



GENDER ANALYSIS REPORT

Climate Resilient Agriculture in the Mekong Delta

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	iii
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	iii
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	v
General	v
Approach 1: Expand low emission agriculture	v
Approach 2: Build climate resilience	v
Approach 3: Promote nature-based solutions	vi
Approach 4: Develop climate resilience policies	vi
INTRODUCTION	vi
Activity Context	I
Purpose of the Gender Analysis	I
METHODOLOGY	I
KEY FINDINGS: GAPS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN	2
Cultural Norms and Beliefs	2
Patterns of Power and Decision Making	4
Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices	6
Gender Roles, Responsibilities, and Time Use	8
Access To and Control Over Assets and Resources	9
CONCLUSIONS	11
Approach 1: Expand low methane emission agricultural development	12
Approach 2: Build climate resilience for vulnerable communities	13
Approach 3: Promote nature-based solutions	15
Approach 4: Develop climate resilient and low emission policies	15
RECOMMENDATIONS	16
General	16
Approach 1: Expand low emission agriculture	17
Approach 2: Build climate resilience	17
Approach 3: Promote nature-based solutions	17
Approach 4: Develop climate resilience policies	18
REFERENCES	19

ACRONYMS

ADS	Automated Directives System
CRA	Climate Resilient Agriculture
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
GVN	Government of Vietnam
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MOLISA	Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table I: Desk review findings

Automated Directives System (ADS) 205 Domain	Desk Review Findings
Cultural norms and beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender norms are rooted in patriarchal traditions that give more power and privileges to men. • Women are expected to care for the home and family. They typically have reduced opportunities in employment and are paid less than men for similar work. • Young people typically see agriculture as an unattractive sector, and rural to urban migration is common. • Discrimination against persons with disabilities is a serious barrier to their participation in society.
Patterns of power and decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are underrepresented in politics and positions of power at all levels of society, including within community-based decision making bodies in the Mekong Delta. • Women also have less decision making power in their own households. • Men and women use different strategies to respond to climate change, with women being more likely to use savings or loans, sell livestock, raise their own vegetables or seek government aid, while men will dispose of assets or take little action. • Female farmers are not high adopters of climate-smart agriculture technology, possibly due to low awareness and/or a perception of high costs.
Laws, policies, regulations, and institutional practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It does not appear that there is an overt gender bias in the policy framework. However, inclusion is not effectively mainstreamed in ‘ungendered’ sectors such as climate and agriculture, likely due to entrenched cultural biases and a lack of female input at senior levels of government. • Inclusion efforts often fail to achieve their goals, largely due to issues with implementation at the local level. There are limited guidelines or incentives in place to ensure inclusion is promoted in sectoral programming, and few mechanisms for accountability. • The lack of substantive inclusion considerations in environment and agriculture policy often has the effect of men receiving greater benefits.
Gender roles, responsibilities, and time use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men and women are assigned different tasks in agriculture, based on the assumption that men are stronger. Men often handle tasks requiring heavy labor or specific skills, with women handling planting, weeding, and post-harvest activities.

Automated Directives System (ADS) 205 Domain	Desk Review Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrimp farming largely involves male labor. Non-rice livelihood activities for women in the Delta include raising small livestock and cultivating upland crops, such as vegetables. • Cultural norms dictate that women are responsible for managing the household and taking care of children and the elderly.
Access to and control over assets and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female farmers, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities in the Delta typically have lower education levels than men. • There is a significant gender gap in access to agricultural training and services, with men benefitting much more from agricultural extension and mechanization. Women are more likely to learn about new technologies through informal social networks in their local areas. • Men typically control large assets, such as the house and family land, while women control some smaller assets, such as livestock and basic commodities. • Female headed households and Khmer communities are more likely to be landless and are among the most economically vulnerable groups in the Mekong Delta.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

General

1. USAID should add a stakeholder validation step in activity design to ensure findings of the gender analysis are validated by the specific communities the Activity will be working with and to gather further insight into the most acute priorities of women, ethnic minorities, and youth.

Approach 1: Expand low emission agriculture

2. USAID should take steps to reduce barriers for women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities to participate in and effectively learn from capacity development activities.
3. USAID should target capacity development opportunities to women's gendered roles in agriculture (while keeping options open to either gender, as some households may have women performing traditionally male roles).

Approach 2: Build climate resilience

4. In interventions promoting climate risk reduction practices for communities, USAID should find ways to engage women in roles with agency and influence.
5. USAID should consider providing additional educational, financial, and social support for women and ethnic minorities to successfully diversify their livelihoods.

6. USAID should consider providing financial literacy or financial management training for women.

Approach 3: Promote nature-based solutions

7. USAID should ensure women are enabled to participate in the decision making and monitoring the implementation of the co-management model of mangrove/wetland conservation.
8. To reduce harmful, unintended consequences, USAID should consider how men, women, and female-headed households may experience shifts in rice cultivation or agricultural practices differently and prepare to provide other livelihood options for women whose labor may be displaced by the change.

Approach 4: Develop climate resilience policies

9. USAID should support MARD and provincial governments to solicit feedback and perspectives directly from women. Relatedly, USAID should also consider strengthening the capacity of women/women's organizations to engage in policy dialogue.
10. USAID should support policymakers and local implementers to mainstream gender issues in policy and programming and, to the extent possible, consider work with officials on addressing identified gender-related policy issues.

INTRODUCTION

Activity Context

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Vietnam and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) have entered into a limited scope grant agreement to launch a new activity promoting climate resilient agriculture (CRA) in the Mekong Delta (or, more colloquially, the Delta). The Mekong CRA Activity (the Activity), which is scheduled to commence in FY2023, aims to increase climate resilience, reduce methane emissions from the agriculture sector, increase sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions in the Mekong Delta, and conserve biodiversity. The Activity will implement four mutually reinforcing approaches that respectively seek to:

1. Expand low methane emission agricultural development;
2. Build climate resilience for vulnerable communities;
3. Promote nature-based solutions; and
4. Develop climate resilient and low emission development policies.

Purpose of the Gender Analysis

To design this activity, USAID/Vietnam is undertaking this gender analysis of CRA in Vietnam. Among other issues, the Mission is interested in understanding the gender gaps shaping the development of climate resilience in Vietnam. The analysis will aim to identify, understand and explain gaps between men and women and other groups, where possible, in CRA in the Mekong Delta. In alignment with ADS205, the purpose of this gender analysis is to:

- Analyze the gaps that exist between males and females in the household, community, and institutional levels that could affect the achievement of activity results.
- Identify key gender inequalities, needs for female empowerment, or differential effects that could be addressed or mitigated through the activity.
- Recommend concrete actions USAID/Vietnam can undertake to address the above.

