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Organization of the
United Nations



COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

OF AGRICULTURE AND
THE RURAL SECTOR IN

VIET NAM

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THE RURAL SECTOR IN

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The assessment was conducted under the overall supervision of Jong-Ha Bae and Albert Lieberg, former and current FAO Representative in Viet Nam respectively, the technical supervision of Clara Mi Young Park, Regional Gender Officer for Asia-Pacific, and the coordination of Nguyen Minh Nhat, National Programme Officer, and Minh Huong To, M&E and One UN Specialist and Gender Focal Point, FAO Viet Nam. The initial report was prepared by Pham Thu Hien and Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy and finalized and edited by Christina M. Schiavoni, International Consultant. The assessment benefited from technical editing and comments by Bettina Gatt of FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ARD	agriculture and rural development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEPEW	Centre for Education, Promotion and Empowerment of Women
CFAW	Committee for the Advancement of Women
CGA	Country Gender Assessment
CGA-ARS	Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector
CSAGA	Centre for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender, Family, Women and Adolescents
DARD	Department of Agricultural and Rural Development
DOCST	Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism
DOH	Department of Health
DOLISA	Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FGD	focus group discussion
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	gross domestic product
GE	gender equality
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GNI	gross national income
GSO	General Statistics Office
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INDCs	intended nationally determined contributions
ISDS	Institute for Social Development Studies
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LUC	Land Use Rights Certificate
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MMR	maternal mortality rate
MOCST	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment

NCAFAW	National Committee for the Advancement of Women
NNS	National Nutrition Strategy
NRD	New Rural Development Programme
NSGE	National Strategy on Gender Equality
PCSA	Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs
RWE	rural women's empowerment
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRB	sex ratio at birth
TFR	total fertility rate
U5MR	under-five mortality rate
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VBSP	Viet Nam Bank for Social Policies
VHLSS	Viet Nam Household Living Standard Survey
VND	Viet Nam dong
VUSTA	Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Association
VWU	Vietnamese Women's Union
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

The Country Gender Assessment (CGA) was commissioned by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) from October 2017 to February 2018 as a way to gauge Viet Nam's progress in achieving gender equality in agriculture and the rural sector and as a mechanism to guide FAO's strategic mission in Viet Nam. Its objective is to inform FAO country-level planning and programming in line with national development priorities and FAO's mandate and strategic framework. The assessment is also aimed at facilitating FAO's contribution to the United Nations Country Team report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) with up-to-date and objective information on the situation of rural women in the country.

The methodology of the CGA included a desk review of policies and programmes on agriculture, food and nutrition security and gender equality, a quantitative analysis of national statistics, in-depth interviews with FAO Viet Nam partners and qualitative surveys and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in two provinces (Ninh Thuan and Lao Cai).

Highlights of the analysis include:

1. Viet Nam is a member state to a range of international conventions and demonstrates a strong commitment to responding to its obligations. Over the past few decades, Viet Nam has made significant progress in promoting gender equality in all sectors by endorsement or revision of legal frameworks and policies on gender equality and the advancement of women, most notably the Gender Equality Law and the National Strategy for Gender Equality. Although sound achievements have been made thus far, there still exist gender gaps in policies and in the formulation and implementation of laws. For example, several sectorial and interinstitutional mechanisms on gender equality and women's empowerment exist. These have made notable contributions toward the development of legislation on gender equality and toward related dissemination and awareness raising, from the central level down to the community level, and have served as the primary advocacy tools on gender equality within the state system. However, the multiplicity of institutions with an unclear division of responsibilities negatively impacts policy and programme coherence and coordination and creates inefficiency.
2. Despite these efforts towards gender equality and the advancement of women, Vietnamese society continues to face significant challenges such as violence against women and girls and a sex ratio imbalance at birth. While much progress has been made in eliminating gender-based discrimination via legislation, gaps remain. Though the ratio of women in the labour force is high, they are more engaged in the informal economy and in unpaid family labour and own-account work, which places them in a vulnerable position. In 2016, the proportion of women engaged in unpaid family work was 22.1 percent, almost double that of men, at 10.4 percent. In terms of leadership, women's representation in government bodies is low. Social inequalities are becoming more visible, especially for ethnic minorities and other marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as the rural poor.
3. There have been gradual improvements to Viet Nam's legal and policy system on agricultural, food and nutrition security, such as expansion of the range of beneficiaries, increased benefit levels, more attention to equality in terms of those benefiting from policies, and greater and more diversified resources for policy implementation. A review of policies and programmes on agriculture, food and nutrition security has revealed that, while gender equality is recognized as a principle and strategic direction in some of them, gender is not integrated systematically into all of them. As a result, specific actions for gender mainstreaming in the programmes are not properly addressed. Some policies related to food and nutrition security that target women within their traditional roles tend to reinforce gender stereotypes and biases rather than help to change gender relations.

