supply and distribution systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 40% of residents consulted on construction design and planning are women. • 100% coverage of identified poor and women-headed HH within the project area. • Equal employment opportunities and equal pay for equal work for women and men in civil works. • Target 30% female laborers in unskilled civil works with support of local Women's Unions. • Target 25% women in CSBs (at ward level), CRCs and PMUs. • Train all CSB members – men and women – on various aspects of project oversight. • Separate women's latrines and living quarters at construction sites.
Output 2: Improved business planning, asset and financial management	
Improve operation and maintenance, improve strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water tariff increase agreed at midterm review with gender and affordability considerations. • Provide gender awareness training for all levels of WSC, project staff, subproject

Output 2: Improved business planning, asset and financial management	
analysis and planning of the water supply companies and effective monitoring and evaluation	<p>steering committees, CSBs, and consultants to increase sensitivity on water and gender issues, including through exposure visits for female staff of WSC and Women's Union members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 50% female staff for new recruits in each PMU and water companies/enterprises in technical and project management positions. • Ensure 30% of existing female WSC staff participate in training on technical issues like water supply management, scheme operations and maintenance (including MBC and NRW reduction). • Partner with Women's Union and Community Health Centers in IEC planning and delivery that target both male and female residents and local authorities' representatives equally. • Gender-responsive IEC materials integrating women's issues and needs, disseminated through channels accessed by women, and Customer Service Contracts signed with all households, including those headed by women. • Ensure 30% of field operations staff (including meter readers) and 50% of IEC facilitators employed by WSCs and PMUs are women. • During construction, inform women of water supply interruption schedules to enable better household planning and minimize disruptions. • Disaggregate customer feedback by sex (including in Citizens Report Cards) for use in future planning and in project quarterly reports and biannual GAP Progress Reports.
Output 3: Effective NRW reduction	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicize water tariff roadmap which integrates gender and affordability concerns informed by VWU participation in roadmap planning exercises. • Ensure appropriate monitoring mechanism and staff resourcing for the implementation of decree 117/2007 and Decree 124/2011 to ensure lifeline tariff and free connections to 100% of identified poor and women-headed households.

CRC = Compensation and Resettlement Committee; CSB = Community Supervision Board; HH = Household; IEC = Information, Education and Communication; MBC = Metering, Billing and Collection; PMU = Project Monitoring Unit; VWU = Viet Nam Women's Union; WSC = Water Supply Company.

E. Budget, Implementation and Monitoring arrangements

7. WSCs, as project owners, are responsible for project implementation and monitoring. PMU, established in each WSC and with support from VWU staff, will recruit a national Social Development Specialist and a national Safeguards specialist on an intermittent basis, with expertise in planning, implementation and monitoring of the GAP, to guide and ensure overall implementation of their respective Subproject GAPs. The specialists will ensure that the Coordinating Agency of PFR3, (Ministry of Planning and Investment) and ADB are updated regularly of all issues and progress related to the implementation of the GAPs through regular updating and bi-annual submission of GAP Progress reports and in project biannual progress reports. Monitoring and evaluation of the GAP will be incorporated into the overall monitoring and evaluation plan of the project. Project management consultants will work with the PMU to establish sex disaggregated indicators. The indicative budget from the supervision budget is \$281,000 distributed among the seven WSCs with about 50% allocated to IEC and 50% to TCB, including provision for the representatives from the Women Union.