METHODOLOGY

The gender analysis focused exclusively on a rapid desk review of Government policies and associated documents, recently published relevant reports, and reviews of program design documentation. The report draws heavily from studies conducted in the Mekong Delta on gender dynamics in climate smart agriculture (CSA) programs, along with a few regional examples and documentation of international best practice. Analysis focused on understanding gaps that exist between males and females at the household, community, and institutional levels that could affect Activity results, as well as achievements to date in these areas, the differential effects of these gaps and achievements, and key opportunities for USAID engagement that could be addressed or mitigated through the Mekong CRA Activity. The analysis also briefly discusses similar dynamics affecting young people, ethnic minorities (predominately the Khmer), and persons with disabilities.

In line with the gender analysis purpose, the report is structured around findings related to gaps between males and females, conclusions focused on the differential effects of those gaps as well as the engagement opportunities they present as both relate to the Mekong CRA design specifically, and recommendations. In accordance with USAID policy, the findings section addresses five key domains: 1) cultural norms and beliefs; 2) laws, policies, regulations and institutional practices; 3) gender roles, responsibilities and time use; 4) patterns of power and decision-making; 5) access to and control over assets and resources. However, the conclusions and recommendations are organized by the four approaches of the Activity, applying the findings from the gender domains in a holistic manner.

KEY FINDINGS: GAPS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Over the past decade, Vietnam has experienced rapid social and economic development, making progress on many sustainable development goals, including gender equality. Cultural norms, however, are slower to change and continue to stay rooted in a patriarchal system. These persisting norms and beliefs about men and women underlie the gender gaps and inequalities in Vietnamese society: unequal opportunities provided for leadership and decision-making roles, the ongoing reality of gender inequality despite existing laws and policies, the distinct roles men and women have within the home and within agricultural practices, and unequal access to basic resources like education and financial services. Thus, the discussion of key findings below will begin by exploring these underlying gender norms before exploring the details of the resulting inequalities in the other four domains.

Cultural Norms and Beliefs

Gender norms in Vietnam are rooted in patriarchal traditions that give men more power and privileges than women. Like most patriarchal societies, men are traditionally viewed as the ‘stronger’ or ‘more capable’ sex - believed to be better leaders, better at politics, more adept at using technology, and the main decision makers within a household and society.¹ On the other hand, women are seen as the ‘weaker’ sex - believed to be better suited to homemaking and caregiving, and valued for virtues such as beauty, gentility, and modesty.² In agriculture, these gender norms are manifested through gendered division of labor that give men any tasks deemed ‘hard labor’ (see roles section below). This belief that women are weaker is one underlying reason why women are paid less for agricultural work.³ On average, men earn 30 percent more than women for daily wage labor because men’s agricultural work is considered ‘harder’ or requires more technical skills.⁴ Gender norms also stereotype women as more hardworking and meticulous in their agricultural work than men.⁵ In addition, men are stereotyped as being less responsible and women are expected to be better at managing household finances and paying back loans on time.⁶

Gendered Priorities

Vietnamese gender norms dictate that a women’s first priority should be caring for the home and family,⁷ as they are responsible for ensuring ‘family happiness’.⁸ Men are also encouraged to value their family; however, the priority for men is providing for the family (focused on work outside the home).⁹ This gender norm - that women are responsible for home affairs and men are responsible for affairs outside of the home - underlies many of the gender roles and power dynamics discussed in later sections of this analysis. Likewise, pervasive gender norms still dictate that male ‘face’ should be preserved, with the result that many believe women should not express their views publicly. These norms have even greater sway among marginalized groups, including ethnic minorities.¹⁰ **Although men are considered the traditional ‘head of household,’ women are the day-to-day managers of a Vietnamese household.** Women are responsible for managing day to day household decisions, including finances, while men retain final authority for decisions around large assets (see decision making and access sections below).¹¹

¹ Institute for Social Development Studies. 2020.

² Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

³ Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2.

⁴ Pistor et al. 2012.

⁵ Tho et al. 2019. Chapter 9.

⁶ UN Women. 2017.

⁷ Neefjes. 2009.

⁸ Rydstrøm, H. 2017.

⁹ Institute for Social Development Studies. 2020.

¹⁰ Nguyen and Simkin. 2017.

¹¹ Tran et al. 2021.

Economic Activity

Although men are traditionally expected to work outside the home, gender norms in Vietnam are changing such that women have been increasingly participating in the paid labor market for decades.¹² **Both male and female family members provide labor in different livelihood activities, depending on social and economic status, gender roles, opportunity costs, and access to resources.** Incomes from various sources are pooled and wives manage the family budget.¹³ For farming households in the Mekong Delta, rice income alone is typically insufficient (averaging 78 percent of total household income); thus, women often raise small livestock or grow vegetables, while men may contribute through aquaculture, rental of machines, or cultivation of other crops.^{14,15} Both men and women may pursue off-farm income generation or seasonal agricultural work, depending on the household's socioeconomic status and access to land (see roles and access sections below).

Migration and Youth

Rural to urban migration is a common phenomenon across Vietnam. In the Delta, there is less migration of male heads of household compared to other regions and most migrants are youth - both young women and young men.¹⁶ **Young people typically find agriculture to be an unattractive sector for employment.** As they move out from rural areas to find other employment, young people leave behind an aging population of farmers, who may not have as much incentive or ability to implement CSA techniques.¹⁷ The aging population in the rural Mekong Delta also increases the dependency ratio in households, adding pressure for household income and increasing women's unpaid labor to care for children and elderly.¹⁸ Likewise, in cases where male heads of household have migrated, women are left with more responsibility, both in rice production and other income generation.¹⁹

Marginalized Groups

Khmer is the largest ethnic minority community in the Mekong Delta. Overall, gender inequality is more pronounced in ethnic minority groups than in the majority Kinh ethnic group.²⁰ However, one study conducted in 2013 found that gender equality was quite good among Khmer communities in the Mekong Delta: women contributed over 50 percent of household income, had more access to education opportunities than men, and were equally involved in resource management.²¹ This reconfirms that gender norms can vary over time, can be based on geography and socioeconomic status, among other factors, and must be studied in consultation with the specific groups in question to ensure the most accurate portrayal of gender norms and gaps.

Discrimination against persons with disabilities is a serious barrier to their participation in Vietnamese society, including access to education and jobs (see access section below). 75 percent of Vietnamese persons with disabilities live in rural areas, but there is limited research available on the roles they play within agricultural production in the Mekong Delta.²² Nationally,

¹² International Monetary Fund. 2018.

¹³ McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

¹⁴ Tran et al. 2021.

¹⁵ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

¹⁶ Tran et al. 2021.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ N.M, Quang. 2022.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ UN Women. 2017.