4. Gender inequalities in agriculture, food and nutrition security are visible in labour and in access to resources (land, finance, technology, training and markets) and agricultural extension services. Women constitute a critical workforce in agricultural production, especially in rural areas, where 63.4 percent of working women are in agriculture compared to 57.5 percent of working men. Traditionally, women are more involved in agriculture as they are burdened with unpaid care work and women's knowledge and skills remain limited when it comes to new technologies. Furthermore, although women are more involved in agriculture, they are also more likely to work on smaller farms and to cultivate subsistence crops.
5. The revised 2013 Land Law stipulates that both a husband's and wife's names are to be included on a Land Use Rights Certificate (LUC). The challenge lies in the implementation process, as the LUC is not well enforced. Rural women have limited access to land due to kinship-based practices of inheritance, such as in patrilineal succession and patrilocal marriage. In regard to land rights, the most vulnerable women were found to be the ones from patrilineal groups and those living in rural and mountainous areas.
6. While the government has taken a variety of steps to promote gender, the most significant efforts to date have been on the Law on Gender Equality. However, gender is still not integrated systematically into the laws and policies related to agriculture, food and nutrition security and related indicators are not sex-disaggregated.
7. Despite the fact that the Vietnamese Government has favourable policies for rural women related to credit access supported by the Viet Nam Bank for Social Policies (VBSP), these programmes provide small loans and tend to be fragmented and poorly coordinated with training and extension programmes. Poor agricultural producers, especially rural women, find it challenging to access formal and more substantial loans from entities. This means that they remain dependent on informal credit networks in rural areas.
8. Agricultural advisory and extension services are delivering knowledge and new production methods to farmers. Such services are also changing outmoded practices of production, improving production skills and providing financial assistance. However, gender difference is observed in access to those services. Women's limited access to rural advisory and agricultural extension services, training and technology transfer is due to various gender-biased patriarchal social norms, resulting in women's lower levels of education, increased time constraints and limited mobility, among other constraints.
9. Viet Nam is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. The country has been identified as one of the five developing coastal countries most seriously affected by climate change. Women's vulnerability to climate change in rural Viet Nam is heightened by their greater concentration in the agricultural sector, particularly in subsistence production, and in the informal economy.
10. In terms of the gender dimensions of food and nutrition security, the assessment also examined gendered aspects of food availability, food accessibility, food utilization and food stability. Factors hindering rural women's effective participation in food production include their burden of unpaid care work, limited opportunities in productive work, unequal access to and control over key resources in agriculture and weaker decision-making power at the household and community levels.
11. Women's access to food is influenced by their limited engagement in formal agricultural labour and by lower wages. Women and children within ethnic minority communities are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to health and nutrition care.
12. The case studies of Ninh Thuan and Lao Cai, which assessed gender mainstreaming in local programmes, indicate the importance of awareness raising in gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels, especially at the local level.

1

INTRODUCTION



1.1 Background and rationale

The Country Gender Assessment of the Agriculture and Rural Sector (CGA-ARS) is required by the corporate Country Programming Framework guidelines¹ and mandated by FAO's Policy on Gender Equality.² There is evidence that gender inequalities contribute to low agricultural productivity and food and nutrition insecurity. Closing the gender gap in access to productive agricultural resources is crucial for achieving FAO's goal of a world free from hunger.

The objective of this assessment is twofold: (1) to inform FAO country-level planning and programming in line with national development priorities on gender disparities in rural Viet Nam; and (2) to facilitate FAO's contribution to the United Nations (UN) Country Team CEDAW report with up-to-date and objective information on the situation of rural women in the country.

This assessment takes into account the relevance of the Country Programming Framework (CPF) for Viet Nam 2017–2021, which identifies four priority areas: (1) increased food security with a focus on alleviation of hunger, malnutrition and food safety concerns; (2) sustainable development of the agriculture sectors (crop production, livestock, fisheries and forestry), contributing to national green growth and other strategies for improved natural resource management and environmental protection; (3) new rural development and sustainable poverty reduction; and (4) enhancing resilience of communities to disasters and threats (FAO, 2017).

1.2 Methodology

The assessment has used a range of methodological approaches of both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Desk review of available studies and documents:

Documents reviewed include: (1) legal and policy documents on gender equality in Viet Nam; (2) laws and policies on agriculture and rural development (ARD) and food and nutrition security; (3) analyses and studies on the situation of gender equality and gender

issues in the ARD sector; and (4) relevant documents and reports of the local governments in the two provinces surveyed. The review helped to provide an overview of the general context and issues related to the gender dimensions of agriculture, food and nutrition security in the country.

Quantitative data was mostly sourced from national representative surveys such as Viet Nam Household Living Standard Surveys (VHLSS), the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and various studies and reports.

The research team also met with selected government agencies involved in agriculture and rural development, including the Department of Cultivation, the Institute for Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. International organizations such as UN Women and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Viet Nam were also consulted for this assessment.

Primary data was collected in Ninh Thuan and Lao Cai provinces, which are target areas of an FAO project for food and nutrition security.³ These two provinces have been heavily affected by natural disasters (floods, droughts) in the past five years, which have rendered the poorer population particularly vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity. In each province, two communes were selected for surveying in consultation with local authorities. At the communal level, focus group discussions with farmers were held, as were meetings with commune leaders and/or elders, agricultural and extension officers, commune health workers, governmental officials responsible for issues related to labour and social affairs and representatives of the Viet Nam Women's Union and Farmers' Union. At the provincial level, meetings were organized with the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Department of Health and the Women's Union.

Discussions were focused on the gender equality situation, on gender issues in agriculture, food and nutrition security, especially in the context of natural disasters and climate change, and on lessons learned in gender mainstreaming in agriculture, food and nutrition security in the two provinces.

¹ See page 49 of the *Guide to the Formulation of the Country Programming Framework*.

² See page 6, *Gender Mainstreaming Minimum Standards of the Policy*.

³ The UN Joint Programme on 'Integrated nutrition and food security strategies for children and vulnerable groups in Viet Nam, implemented by FAO Viet Nam from 2015 to 2017.



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1.3 Organization of the assessment

This report consists of six main chapters. Following the introduction and the methodological section, Chapter 2 introduces the national socio-economic, ARD and human development context. Chapter 3 analyses the policy, legislative and institutional context, mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality

and rural women's empowerment, and gender gaps in ARD policies and strategies. Chapter 4 examines gender inequalities in agriculture, food and nutrition security and is complemented by case studies from Ninh Thuan and Lao Cai provinces elaborated in Chapter 5. The final part provides key conclusions and recommendations for FAO and for the Government of Viet Nam.

2

VIET NAM COUNTRY CONTEXT



2.1 Socio-economic context

Viet Nam has made significant development progress since the launch of its economic reform in 1986 (known as *Doi Moi* reforms), graduating to middle-income status in 2015. Poverty has fallen rapidly over the years. The USD 1.90-a-day poverty rate fell from 50 percent of the population in the early 1990s to 3 percent in 2016 (World Bank and MPI, 2016). The population is better educated, with average years of schooling at 8.2 (UNDP 2018). Progress has been made in all fields of social life, including education and health. Access to basic infrastructure, including electricity, water and modern sanitation, has also improved substantially. Massive restructuring, particularly in public investment, state-owned enterprises and the banking sector, taken place in recent years. There has also been rapid growth in information and communications technology, which is a key instrument for maintaining and boosting the economy's competitiveness.

There are still many challenges, however. Poverty reduction achievements are still fragile. A large part of the population, especially in rural areas and among ethnic minority groups, is at risk of falling back into poverty if proper measures are not put in place. Labour productivity growth has been declining since the end of the 1990s across most industrial subsectors. In agriculture, labour productivity is lower than in most of the region's middle-income countries (Ho Thanh Thuy, 2016).

Agricultural modernization will remain an important driver of growth and poverty reduction in Viet Nam for many years to come, with almost half of the workforce still engaged in agriculture. Viet Nam also faces widened gaps between the rich and poor, with an increase of the Gini coefficient from 0.33 points in 1993 to 0.44 points in 2016 (Ho Thanh Thuy, 2016). The Government of Viet Nam continues to demonstrate its commitment to reform. The ten-year socio-economic development strategy for 2011–2020 emphasizes the need for economic restructuring to ensure environmental sustainability, social justice and macroeconomic stability and to address emerging issues. The strategy identifies three "breakthrough areas": (1) promoting skill development to meet the demands of modern and innovative industries; (2) restructuring of market institutions; and (3) continued development of infrastructure. The Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016–2020,

approved in April 2016, recognizes the delayed implementation of a number of policy priorities and calls for accelerated reform.

2.2 Agriculture and rural development

Agriculture is one of the most important economic sectors in Viet Nam. It contributes 20 percent of total gross domestic product (GDP) and accounts for about 50 percent of the total labour force (GSO, 2014). The agricultural sector has made great strides in the past years and Viet Nam has become a leading global exporter of agricultural products. In the 30 years of the *Doi Moi* policy/economic reforms (1986–2016), Viet Nam's agriculture has achieved rapid and steady growth over an extended period of time, and Viet Nam's agricultural production value has grown at an average rate of 4.06 percent per year (1986–2015) (Pham Thanh Binh, 2016).

The major areas of reform in terms of agricultural development have been: (1) agrarian reforms; (2) a new rural development programme; (3) infrastructure for agricultural production; and (4) agricultural restructuring. Agrarian reforms regarding land users' rights have played an important role in the country's agricultural growth. The New Rural Development Programme, involving investment in infrastructure, sustainable poverty reduction and social services in rural areas, has sparked a widespread movement throughout the country. Infrastructure for agricultural production, including irrigation and dyke systems, continues to be improved in response to climate change. Agricultural restructuring, implemented based on the competitive advantages of each locality and region, has achieved initial success (Pham Thanh Binh, 2017).

The 2013 Land Law was promulgated to promote the development of the land market and maintain land use rights, with land area allocated based on family members per household. These regulations are intended to ensure equal access to land among rural people, but they have resulted in agricultural land being fragmented, with small, scattered pieces of land allocated to families. This hinders long-term investment. Furthermore, the farm size of Vietnamese agricultural households is the smallest in Southeast Asia and in the world, which makes it difficult to mechanize, modernize and develop large-scale production. There is a growing need to generate

Table 1: Population by sex and geography in 2017

	Population	Percentage
Total	93 671.6	
Sex		
Men	46 253.0	49.3
Women	47 418.6	50.7
Areas		
Urban	32 813.4	35.0
Rural	60 858.2	65.0

Source: General Statistics Office: Statistics Book 2017 (GSO, 2017)

employment in rural areas due to population growth. Annually about 1.4–1.6 million people join the labour force, of whom 0.9 million are added to the agricultural sector. This creates a flow of rural-urban migration due to low productivity and low income from agricultural work. Farmers' limited access to agricultural credit, especially to formal banking services in rural areas due to lack of collateral security, is another pressing issue.

2.3 Human development and gender equality

2.3.1 Demographic dynamics

According to current estimates, the population of Viet Nam is around 93 million people with a population growth rate of 0.93 percent and the urban population accounting for 34.9 percent of total population (GSO, 2017).

The imbalanced sex ratio at birth (SRB) is a considerable demographic challenge and policy issue in Viet Nam. The SRB rose from an estimated 106 male births per 100 female births in the year 2000 to 110.5 in 2009 and 112.6 in 2013. The imbalanced

SRB has increased in both rural and urban areas, but the rise has been most dramatic in urban areas. The Red River Delta has recorded the most imbalanced SRB in the country (122.4 in 2011) (UNFPA 2014). The reasons are various, including traditional preference for sons and the consequent abortion of female foetuses (GSO, 2011). Furthermore, most families in Viet Nam adhere to the one or two child family norm, so they find it important to have at least one boy. Currently Viet Nam is implementing a number of strategies to address these issues such as the National Strategy on Population and Reproductive Health and the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011–2020.⁴

Fertility in Viet Nam has declined over recent decades and has been sustained slightly below the replacement level. The total fertility rate (TFR) in 2014 was 2.09. The TFR in rural areas also sharply declined from 4.26 children per woman in 1989 to 2.03 in 2009, with a slight increase to 2.21 in 2014. Women are getting married later and having fewer children. The number of provinces and cities with a TFR below 1.8 increased from 5 in 1999 to 8 in 2009 and 11 in 2014. The age-specific fertility rate of women

⁴The Government Decision 114/2006/NĐ-CP on Regulation of Administrative Sanctions on Population and Children lists detailed penalties for acts of sex selection. The Government Decision 55/2009/NĐ-CP on Gender Equality defines fines from Viet Nam dong three to five million for the act of inciting another person to abort a foetus because of its sex. The National Strategy on Population and Reproductive Health aims to substantially reduce the SRB imbalance, returning the ratio to the normal level of 105–106 male births per 100 female births by the year 2025.



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between 15 and 19 years increased from 23.9 in 2009 to 30.0 in 2014 (UNFPA, 2014b). Teenage fertility rates among ethnic minority groups remain high due to child marriage (UN 2016).

The country has made exceptional advances in population life expectancy, which rose to 73.5 years (70.9 for men and 76.2 for women) in 2017 from 73 years (70.6 for men and 76.0 for women) in 2014 (GSO 2014; GSO 2017). Viet Nam's rapid population ageing continues and is expected to accelerate in the future. While in the 1990s, seniors (aged 60 years and above) made up 7.2 percent of the population, they accounted for 10 percent in 2011, which marked the country's entrance into its so-called "ageing phase." It is projected that by 2038, seniors will comprise 20 percent of the total population – an increase three times the size of the change over the previous 24 years (UNFPA, 2015).