²¹ Hong and Nguyen. 2013.

²² USAID. 2021.

almost ten percent of persons with disabilities are unemployed, whereas unemployment rates are less than five percent among persons without disabilities.²³

Patterns of Power and Decision Making

Cultural norms greatly shape the level of influence and involvement that men and women have in decision-making both outside of and within the household. Due to patriarchal cultural norms, women in Vietnam are traditionally excluded from community decision making and political activities.²⁴ Additionally, women's responsibilities for household tasks limit their time and availability to participate in activities outside the home, including politics, community associations, and other avenues for group decision making.²⁵ However, gendered responsibilities do afford women greater decision making power within the household.

Public Sphere

From the national to the commune level, women are underrepresented in politics and community-based groups in Vietnam and thus have unequal opportunities to influence decision making across sectors, including agriculture and climate change. In 2016, females made up less than 30 percent of all government officials working at both the provincial and commune levels, and most served in supportive roles, such as financial officer, rather than in positions of authority.²⁶ The Women's Union is an active avenue for women to engage in politics at the local, provincial, and national levels - however, the institution's influence is constrained by lack of resources and understaffing, and by the limited way it is integrated into the rest of the political system (see the section on laws and policies below).^{27,28} This trend of women's low participation also carries over into other avenues for community-based decision-making, such as business associations, agricultural groups, and development projects. According to one study, only 2.5 percent of women are members of a trade or business association²⁹ and women's leadership within agricultural cooperatives is also reportedly low, at 23 percent.³⁰ In addition to cultural norms that promote men as natural leaders, women also face other barriers to participation, including lack of time and access to information about these initiatives (see sections on gender roles and access to resources below).

Women who do participate in community-based groups typically hold less power and influence than male peers. In mixed-gender groups, men tend to dominate discussions at meetings. In one study of an agricultural training program in Bac Lieu Province, women reported feeling shy to express their opinions and unmotivated to attend mixed group meetings.³¹ Additionally, many development projects invite women to meetings but do nothing to redistribute power between men and women or increase women's influence on decision-making processes; their participation is prioritized as a part of consulting vulnerable groups, without being given influencing power in the design or management of the initiative.^{32,33}

Household-level Decision Making

Although cultural norms suggest men as the default 'head of household' to make larger decisions, women do participate jointly or take full responsibility for many agricultural and household decisions, following gendered division of labor (see section on roles and responsibilities below). **Women**

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Social Impact. 2019.

²⁵ Pham et al. 2016.

²⁶ UN Women. 2017.

²⁷ Hoang. 2020.

²⁸ Pistor et al. 2012.

²⁹ Vermeltfoot. 2018.

³⁰ UN Women. 2017.

³¹ Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2.

³² Pham TT et al. 2016.

³³ UN Women. 2017.

alone make decisions on small livestock and day-to-day household management (spending on food, clothing, and education).³⁴ Decisions related to large assets, such as land, are mostly handled by men,³⁵ however, several studies in the Mekong Delta found that decisions around high-cost investments and disposing of assets were jointly decided by husband and wife.^{36,37}

Several studies in the Delta also found that **women's participation in decision-making on rice production is generally low** and concentrated in the topics of crop selection and postharvest, and that men make more decisions on farm inputs and equipment.^{38,39} It is important to note that decision-making on farm-related matters will also differ from household to household depending on a husband's short-term or long-term absence and the woman's level of experience, knowledge, and access to agricultural extension services and inputs.⁴⁰ One study in the Delta found that lack of knowledge is a key barrier preventing women from weighing in on certain decisions in rice production and that access to training empowered women to more actively participate in these decisions within their household.⁴¹

Climate Adaptation

Men and women apply different strategies to cope with the effects of climate change and adapt their agricultural practices in line with their gendered roles within the household (see roles and responsibilities section below). Two studies conducted in the Delta found that women (and female heads of household) are more likely to use savings or loans, employ expenditure saving strategies, sell livestock, raise their own vegetables or seek government aid in times of stress, while men (and male heads of household) are more likely to dispose of assets or do nothing.^{42,43} Among rice farmers in the Delta, men are more likely to use fertilizers or pesticides, adjust water management, leave the field fallow, change cropping patterns, or change from crop to livestock, while women tend to store more seeds for the next season or use higher seed rates.^{44, 45}

When it comes to the adoption of CSA techniques, however, there are fewer differences in how men and women approach the decision. CSA technology has a low to medium adoption rate among all farmers in the Mekong Delta, regardless of gender, due to low availability of required inputs, high costs of installation, financial constraints, limited access to tailored information, and limited guidance and support for CSA adoption from the district and provincial government.⁴⁶ Two studies did find that men were either more likely to use or more interested in CSA practices and climate adaptation strategies, which researchers attributed to women's lack of awareness of the benefits of these technologies and a perception that the strategies required high input costs.^{47, 48} **Women tend to prefer CSA techniques that are more cost-saving and are most concerned about employing strategies that have costly inputs or require specialized skills training.**⁴⁹

³⁴ Tran et al. 2021.

³⁵ International Center for Research on Women. 2015.

³⁶ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

³⁷ Tran et al. 2021.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

⁴⁰ Duyen et al. 2019. Chapter 7.

⁴¹ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

⁴² McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

⁴³ Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2.

⁴⁴ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

⁴⁵ McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

⁴⁶ Tran et al. 2021.

⁴⁷ McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

⁴⁸ Duyen et al. 2019. Chapter 7.

⁴⁹ Tran et al. 2021.

Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices

The prevailing gender norms of Vietnam - female deference to male perspectives and preferences, and a focus on ensuring family stability and happiness - and women's underrepresentation in government shape the development of laws and policies at different levels of society. Lacking sufficient input from Vietnamese women and marginalized groups, **the legal and policy framework across different sectors does not adequately address their unique needs and perspectives**, including in agriculture and the environment.