2.3.2 Gender-sensitive measurement of human development

With a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.694, Viet Nam ranked 116 out of 189 countries in 2017 (UNDP, 2018). The HDI, which measures progress in the areas of standard of living, health and education, has been on a positive trend since 1990 when it was 0.477. As of 2018, progress has been as follows: life expectancy at birth is 73.5 years, mean years of schooling is 8.2 years and gross national income (GNI) per capita is USD 5 859 at purchasing power parity (PPP).

The **Gender Development Index (GDI)** reflects gender inequalities in the same three dimensions of the HDI. The GDI was calculated for 189 countries in the 2017 Human Development Report (HDR) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The female HDI value for Viet Nam is 0.696 compared with 0.692 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 1.05, which places the country into Group 1.⁵

In 2017, the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked Viet Nam 69 out of 144 countries in terms of overall performance in closing the gender gap, with a score

of 0.698. This ranking contained separate scales for economic participation and opportunity (rank 33), educational attainment (rank 97), health and survival (rank 138), and political empowerment (rank 97) (WEF, 2017). The poor ranking on health and survival is largely due to the very high ratio of male to female births in Viet Nam.

The **Gender Inequality Index (GII)** introduced in the UNDP HDR reflects three dimensions of gender inequality: reproductive health,⁶ empowerment⁷ and economic activity.⁸ According to the 2018 UNDP HDR, Viet Nam has a GII value of 0.304 (with a lower value reflecting lower gender inequality), ranking it 67th out of 189 countries in the 2017.

2.3.3 Employment and access to decent work

Labour force participation rates are relatively high for both men and women in Viet Nam. In 2014 the national participation rate was 77.7 percent, with 82.5 percent for men and 73.3 percent for women (UN, 2016). However, women are highly concentrated in informal employment, which is not covered by the provisions of the Labour Code, as illustrated below. A clear gender division is evident in terms of the sectors, in addition to the vertical gender segregation of labour in the sectors in which both women and men are typically employed. For instance, a very small share of women are employed in the transportation and storage (9.8 percent), construction (9.8 percent) and energy (16.1 percent) sectors. Sectors where women workers predominate include hired domestic help (93.0 percent), education and training (71.1 percent) and hotels and restaurants (69.6 percent) (UN Women, 2015).

By 2014, the employment-to-population ratio reached 76.1 percent, the highest rate in recent decades. This high ratio reflects the potentially strong capacity of the economy to provide employment for workers. The employment to population ratio is higher for men than women, with the difference hovering at around 9–10 percent points (Government of Viet Nam, 2015).

⁵ As identified by UNDP, group 1 comprises countries with high equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of less than 2.5 percent).

⁶ Measured by maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates.

⁷ Measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women, and attainment in secondary and higher education.

⁸ Measured by the labour market participation rate for women and men.

Women are predominantly working in vulnerable employment.⁹ In 2016, the proportion of women doing unpaid family work was 22.1 percent (compared to 10.4 percent for men) and the proportion of women own-account workers was 40.3 percent (with men at 39.5 percent), while women paid workers were at 35.7 percent (and men at 46.3 percent) and women business owners at 1.9 percent (and men at 3.8 percent). Unpaid care and domestic work have an opportunity cost, which is key in discussions on women's empowerment. The burden of unpaid care work has adverse impacts on women's employment outside the home, as well as on women's access to training and education, participation in social life, etc. Housework remains the primary responsibility of Vietnamese women, with little difference between women of different educational levels and marital status (Action Aid, 2016). On average, women spend 314 minutes per day doing unpaid care and domestic work as opposed to 190 minutes per day spent by men. In 2015, more than 20 percent of women did not do paid work because of the burden of care work and domestic work, compared to 2 percent of men (ISDS, 2015). In 2015, it was estimated that unpaid care work contributed to over 20 percent of the total GDP of Viet Nam (Action Aid, 2016).

2.3.4 Literacy, education and vocational training

The literacy rate is very high in Viet Nam for both men and women, at 94.7 percent in 2014 (GSO and UNICEF, 2015). Viet Nam has achieved universal primary education and the country is moving towards universal lower secondary education. By 2014, the net enrolment rate in primary education reached an all-time high of 99.0 percent and the net enrolment rate in lower secondary education was 87.2 percent in 2012 (Government of Viet Nam, 2015).

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) value for the primary and lower secondary school level was 1.00, indicating no difference in the attendance of girls and boys in primary and secondary school. However, in tertiary and vocational training institutions, although there has been improvement in women's enrolment, men still outnumber women. The percent of men holding college and university degrees is higher than that of women; in 2008 it was 5.7 percent for men

compared to 4.5 percent for women, and in 2012, 7.5 percent for men compared to 6.7 percent for women (GSO, 2013). Gender differences are also reflected in the segregation of fields of studies. Women students are concentrated in social sciences, education, humanities and the arts, while men students are concentrated in engineering, manufacturing and construction. Furthermore, women take vocational training in traditionally women-dominated occupations. This limits women's future career development, especially in non-traditional and emerging jobs and other income-generating opportunities. The CEDAW Committee called on Viet Nam to "intensify its efforts aimed at diversifying academic and vocational choices for women and men and take further measures to encourage girls and boys to choose non-traditional fields of education" (CEDAW Committee, 2015).

Gender gaps in educational access are particularly evident among ethnic minority young people and those from poor households who live in remote and mountainous areas. People with disabilities comprise another group where gender gaps in education are evident. Another issue is common stereotypical portrayals of men and women in traditional roles. For example, men and boys are portrayed as strong, intelligent and able to carry out complicated and physically challenging task, while girls and women are typically portrayed as caring, clean and orderly, emotional and lacking in physical strength (UNESCO and MOET, 2011).