Institutional Arrangements and Legal Frameworks

Several entities across the Vietnamese government are tasked with promoting gender equality in law and policy. The Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) is the main government agency in charge of the issue, with input from other central entities.⁵⁰ These actors have counterparts at the provincial level that are able to initiate policy processes on gender matters within their boundaries. In addition, the Vietnamese Women's Union is a socio-political organization established to represent women and promote equality, though its ability to directly shape law and policy development is limited. Central government maintains a range of policy frameworks on gender matters, from political engagement to social and economic development of women. These institutional arrangements have produced **several policies advancing gender equality and ethnic minority development in Vietnam** on a range of issues, including land ownership, property and inheritance, political representation, and women's socio-economic advancement.⁵¹ Indeed, these laws are generally in line with international best practice and have budget allocations.⁵² Vietnam has also ratified and signed all international conventions on advancing gender equality.⁵³

However, **gender and minority issues tend to be poorly mainstreamed in sectors that are considered 'ungendered' or unconnected to minority issues specifically, beyond references to equality and women's advancement.**⁵⁴ The Law on Promulgation of Legal Docs states that gender integration is a principle of formulating new laws, but Article 59 states gender mainstreaming is only required if the laws have regulations related to gender equality issues.⁵⁵ As women are also much less likely to participate in the highest levels of governance, they are unable to shape policies to ensure they address their specific needs.⁵⁶ Furthermore, analysis suggests that state organizations charged with advancing gender equity, such as the Women's Union, often uphold traditional gender norms, counteracting progress on these issues.⁵⁷

As a result, despite being a formal priority for decades, **gender equality policies in Vietnam often fail to achieve their goals.** While authorities are encouraged to take gender and inclusion issues into consideration, they receive limited guidance or incentive to do so, and there are few mechanisms in place to ensure implementation. Policy intended to advance gender equality or address gender differentiated issues often lack effective guidelines or targets.⁵⁸ Critically, legal frameworks are insufficient to address critical issues without effective implementation.⁵⁹ As such, **while explicit gender bias is typically not found in Vietnamese law and policy, blindness to difference may result in important consequences for women and minorities and reinforce male-dominated cultural norms.**

⁵⁰ ISPONRE. 2021.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Munro. 2012.

⁵³ USAID/Vietnam. 2022.

⁵⁴ ISPONRE. 2021.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ USAID/Vietnam. 2021.

⁵⁷ Schuler et al. 2006.

⁵⁸ Pham, T. T. 2016.

⁵⁹ Hill et al. 2017.

Policies in agriculture, the environment, and climate change generally reflect these issues. There are a number of positive legal and policy frameworks advancing women and ethnic minority equality and development in these areas. For example, the Law on Environmental Protection promotes gender equality, as do several relevant government policies, including the MARD 2016 Action Plan on Climate Change and the National Strategy on Climate Change for 2050.⁶⁰ The 2001 Land Law allows women to have their name listed on titles, with equal ownership rights to their husbands. Government policy on access to credit in rural areas is generally favorable, with women accessing finance through the Vietnam Bank for Social Policies, the Women's Union and the Youth Union.⁶¹ The Government of Vietnam (GVN) has also adopted National Target Programs on Sustainable Poverty Reduction and on Socio-Economic Development in Ethnic Minority Areas, both of which are intended to support marginalized groups through economic opportunity, infrastructure development, education capacity strengthening, and empowerment initiatives.

However, **prevailing biases and a general lack of guidelines or incentives to implement these policies at the local level often means that these initiatives fall short.**⁶² Government departments, including in MARD and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), generally do not have significant training on inclusion issues, and mainstreaming suffers as a result.⁶³ For instance, the MARD 2016 Action Plan and the accompanying Decision 819 do require gender integration and women's participation, but they do not include a specific gender component for any key task focusing on technical issues in the sector.⁶⁴ The degree of mainstreaming across provinces also varies; one study found that it was not applied consistently or effectively across five provinces in the Delta.⁶⁵ In Ben Tre province, for example, the local government recognized the need for women's empowerment in the context of climate adaptation, but the risk dynamics are not fully recognized in the province's disaster risk reduction and climate change action plans.⁶⁶ Furthermore, at both central and local levels of government, inclusion targets lack clear measures of success, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) capacity is often weak.⁶⁷ Departments do not collect sufficient data on differential impacts, making it difficult to respond to challenges.

The lack of clear protections or substantive considerations, specifically for women and minorities in sector laws and policies, has the practical result of men receiving greater benefits. For example, as policy makes no special effort to engage women in agricultural capacity building, men particularly benefit from mechanization and technology transfers, as their roles in agriculture are better able to make such a transition.⁶⁸ Men are also better able to engage with agricultural extension services, with women more excluded from training and support.⁶⁹ By contrast, women's roles in agriculture, largely confined to planting, maintaining and harvesting in the fields, may expose them to harsher work environments (see the following section). While the Land Law does allow joint land titling, in practice, many households only use the husband's name as the administrative procedures are simpler.⁷⁰ Despite favorable formal credit policies, women also face

⁶⁰ Vermeltfoot, Resy. 2018.

⁶¹ UN Women. 2017.

⁶² Munro. 2012.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ ISPONRE. 2021.

⁶⁵ Pistor et al. 2012.

⁶⁶ N.M, Quang. 2022.

⁶⁷ Pham, T.T. et al. 2016.

⁶⁸ UN Women. 2017.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2.

issues with having the collateral required for accessing loans, securing a viable divorce settlement, and claiming rights to land when widowed.⁷¹

Gender Roles, Responsibilities, and Time Use

Traditional men's and women's roles are changing under an era of rapid economic transformation in Vietnam, but cultural norms continue to heavily gender the responsibilities men and women have, both in livelihood activities and within the household.

Rice Farming

Men and women are both involved in rice production in Vietnam, but with differing contributions throughout the country. In the Mekong Delta, there is less out-migration of men than other regions, therefore, men do the majority of labor in rice production.⁷² However, the generalization that men do most of the rice farming in the region underestimates the labor contributions of women, who do play some part in all phases of production, up to nearly equal levels as men in some districts.^{73,74}

Labor roles within rice production are often gender-sequential, with different tasks assigned to either men or women.⁷⁵ The division of labor is often based on the gendered assumption that men are physically stronger than women. Men are responsible for the tasks requiring heavy labor or specific technical skills, including use of machinery for preparing the land, managing irrigation, and applying pesticides; their involvement is more concentrated in preparation, crop care, and harvesting phases. Alternatively, women are responsible for tasks that do not require physical strength or specialized technical skill, including transplanting, weeding, and seed cleaning, selection, and storage; their involvement is highest in crop establishment and post-harvest phases.^{76.}

77

While roles are fairly uniform across the region, **the division of labor in rice production can vary from household to household based on the demographic makeup of the household, the type of production system, challenges encountered, and degree of mechanization used.** If there are male family members available, women's time spent in rice production tends to be lower. On the other hand, women from smaller or female-headed households often perform similar roles to men, particularly if they are economically unable to hire additional labor.^{78, 79} Irrigated rice cultivation requires more heavy labor to set up and operate the irrigation system and therefore tends to involve more labor from men, while rain-fed cultivation retains more of women's involvement in traditional tasks.^{80,81} Men's role is also higher when responding to extreme weather events, such as floods, which require more heavy labor for replanting and preparing fields.^{82,83} Finally, as households introduce more machinery into production, women's labor participation declines. Mechanization in rice production is particularly prevalent in the Mekong Delta, compared to other regions, due to the larger farm sizes and favorable conditions.⁸⁴ As men take on more roles, women become increasingly active in alternative livelihoods, such as livestock or non-rice crops.

71 UN Women. 2016.

72 Tran et al. 2021.

73 McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

74 Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2.

75 Pistor et al. 2012.

76 McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

77 Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2.

78 Ibid.

79 McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

80 Ibid.

81 Duyen et al. 2019. Chapter 7.

82 Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2

83 Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

84 Tran et al. 2021.

Other Rural Livelihoods

Both men and women contribute to a household's income outside of rice farming, however the type of livelihood activities done by each are heavily gendered. Shrimp farming involves mostly male labor, with the exception of various duties women may hold at shrimp processing facilities.⁸⁵ Mixed shrimp and rice cultivation is becoming more common for households in the region, but there is limited literature available on how gender impacts the division of labor for these activities. The most common non-rice livelihood activities for women in the Mekong Delta are raising small livestock and cultivating upland crops, like vegetables, while men are more likely to engage in aquaculture, rental of machines, large animal husbandry, or land rental.⁸⁶ If a household is landless or has limited agricultural land, it is much more common for women to take seasonal agricultural jobs or work off-farm in beauty salons, clothing factories, or as domestic helpers.⁸⁷

Household Responsibilities and Time Use

Cultural norms dictate that women are responsible for managing the household - including chores like cooking and cleaning - and taking care of children and elderly. This norm is pervasive across the country and impacts the workload of all women, regardless of education level, ethnicity, age, location (rural/urban), marital or childbearing status.^{88,89} In rural areas, women have additional responsibilities for food production (vegetable gardens), collecting fuel for cooking, and securing water for domestic uses.⁹⁰ These household responsibilities come in addition to other forms of income generation (whether on one's own farm or outside the home). The double burden of paid and unpaid labor means women have significantly less time than men to spend outside the home.⁹¹ This affects women's ability to participate in a wide range of activities, including agricultural extension; a heavy workload is consistently identified as a top barrier for women to participate in agricultural training.⁹²

Access To and Control Over Assets and Resources

An individual's ability to access and have control over assets and resources is influenced by cultural norms, legal policies and regulations, intra-household dynamics, and socioeconomic status. In the Mekong Delta, women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities have unequal access to a range of critical resources, including formal education, agricultural extension services, and land ownership.

Education

A wide range of studies have found that **women farmers in the Mekong Delta have lower education levels than men.** While Vietnam has made substantial progress towards educational equity in recent decades, there is still a large gap among older populations, such as female farmers (a relic of when girls were more likely to drop out of school much earlier than boys). Additionally, **ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities of any age are much less likely to have equal access to education.** One-fifth of ethnic minority girls have never attended school and lag behind Kinh girls' enrolment in secondary school by ten percent⁹³ and in Vietnam, 20 percent of persons with disabilities have not attended school compared to only five percent of persons without disabilities.⁹⁴ The discrepancy in education access is most acute when looking at literacy rates. Among Kinh majority, men and women over the age of 15 have similar, high rates of literacy (98

⁸⁵ IFAD. 2014.

⁸⁶ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

⁸⁷ Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2.

⁸⁸ ActionAid International. 2016.

⁸⁹ Pistor et al. 2012.

⁹⁰ Tran et al. 2021.

⁹¹ Neefjes. 2009.

⁹² Verzosa et al. 2021.

⁹³ IFAD. 2014.

⁹⁴ USAID. 2021.

percent and 95.6 percent, respectively), however, the literacy rate falls to 86.3 percent among ethnic minority men and 73.4 percent of ethnic minority women,⁹⁵ and 76 percent among persons with disabilities.⁹⁶ Lower levels of education also affect financial literacy. A study in Ben Tre Province found that women's knowledge of budgeting, financial management, and investing was low, which the study notes is a risk factor in climate vulnerability.⁹⁷

Access to Agricultural Information

Although extension workers in the region are taking more conscious efforts to invite women,⁹⁸ there is still a **large gap between men and women's access to agricultural training and services in the Mekong Delta**. In one study, 87 percent of female farmers did not attend any agriculture-related training.⁹⁹ Another study found that 60 percent of male-headed households attended agricultural training, compared to 35 percent of female-headed households, and women participants accounted for only 20 percent of total attendance.¹⁰⁰

Reasons for this differential access are wide-ranging. First, there is structural exclusion. Local governments often do not consider women as specific recipients of agricultural extension training, but instead gear training toward male farmers, leaving women without a formal invitation and without incentive to attend, given that their unique roles along the value chain are not covered in the training.^{101,102} Second, there are cultural barriers that prevent women from attending, including feeling intimidated by the presence of men in meetings (see Power and Decision-Making section above) and not having time to attend, given household responsibilities (see Roles and Responsibilities section above). While mobility is not typically a primary barrier for women to access training, transportation is a significant obstacle for persons with disabilities who often have difficulties using a motorbike unassisted.¹⁰³ Education gaps and training approaches may also partly explain this phenomenon, as one study found that women reported agricultural training too complicated or overly lengthy, with some finding the content too difficult to comprehend in a short period of time.¹⁰⁴

Since women farmers have fewer opportunities to participate in training workshops, they must find other ways to gain knowledge and typically have less overall access to agricultural information than men. Women mostly learn about new technologies or the application of new techniques through hands-on experiences and good examples from their villages.¹⁰⁵ Women may also obtain farm-related information from their social networks, relatives, other women in the village, and their husbands, although some studies have found that men do not always share the information they learn with their wives.^{106,107} In the Mekong Delta, men and women do have equal access to weather information, likely due to the public dissemination method (announced over loudspeaker in the village).^{108,109}

⁹⁵ Government of Vietnam. 2020.

⁹⁶ USAID. 2021.

⁹⁷ N.M, Quang. 2022.

⁹⁸ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2.

¹⁰¹ McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

¹⁰² Duyen et al. 2019. Chapter 7.

¹⁰³ USAID. 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Tho et al. 2019. Chapter 9.

¹⁰⁵ UN Women. 2017.

¹⁰⁶ McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁷ Phan P et al. 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

¹⁰⁹ McKinley et al. 2019. Chapter 3.