2.3.5 Health care

Viet Nam has made exceptional progress in reducing child mortality and maternal mortality ratios (MMR). The under-five mortality rate (U5MR), which was 58 deaths per 1 000 live births in 1990, was halved by 2004. This means that the rate was reduced by an average of 2 deaths per 1 000 live births annually during this period. By 2014, the U5MR was at 22.4. In terms of the MMR, in accordance with Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5, Viet Nam aimed to reduce to it to 58.3 per 100 000 live births by 2015 from 233 per 100 000 live births in 1990. By 2014, the national MMR had reached 60 per 100 000 live births (Government of Viet Nam, 2015).

⁹ The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines vulnerable employment as a sum of own-account workers and contributing family workers.

Table 2: Women in provincial, district and commune People’s Councils (percent)

	1994–2004	2004–2011	2011–2016	2016–2021
Provincial level	22.33	23.80	25.70	26.42
District level	20.12	22.94	24.62	27.51
Commune level	16.10	19.53	17.71	26.70

Source: Office of the National Assembly, 2016

The health care system in Viet Nam combines public and private health care provision. One of the overall goals of the system is social equity in health care. Reforms in the health system have included the introduction of user fees and hospital fees, the legalization of private medical practice, and the introduction of health insurance schemes at the national level. In the last decade, the government has issued a number of policies supporting disadvantaged groups, such as free health insurance for the poor, children under six, people receiving old-age or disability pensions or unemployment insurance, and people over 80 years of age. The proportion of women with medical insurance is slightly higher than that of men (56.11 percent versus 52 percent). Gender differences in access to services also exist, with 43.6 percent of women using medical services compared to only 34.6 percent of men. This is potentially explained by the higher prevalence of illness among women (PAHE, 2012).

The critical gender issues related to health are adolescent birth rate, abortion and violence against women and girls. Pregnancy and abortion among young women are concerns. The 2014 update to the CEDAW report noted that the nationwide rate of teenage pregnancy in 2014 was 2.8 percent, compared to 3.16 percent in 2013 (UN Viet Nam, 2016). The 2012 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report indicated that between 2007 and 2010, the abortion rate among young and unmarried women increased significantly.

Data from the 2010 National Study on Domestic Violence against Women represents the first and only nationally representative study on intimate partner violence in Viet Nam (GSO, 2010). It shows that 58 percent of married women experienced some form of physical, sexual or emotional violence by

their intimate partners at some time in their lives. Thirty-two percent experienced physical violence; 10 percent experienced sexual violence; and 54 percent experienced emotional abuse. However, 87 percent of them never sought help from a formal service or authority. According to a UN Women study, the cost of violence against women in Viet Nam, both in terms of in- and out-of-pocket expenditures and lost earnings, represents nearly 1.41 percent of the GDP, and the women who have experienced violence earn 35 percent less than those who have not, representing another significant drain on the national economy (UN Women, 2012). The overall productivity loss was estimated at 1.78 percent of GDP in 2010. In sum, the potential opportunity cost and productivity loss of domestic violence by an intimate partner was 3.19 percent of the 2010 GDP (UN Women, 2012).

2.3.5 Women’s decision-making power, voice and political representation

Both the National Strategy on Gender Equality (2011–2020) and Party Resolution No 11 (2007) set a target of a minimum 35 percent women representatives in the National Assembly and People’s Councils in the term starting in 2016. However, to date the government’s targets have not been met. The main reasons are weak accountability and enforcement of these policies.

As of the elections in May 2016, the representation of women in Viet Nam’s National Assembly for the 2016–2021 term stands at 26.8 percent. This is higher than it was for the 2011–2016 term, at 24.4 percent. This is also higher than the average rate of 19 percent for Asian countries and the global average of 21 percent (UN Viet Nam, 2016). There has also been some increase in women’s representation in People’s Councils at the province



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level (26.42 percent in 2016–2021), the district level (27.51 percent) and at the commune level (26.7 percent) (Viet Nam Women’s Union, 2016).

In terms of governance, although there is a high percentage of women civil servants, women’s representation in government administration and decision making is low from the central to the local levels, lagging far behind gender equality improvements in education and the economy. In Viet Nam, the “glass ceiling” is present in government leadership, and women leaders are

more prevalent in the lower levels of the government system. Currently only 1 of Viet Nam’s 22 ministers is a woman. In 2015, of 281 vice ministers and equivalent positions, 36 were held by women (12.8 percent). In 2012, approximately 6.8 percent of directors and 12.4 percent of vice-directors were women. Women’s leadership was highest in health, education and training, social affairs and foreign affairs, and lowest in the transport, natural resources and environment, and construction sectors. This underscores the predominant role that men continue to have in leadership at all levels (Munro, 2012).

3

POLICY, LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT RELATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT



3.1 Analysis of the institutional context and inter-institutional mechanisms

3.1.1 National level

National Government agencies working on gender equality and women's empowerment

Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs (PCSA)

In terms of the legislature, the PCSA is responsible for gender equality nationwide. The Law on Organization of the National Assembly approved in August 2014 and the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents passed in 2015 identify the PCSA's functions and tasks, including the examination of all proposed and drafted laws to ensure that gender aspects are incorporated into these normative documents. In addition, the National Assembly Women Members' group, as a formal group, plays an important role in the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in National Assembly operations. The government is also required to provide annual reports on the implementation of gender equality objectives to the National Assembly that must be verified by the PCSA beforehand.

The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA)

MOLISA has been the lead governmental agency to undertake state management of gender equality nationwide since 2008. To perform this function, it established the Gender Equality Department (GED) under the Ministry. MOLISA is responsible for development of legal documents, strategies/programmes and long-term plans in the area of gender equality at the national level; provision of guidelines for and monitoring of the implementation of the Gender Equality Law; and yearly reporting of gender equality results to the National Assembly.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MOCST)

MOCST is responsible for executing the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control through the Family Department. The Department is responsible for coordinating the implementation of programmes and plans on addressing and preventing domestic violence; developing counselling services for families on domestic violence issues, including support services for victims of domestic violence; and providing training for staff on the control and prevention of domestic violence.

Line ministries

All other ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), established their Committees for the Advancement of Women (CAW). Decision No. 2351/QĐ-TTg of 24/12/2010 of the Prime Minister approved the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2010–2020, which stipulates that the ministries implement the National Strategy on Gender Equality (2011–2020) under their designated areas; develop and implement annual and five-year work plans to achieve the gender strategy targets; strengthen intersectoral coordination, especially mainstreaming gender issues into sectoral plans and policy making; and examine and assess the implementation of the strategy within the ministry and agency. To date, almost all ministries and line ministries have developed and are implementing their action plans on gender equality for the period 2016–2020.