Assets

Gender norms greatly influence access to and control over assets. **In Vietnamese culture, it is common for men to own all large assets, including house and land. Control of other, smaller assets within a household are based on gender roles.** Women own small livestock and other basic household commodities, while men are more likely to own agricultural equipment such as water pumps (although couples do sometimes have joint ownership).¹¹⁰ This gendered expectation about who controls assets often prevents women from having full or joint ownership of these productive resources, despite equal rights under the law (see Cultural Norms and Laws and Policies sections above). For example, in Long An province, parents give more land to boys than girls when dividing up the family assets.¹¹¹ Likewise, cultural norms make it difficult for women to secure land rights in a divorce settlement or claim rights to land when widowed.¹¹² As a result, although women make up 60 percent of the agricultural labor force in Vietnam, only 9 percent are farm owners.¹¹³

Land is a critical asset for individuals and households; it influences access to financial services and is an important indicator of economic well being. **If women do not have their names on a household's land ownership certificate, they are unable to access credit from formal sources, as most farmers use land as the main collateral to secure loans.**¹¹⁴ Thus women most often access credit through the Women's Union social fund or other informal savings credit groups, typically for the purposes of raising livestock.¹¹⁵ Lack of land ownership is also closely associated with higher rates of poverty and makes it more difficult for households to diversify their income sources, particularly if they also have low education levels or limited access to training for technical skills.¹¹⁶ In the Mekong Delta, female-headed households and Khmer communities are more likely to be landless and are among the most economically vulnerable groups.¹¹⁷ Half of the Khmer households participating in one study had no agricultural land,¹¹⁸ while another study found that the highest percentage of poor households in the Mekong Delta was in the two provinces where female-headed households made up nearly one-fourth and one-third of the poor households, respectively.¹¹⁹

CONCLUSIONS

The unique roles, knowledge, and opportunities afforded to men, women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities in the Mekong Delta mean that the **Mekong CRA Activity's interventions will have differential impacts across these groups.** If not intentionally addressed in the Activity's design, the gender gaps and inequalities discussed above will affect USAID's ability to achieve the Activity's objectives across all populations. Likewise, USAID also has an opportunity to tailor the Activity's interventions to be not only responsive to gender differences, but also transformative: using the implementation of the Activity to actively promote gender equality and inclusion of all people. This section will explore the specific consequences of the gender gaps and inequalities in the Mekong Delta for the Mekong CRA Activity and its four mutually reinforcing approaches.

¹¹⁰ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

¹¹¹ International Center for Research on Women. 2015.

¹¹² UN Women. 2017.

¹¹³ ISPONRE. 2021.

¹¹⁴ Dasgupta. 2019. Chapter 2.

¹¹⁵ IFAD. 2014.

¹¹⁶ Tung, D. T. 2018.

¹¹⁷ IFAD. 2014.

¹¹⁸ Tung, D. T. 2018.

¹¹⁹ Pistor et al. 2012.

Approach I: Expand low methane emission agricultural development

Under Approach I, the Activity will assist MARD and provincial governments to develop and implement agricultural extension aimed at promoting new practices for rice and livestock production and building the capacity of farmers to implement these techniques. The Activity will also assess potential for carbon financing to fund greenhouse gas emissions reduction activities.

Capacity Development

Encouraging participation: Women's responsibility for housework and caregiving will impact the time they have available to participate in any project intervention, including training. Ensuring women and other traditionally excluded groups are able to participate in Activity interventions is a critical first step to effective and equitable programming. Yet even if women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities participate, the existing education gaps - whether lower education levels, lower literacy, or less experience learning in traditional training environments - may make it difficult for these groups to absorb the relevant information in an actionable way.¹²⁰ Additionally, application rates for new CSA techniques are often low among all farmers, even after receiving training. In this context, it will be important for the Mekong CRA Activity to think critically about how gender dynamics affect participation, what knowledge is needed, and barriers to adopting new agricultural practices.

Ability to participate: Women's busy workload with paid and unpaid work can make it challenging for them to participate in training, meetings, or other development activities. Other projects in the Mekong Delta have found it helpful to schedule trainings or meetings during late morning or early afternoon to best fit women's household schedules. However, adjusting the timing of a training session does not guarantee that women will have the time or feel comfortable to participate. Activities take time that would otherwise be spent on household tasks or livelihood activities. The increased time burden is a common complaint women have about their experience with other CSA development programs.¹²¹ This factor needs to be considered in the design of the Activity and, where possible, the Activity should find ways to reduce women's time burden through gained efficiencies in agricultural practices or by encouraging more participation of men and boys for household tasks traditionally done by women. Women also may not feel comfortable attending capacity development activities, given their lack of experience participating in training and cultural norms that suggest men are more appropriate to engage in activities outside the home. This can be mitigated by intentionally designing activities that target women's specific roles in agriculture, offering learning opportunities outside of the classroom (e.g., demonstration trials), and providing women's only spaces (including female trainers). Persons with disabilities, regardless of gender, also face cultural and physical barriers to participation, which can be mitigated with accommodations, such as targeted invitations, less emphasis on written materials, smaller learning groups, and access to transportation.

Information needs: Farmers are more likely to apply knowledge learned if it is directly related to their roles in production. In the case of livestock, a women-focused capacity development approach may be appropriate as they tend to control animal husbandry activities. The heavily gendered roles in rice production should be taken into account when promoting new practices. Traditional extension has focused on male-dominated aspects of rice production and opportunities for mechanization, which fall under male responsibilities and often require access to credit services - both of which exclude women and put female-headed households at a disadvantage.^{122, 123} By more intentionally targeting capacity development to women's roles in rice production and less machinery-

¹²⁰ FAO and CARE. 2019.

¹²¹ Verzosa et al. 2021.

¹²² UN Women. 2016.

¹²³ Duyen et al. 2019. Chapter 7.

heavy techniques, women and female-headed households can also access new practices that may increase agricultural yields, which would benefit households and communities, and empower women.

Barriers to adopting new practices: While low adoption of CSA techniques is not specifically gendered, the reasons why farmers are hesitant to put these new practices to use are related to gender inequalities and therefore, the solutions should also be gender sensitive. Farmers hesitate to adopt new agricultural practices due to low availability of inputs, financial constraints, limited access to information, and limited guidance from local governments. Men receive many of these supporting resources through existing agricultural extension, however, women and other vulnerable groups have less access. Women may also be hindered from adopting new practices due to a lack of involvement in agriculture or business associations (stemming from cultural norms and lack of time to engage outside the household). Having a network of peers engaged in similar activities can be an important avenue for sharing new ideas and offering resources and support needed to put those ideas into practice. Therefore, it is critical for the Mekong CRA Activity to promote women's access to inputs, credit, tailored information, and a full range of agriculture-related guidance and support.

Carbon Financing

Access to financial services: Women, female-headed households, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities all face barriers to accessing traditional financial services, including lack of land ownership (to use as collateral). Any assessment of the potential for new avenues of financing must consider options for accessing credit that are available for anyone, regardless of land ownership.

Household decision-making and financial management: Although women in the Delta are less involved than men on decisions related to rice production, this is partially due to their limited access to technical information. Increasing women's access to training on activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions could increase their involvement in agricultural decision-making.¹²⁴ Women's role as primary manager of household finances should also be considered in any exploration of agricultural financing. Due to gender norms and roles, women are often more cost-conscious and may forgo adoption of new practices due to cost or lack of access to financing. Increasing their skills and knowledge related to financial management could empower women to more effectively manage decisions around financial services, including any new carbon financing funds.

Approach 2: Build climate resilience for vulnerable communities

To build climate resilience, the Activity must first assess which groups in the Delta are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including sea level rise, floods, drought, and salinity intrusion. Once identified, the Activity will work with MARD to develop interventions tailored to their needs, such as diversification of livelihoods and promotion of risk reduction practices.

Understanding Vulnerability to Climate Change

Adaptive capacity: Poverty levels affect the ability of households to adapt to climate change. For example poorer households may lack the education, skills, knowledge, and capital needed access non-farm employment or invest in new livelihoods with less exposure to climate change (eg. opening a small retail shop).¹²⁵ Some of the highest levels of vulnerability and low adaptive capacity in the Mekong Delta are amongst the landless, who are predominantly Khmer or female-headed households. Additionally, rural women have less adaptive capacity than men. Women's livelihoods and roles within the household make them highly dependent on natural resources and therefore more vulnerable to adverse effects of climate change. Likewise, women and ethnic minorities are also more vulnerable than men due to limited asset ownership, reduced access to capital/credit and

¹²⁴ Chi et al. 2019. Chapter 11.

¹²⁵ IUCN. 2022.

agricultural inputs, limited access to information, lower awareness of climate adaptive strategies, less diverse income sources, and more reliance on seasonal, unstable, and low-paying jobs.¹²⁶

Diversifying Livelihoods

As the Mekong CRA Activity looks to diversify farming commodities and support youth to pursue non-farming livelihoods and new businesses, it must keep in mind the cultural norms around livelihood activities and varying needs of different demographics.

Expected roles and livelihoods: The roles men and women play in agriculture are heavily gendered; therefore, the Activity should expect that shifting cropping patterns will change the workload of men and women within a household. For example, in aquaculture and mixed rice-shrimp cultivation, men take on the majority of the roles in production, which may lead to a decrease in women's role in agriculture. While this redistribution of responsibility may work well for some, the Activity should consider how different households may experience this shift and prepare to provide other options for women to diversify their livelihoods in-line with the conservation aims of the Activity. For example, vegetable production and handicrafts are alternative livelihoods deemed culturally appropriate for women. Cultural norms also push certain off-farm livelihoods as most appropriate for women and ethnic minorities. These tend to be lower skilled and lower paid than jobs customary for Kinh men. The Activity should consider providing additional educational, economic, and social support to empower and prepare these youth for higher-paid employment.

Access to resources: Traditionally under-resourced groups, such as women and ethnic minorities, will require more support to successfully diversify their livelihoods. For example, when shifting from rice to non-rice foods or handicrafts, women may benefit from the support of a co-operative to reach better markets. Individuals with less formal education (particularly women from ethnic minority groups and persons with disabilities) may require additional, accessible training in literacy, entrepreneurship, or financial management to successfully venture into new businesses. Before beginning any programming, the Activity should consult with a wide range of youth in the Mekong Delta - men and women, Khmer and Kinh - to understand the gender-, ethnic-, and regional-specific barriers they face in pursuing non-farm employment.

Promoting Risk Reduction Practices for Communities

Presence and power in community decision-making: The Mekong CRA Activity will likely work closely with community organizations, local government, and other groups to promote climate risk reduction within communities. These spaces tend to be dominated by men. As noted under Approach I, men are more involved than women in activities outside the home, including participation in community groups, local politics, and other public venues for decision making. This gap is further exacerbated by unequal, gendered power dynamics within these groups that favor men's voice and leadership. Unless the Activity takes intentional action to promote women's meaningful participation, working closely with existing community organizations may mean missing an opportunity to engage and learn from the experiences of women. By convening communities around an issue like climate risk reduction, the Activity has an opportunity to not just encourage women's attendance, but find ways to shift the balance of power and ensure women have roles with influence.

Skills for resilience: Due to cultural norms and gendered roles, women tend to be more responsive to the changing needs of their households. As caregivers and household managers, they have specialized experience and skill sets that could be scaled up to community resilience work if women had the opportunity and enabling conditions to participate in community-level activities and decision-making. The Mekong CRA Activity has an opportunity to embrace women's skills and empower women to have more leadership and access to decision-making spheres, where they could influence communal practice and boost resilience.

¹²⁶ N.M, Quang. 2022.

Approach 3: Promote nature-based solutions

USAID will support local governments to conserve and restore wetlands and mangroves in the Mekong Delta. This work will involve engaging local communities through co-management models and promoting mixed mangrove-shrimp cultivation.

Community Conservation

Livelihood impact: Women's livelihoods and household responsibilities are highly dependent on natural resources, particularly poor or landless women; for example, collecting fuel for cooking and growing vegetables for household consumption. Thus, the Activity should be aware that women are more directly affected by climate change, conservation measures, and privatization of natural resources. This also means women may have specialized knowledge about local natural resources and be more motivated to conserve and protect these habitats based on their experiences. Globally, women are important partners in nature-based solutions. The Activity should consult with women in the Mekong Delta to learn in more detail what their current roles are in relation to the wetlands and mangroves, as well as their concerns and desires for conservation.

Level of influence: As discussed in both Approach 1 and 2, men are traditionally more involved in activities outside of the household, including community associations, and have more leadership and decision-making authority within them. As the Activity looks to involve the community in co-management models, special consideration must be taken to not only get women to participate, but also elevate their influence within the co-management model.

Shifting Cultivation

Expected roles: As discussed in Approach 2, shifting cropping patterns will change the workload of men and women. In the case of mixed mangrove-shrimp cultivation, women are much less involved in shrimp farming than men. The implications of this will be felt within household livelihoods and gender dynamics (see Approach 2) and the Activity must keep these in mind when planning to shift production practices in the pursuit of nature-based solutions for mangrove and wetland restoration.

Ability to take on risk: As discussed in Approach 1, there is risk involved in changing agricultural practices. Poor households, particularly female-headed and ethnic minority households, are more vulnerable to the adverse effects of a disruption to their livelihoods and require more support to access the financing, training, and support needed to successfully navigate the change.

Approach 4: Develop climate resilient and low emission policies

The final approach centers on the development of new policies supporting climate resilience and reducing agricultural emissions in the Mekong Delta. Interventions under this approach are expected to include facilitating multi-stakeholder consultations on policy issues; supporting the drafting of new policies at central and provincial level; and testing new models for production and financing that could be scaled up. Key partners for these efforts would include MARD, MONRE, provincial governments, private sector, cooperatives and other farmer groups, and local organizations.