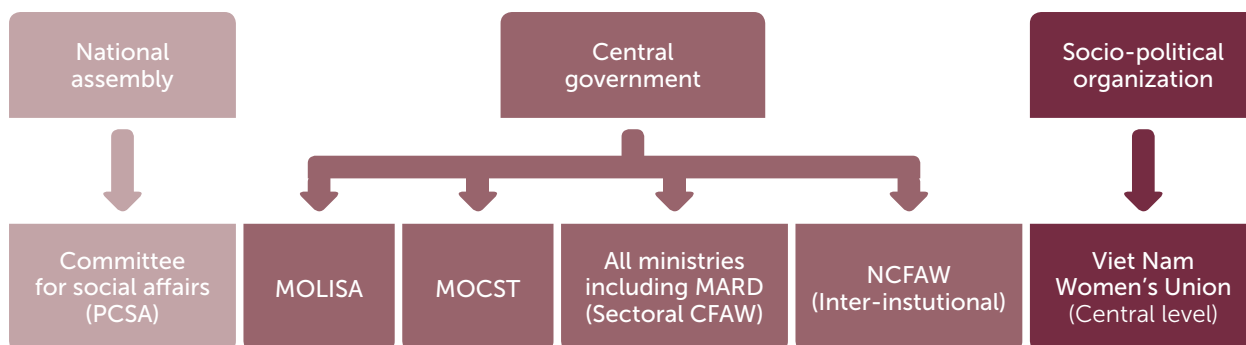
The Vietnamese Women's Union (VWU)

With approximately 15 million members, VWU is a nationwide sociopolitical organization that represents Vietnamese women and strives for their equality and development. Its mandate is to protect women's rights and to mobilize society to achieve gender equality goals. The VWU has played a critical role since its establishment in 1930, especially in recent years, including bringing women's concerns into policy formulation and implementation in order to ensure their rights and benefits in development. Most VWU members are rural women, as it is the only women's organization for farmers, while the women who work in the public and private sectors are members of trade unions that include women's divisions.

Inter-institutional mechanisms: the National Committee for Advancement of Women (NCAW)

NCAW was established in 1985 and strengthened in 1993. It is known as an intersectoral coordination committee for the advancement of women at the national level.

Members of the NCAW consist of vice ministers and equivalent positions from 16 ministries (including the MARD, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF), among others) and central agencies. Since 2008, MOLISA has been

Figure 1: Inter-institutional coordination mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment at the national level

the core member of the NCFAW and the Minister of MOLISA serves as NCFAW's Chair, while the President of Viet Nam Women's Union and the Vice Minister of MOLISA serve as Vice Chairs. MOLISA is coordinating NCFAW's operation.

This intersectoral body is tasked to advise the Prime Minister on multisectoral issues related to gender equality and the advancement of women nationwide. It assists the Prime Minister in supervising and coordinating with all line ministries, ministerial-level agencies, other government agencies and People's Committees at all levels in order to achieve national targets on the advancement of women and meets biannually to discuss gender issues at the macro/national levels. The NCFAW reports on its operations to the Prime Minister every six months or as requested and holds meetings biannually.

NCFAW members are expected to lead their respective ministries on women's issues and gender mainstreaming in sectoral plans and strategies to ensure that their sectoral gender action plans are implemented and contribute to the national gender strategy.

3.1.2 Local level

Local government agencies working on gender equality and women's empowerment

At the local level, local organizations corresponding to the above-mentioned national-level organizations have been established in all provinces of Viet Nam. They are:

- Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA) at the provincial and district levels
- Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism (DOCST) at the provincial and district levels

- Line departments (including Agriculture and Rural Development Department, DARD) at the provincial and district levels
- Women's Unions at provincial, district and commune levels

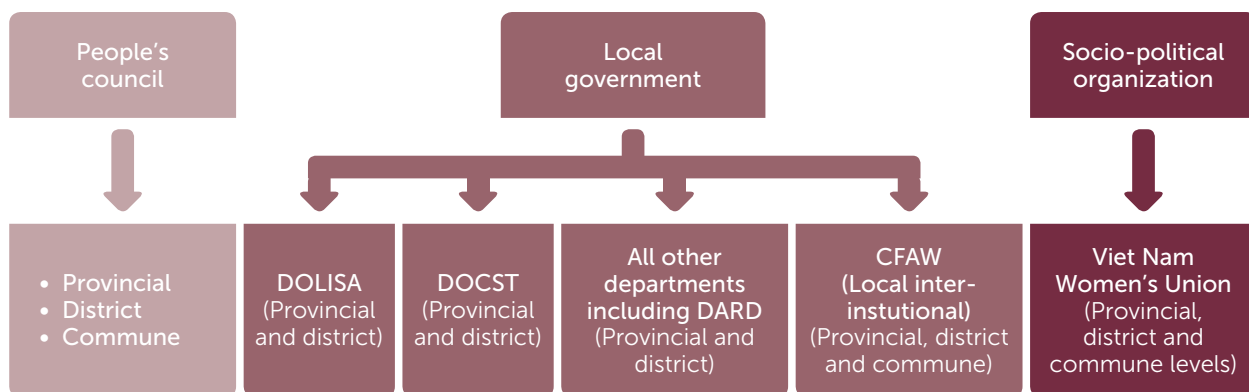
Each of these organizations has a similar function as its corresponding agency at the national level.

Local Inter-institutional mechanisms: The Committee for Advancement of Women

At the local level, there is a multi-organizational mechanism on promoting gender equality similar to that which exists at the national level. This includes the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA), DOCST, line Departments, Committees for Advancement of Women (sectoral CFAWs) and the local branch of the Women's Union.

The government agencies and inter-institutional mechanisms at both the national and local levels have contributed to the development of key legislation on the promotion of gender equality over the past decade, for example, the 2006 Law on Gender Equality, the 2007 Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, and the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011–2020. They have conducted public dissemination/awareness-raising campaigns on these laws and policies from the central level down to the community level and have been the primary advocates on gender equality from within the state system. The accomplishments of these agencies and mechanisms were also acknowledged by the CEDAW Committee in its concluding observations to Viet Nam's state report in 2015.

Figure 2: Inter-institutional coordination mechanisms for gender equality and women’s empowerment at the local level



3.1.3 Non-governmental organizations

The Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS)

ISDS is one of the very first Vietnamese non-profit, nongovernmental organizations registered under the Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Association (VUSTA). The Institute was established on 27 May 2002 by the Decision 468/TC-LHH of VUSTA. ISDS’ vision is for Viet Nam to be a country in which poverty is eliminated, the voices of all people are heard and rights-based social justice prevails. For the past 16 years, ISDS has positioned itself as leading and pioneering research, advocacy and training organization in three major areas, namely, gender, social inclusion and rule of law.

Since 2005, ISDS has actively engaged in research on gender in agriculture, focusing on themes such as women’s access to land, gender and technology, gender and social inclusion in agricultural value chains, indigenous food systems and resilience to climate change, transformation of gender norms in agriculture through innovation, and natural resource management. A number of research initiatives were conducted in partnership with Bioversity International and the International Potato Centre under CGIAR’s ‘Enabling Gender Equality in Agricultural and Environmental Innovation’ (GENNOVATE) initiative. ISDS enjoys a strong national and international reputation based on the quality of its work and its commitment to applying academic knowledge to address national challenges and to inform as well as to influence.

Centre for Education Promotion and Empowerment of Women (CEPEW)

CEPEW is a non-governmental organization established in 1997 and under the umbrella of the Viet Nam Association for Education Promotion and

Encouragement. Human rights and substantive gender equality are key approaches applied by CEPEW in its policy advocacy and public education in Viet Nam. Since its establishment, CEPEW has carried out intervention programmes on poverty reduction for poor rural women, prevention of domestic violence and trafficking among women and girls, strengthening of women’s leadership and women’s participation in politics, gender-sensitive good governance and literacy for ethnic minority women. The implementation of such programmes has made significant contributions to poverty reduction and the advancement of women and good governance within localities while providing CEPEW with valuable evidence for policy advocacy at the national and international levels. CEPEW has facilitated the advocacy of Vietnamese civil society actors on the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Access to Information, as well as their engagement with UN human rights mechanisms in order to advocate for gender equality and human rights in Viet Nam.

Centre for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender, Family, Women and Adolescents (CSAGA)

CSAGA is a local non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting the human rights of Vietnamese women and children through innovative methods. CSAGA’s core capacities include 1) outreach programmes to support gender-based violence victims; 2) communications programmes to increase public awareness; 3) advocacy programmes to enhance national legal frameworks; and 4) psychological intervention for gender-based violence (GBV) victims. CSAGA is a founding member of the Gender-Based Violence Network of Viet Nam, consisting of 15 civil society organizations working on gender and women’s issues. CSAGA’s programmes are based on human rights, with special attention to using

art in development. CSAGA's working areas include domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, sex labour, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights and children's rights. Since 2015, CSAGA's new action plan includes four programmes: 1) "Be Strong" to empower women affected by gender-based violence and discrimination; 2) "Men Move" to encourage Vietnamese men to challenge social stereotypes; 3) "Wind of Change" to stop discrimination against LGBT populations; and 4) "Child Care" to decrease child sexual abuse and bullying in school.

3.2 Legal provisions and international commitments

Viet Nam has made good progress in developing its national legal and policy framework for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights. According to the 2013 Constitution, "women and men citizens have equal rights in all fields. The State shall adopt policies to guarantee the right to and opportunities for gender equality." The key legal frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment are as follows:

Gender Equality Law (2006): Considered a landmark piece of legislation, this law lays out specific measures for achieving substantive gender equality in all fields of social and family life, as well as the corresponding responsibilities of agencies, organizations, families and individuals in exercising gender equality. It refers, for the first time, to substantive gender equality (Article 4) and it has mandated gender mainstreaming in legal documents (Articles 20 and 21).

The Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (2007): This law lays out measures to prevent and combat domestic violence and details the behaviours and types of domestic violence (Article 2). It acknowledges, for the first time in law, intimate partner violence as a punishable offence.

The Land Law (2013): Article 98 of this law mandates that both the husband's and wife's full names are to be put on the certificate of land use rights, house ownership and other assets attached to the land. It aims to ensure women's equal rights to land. This article was first included in the 2003 Land Law and continues to be included in the 2013 Land Law.

The Marriage and Family Law (Revised in 2014): This law ensures equal rights to property and inheritance in cases of divorce and death

(Articles 33 and 59). Although the prohibition of same-sex marriage was removed in 2014, the law still defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Therefore, it does not grant legal status to same-sex marriages, which cannot be registered and are not recognized in family/household registration (United Nations, 2015).

Law on Elections (2015): The new Law on Elections of Deputies to the National Assembly and to the People's Councils introduces a gender quota to support women's candidature. Article 8(3) stipulates that the "number of women candidates shall be proposed by the National Assembly Standing Committee at the request of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Women's Union of Viet Nam, ensuring that a minimum of 35 percent of candidates in the final list to National Assembly members are women."

Law on the Promulgation of Legal Documents (2015): This law defines as the responsibility of the Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs to appraise and verify that gender equality is mainstreamed in draft laws, ordinances and resolutions. Importantly, this law specifies, for the first time, the steps for gender mainstreaming to be taken during the drafting process of legal documents, including to: 1) define relevant gender issues; 2) assess the impact of new/amended pieces of legislation on women and men; and 3) assign responsibilities and resources to address gender issues under the scope of the legal document in concern. There has been gradual progress in mainstreaming gender equality in key legislation, government decrees and policy documents, much of which has been accomplished with the support of the United Nations.

However, the real extent to which gender is mainstreamed in the formulation and implementation of legislation and government programmes and projects remains limited due to lack of adequate resource allocation and shortage of expertise. A report by the Ministry of Justice identified capacity gaps of the legal drafters who found it difficult to follow the gender mainstreaming process and conduct an in-depth gender analysis (MOJ, 2015).