Supporting Engagement in Policy Making

Accessibility: The additional burdens on women's time, particularly their responsibility over unpaid care work in the home, and cultural biases toward deference to male perspectives on key decisions, mean that women may not be able to fully participate in policy dialogues. Ethnic minority representatives may also face challenges in participating, for example by lacking access to venues for discussion. These groups are also less likely to be aware of policy and dialogue initiatives of interest to them. In addition, lower levels of female and minority representation at all levels of government may mean that policymakers are less receptive to messages on women's empowerment and resilience, or are less attuned to associated challenges. To address these issues, central and local governments should be supported to solicit feedback and perspectives directly from these marginalized communities, aiming to understand their particular concerns and identify solutions. For example, dialogues should be held at times and in venues that are accessible to women and ethnic

minority communities, and accommodations should be made to ensure that persons with disabilities may fully participate rather than simply be present. Engagements could also focus on issues directly affecting marginalized communities, such as land title issuance, access to credit, inclusive capacity development approaches, and facilitating access to markets. Policy discussions could also explore related issues hindering inclusion in CRA, including social protection policies and support schemes during adverse climate events, or access to health care.

Local organizations: Efforts could also be made to work closely with local organizations and stakeholders with a clearer understanding of gender and inclusion issues as they relate to agriculture, especially those that are women or minority-led. Such stakeholders may be able to more effectively represent local perspectives to policymakers. However, other recent research has found that entities outside of the political system generally have very limited ability to influence policymaking at national or local levels, at least through a traditional advocacy-oriented strategy. Importantly, the operating space for non-state actors, including on the environment, is closing recently, with a prominent female activist jailed on tax charges.¹²⁷ Accordingly, engaging local stakeholders with strong, established relationships with senior officials and experience with more discrete approaches to policy engagement will be most likely to succeed in influencing policy at all levels of government. Given that men are more likely to have such access and resources, engaging them as effective change agents on behalf of women and marginalized communities may be an opportunity as well.

Mainstreaming Inclusion into Policy

Training officials: Given USAID's strong connections to MARD, MONRE, and provincial governments, there may be opportunities to strengthen their capacity to mainstream inclusion issues into law and policy on climate resilience. Awareness on inclusion issues, including intersectionality, is low at all levels. Local officials in particular need consistent support on the development and revision of policy, guidelines, and programming to address implementation issues, while guidance could be offered to central authorities to hold provincial actors accountable for effective delivery on inclusion targets. Training could also include a focus on recognizing informal dynamics and cultural biases harming inclusion. Support could also be provided to influential actors in the policy process, such as the Women's Union, to better understand inclusion issues in agriculture and identify effective solutions. USAID may also be able to identify potential inclusion 'champions' at different levels of government and provide them with the resources needed to advance these issues throughout the policy process.

Actionable data: Policymakers also lack robust, actionable data on the differential impacts of existing policies, or to model them for new policies. Similarly, monitoring indicators often do not sufficiently measure progress on inclusion issues, making it difficult to understand how initiatives are impacting particular groups or identify appropriate responses. USAID may be able to provide practical guidance on monitoring for inclusion, such as indicator development and analysis, routine data collection efforts, and support on making use of the findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General

- I. USAID should add a stakeholder validation step in activity design to ensure findings of the gender analysis are validated by the specific communities the Activity will be working with and gather further insight into the most acute priorities of women, ethnic minorities, and youth. For example, the Activity should consult with a variety of youth in implementation districts - men and women, Khmer and Kinh - to understand the gender-, ethnic-, and regional-specific barriers they face in pursuing non-farm employment. Additionally, the

¹²⁷ Humphrey. 2022.

Activity would benefit from additional consultations to better understand gender roles and needs related to mangrove and wetland use, conservation, and restoration.

Approach 1: Expand low emission agriculture

2. USAID should take steps to reduce barriers for women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities to participate in and effectively learn from capacity development activities. This could include scheduling sessions during late morning or early afternoon to best fit women's household schedules, providing targeted invitations for persons with disabilities, designing courses to be comprehensible to people of all literacy levels, including more hand-on activities, providing women's only spaces (including female trainers), and simplifying training sessions and/or breaking the material into shorter modules.
3. USAID should target capacity development opportunities to women's gendered roles in agriculture (while keeping options open to either gender, as some households may have women performing traditionally male roles). Helpful women-specific training topics may include production of high-quality, stress-tolerant rice varieties, rearing small livestock, and any low-input, non-mechanized CSA techniques that can increase agricultural yields or reduce input costs.

Approach 2: Build climate resilience

4. In interventions promoting climate risk reduction practices for communities, USAID should find ways to engage women in roles with agency and influence. The Mekong CRA Activity has an opportunity to learn from women's experience with household management and empower women with more access to decision-making spheres, where they can influence communal practice and boost resilience.
5. USAID should consider providing additional educational, financial, and social support for women and ethnic minorities to successfully diversify their livelihoods. For example, when shifting from rice to non-rice foods or handicrafts, women (particularly Khmer women) will require additional support to access markets, such as capacity development in business/marketing and/or the creation of a co-operative. Lines of credit accessible to those without land ownership will also be an essential avenue of support.
6. USAID should consider providing financial literacy or financial management training for women. Even though it is not a direct outcome for the Activity, it is a critical gap in women's knowledge that is directly related to their roles in the household and agricultural activities. Individuals with less education (particularly Khmer women and persons with disabilities) may also benefit from training in entrepreneurship or financial management to venture into new businesses. Increasing their skills in this area could empower women to more effectively manage decisions around adopting CSA practices and accessing financing services, including any new carbon financing funds.

Approach 3: Promote nature-based solutions

7. USAID should ensure women are enabled to participate in the decision making and monitoring the implementation of the co-management model of mangrove/wetland conservation. Special consideration must be taken to not only get women to participate (through appropriately timed training, quotas, etc.), but also elevate their influence within the initiative's design through assigning formal roles and other strategies relevant to the community's gender dynamics.
8. To reduce harmful, unintended consequences, USAID should consider how men, women, and female-headed households may experience shifts in rice cultivation or agricultural

practices differently and prepare to provide other livelihood options for women whose labor may be displaced by the change.

Approach 4: Develop climate resilience policies

9. USAID should support MARD and provincial governments to solicit feedback and perspectives directly from women. This should include engaging women in settings conducive to meaningful participation (female facilitators, appropriate timing, etc.). Relatedly, USAID should consider strengthening the capacity of women/women's organizations to engage in policy dialogue.
10. USAID should support policymakers and local implementers to mainstream gender issues in policy and programming and, to the extent possible, consider work with officials on addressing identified gender-related policy issues, such as land title issuance, credit access and terms, access to training and technology, access to information, and market access.

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