State Budget Law (2015): The revised State Budget Law of 2015 indicates that gender equality, hunger eradication and poverty reduction are to be prioritized in budgetary allocations, and that state budget estimates must apply principles of "gender equality," meaning gender should be integrated and should be a criterion for budget allocation.

National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011–2020

(2011):¹⁰ The National Strategy on Gender Equality is an important part of the national socio-economic development strategy and serves as a foundation of the human resource development strategy of the Party and State. It sets out seven specific objectives in the areas of Political Participation, Economy, Labour/Employment, Health, Education, Science and Technology, and Family and Culture. Following the National Gender Action Plan for the period 2011–2015, a National Gender Action Plan for the period 2016–2020 has been developed and is being implemented in all 63 provinces of Viet Nam. Based on the National Gender Strategy and Action Plans, all ministries and local governments developed their gender action plans for the period 2016–2020.

While much progress has been made on eliminating gender-based discrimination in legislation, gaps remain. As noted by the CEDAW Committee, a lack of sufficient awareness of substantive gender equality, accountability mechanisms and technical and budgetary resources has resulted in weak implementation of gender-related policies (CEDAW Committee, 2015).

Viet Nam has joined many international conventions related to the human rights of women and children including:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime Preamble, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The most recent international agenda that Viet Nam signed is the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3.3 Gender in agriculture and rural development policies and strategies

This section aims to review the key policies and programmes in agriculture, food and nutrition security and rural development from a gender perspective to see how gender is integrated into these policies and programmes.

3.3.1 Agriculture and rural development Resolution No 26 of the Viet Nam Communist Party on agriculture, rural areas and farmers (2008)

This resolution specifies the main principles, goals and solutions of Viet Nam's agricultural and rural development. It obligates the National Assembly, the government and state organizations to promulgate appropriate decrees and resolutions to implement the Party's resolution. Overall targets of this resolution are: 1) to develop modern and sustainable agriculture that is productive, efficient and highly competitive to ensure national food security and 2) to build new rural areas with modern socio-economic infrastructure and appropriate economic structure.

One of the points raised in the Resolution is on "the implementation of gender equality, improving material and spiritual living standards, competencies and positions for rural women."

New Rural Development Programme 2016–2020

The New Rural Development Programme (NRD) is a national target programme (NTP) that aims to improve living standards and rural income with interventions in infrastructure, economic development, education, health care, environment, security and governance. The NRD aims to ensure that 50 percent of communes will conform to new rural development standards by 2020. However, gender is not mentioned in the master programme, nor in the guiding documents

¹⁰ Decision 2351/QĐ-TTg by the Prime Minister, dated 24 December 2012.

on implementation and the criteria for a new rural area. This means that the gender equality principles set out in Resolution No 26 are not translated into specific actions and activities of this programme. This is due to the enforcement, monitoring and accountability systems on gender equality, both within this programme and more broadly, being weak. Limited commitment and capacity of the relevant organizations in charge of this programme have also served as a barrier to the integration of gender into these programmes.

Sustainable Poverty Reduction Programme 2016–2020

The Sustainable Poverty Reduction Programme is a nation-wide target programme that focuses on accelerating poverty reduction in Viet Nam's poorest areas and improving the wellbeing and livelihoods of the poor, particularly among those living in mountainous and ethnic minority areas. This is to be achieved through the effective implementation of mechanisms and policies that increase access to basic social services, improve socio-economic infrastructure in poor districts, communes and villages (e.g. transport, schools, clinics, small-scale irrigation, drinking water) and facilitate people's participation in the Programme's activities.

Poor households, near-poor households and households that have just escaped from poverty, along with people and communities in poor districts and communes, are target groups for the Programme's interventions. Priority to poor ethnic minorities and poor women is specified.

3.3.2 Food and nutrition security

Policies and strategies on food and nutrition security cover a variety of subsectors such as food safety, food security, health and nutrition.

In 2010, Viet Nam passed the Law on Food Safety and the National Strategy on Food Hygiene and Safety 2011–2020. Food and nutrition security is addressed in various laws and policies. The key ones are: the Social Insurance Law (2014), the Law on Children (2016), Policies on Infant and Young Child Feeding, and the Policy to Support Food Subsidies for Children under Five in Pre-schools (2011). However, each of these

laws and policies is gender-neutral, as specific gender issues are not considered. Almost no analysis has been done to find out the differences between the needs and actual conditions of women and men to suggest appropriate interventions/solutions and policies.

The National Nutrition Strategy (NNS) 2011–2020, for the first time, links nutrition to food security, with a component specifically designed for household food and nutrition security and nutrition in emergencies.¹¹ This strategy highlights the importance of an equality approach. It views women and children as the first beneficiaries. The NNS prioritizes the poor, disadvantaged and ethnic minority groups, and mothers and small children. The Policy on Supporting Food Subsidies for Children under Five in Preschools (Circular No.29/2011/TTLT-BGDĐT-BTC) aims to reach universal preschool education of children under five years of age, particularly in disadvantaged, poor, rural and ethnic minority areas. It provides free lunches for children in early education establishments to encourage and increase preschool attendance among children from poor families.

In terms of health, the policies and laws directly related to food and nutrition security are the Law on Protection of the People's Health (1989), the Law on Children (2016), the Law on Health Security (amended in 2014), the National Strategy for the People's Health Care and Protection (for the period of 2011–2020 with a vision toward 2030), and the Strategy on Viet Nam's Population and Reproductive Health (for the period 2011–2020). These policies and programmes are for the most part gender neutral, except for specific programmes on maternity protection focused on pregnant women and infants.

3.4 Gender concerns in national agriculture and rural development plans and programmes

In 2015 all ministries were required to develop their Gender Action Plan for the period of 2016–2020. The Gender Action Plans of all ministries were developed based on the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011–2020 and National Gender Action Plan 2016–2020 and adapted by sector.

¹¹ The key contents of this component are: set up a model for economic development and create on-site food sources to ensure food security for each region; establish a monitoring system for early warning of the risk of food insecurity; establish a food price fluctuation monitoring system; and emergency response planning.

Box 1: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Gender Action Plan 2016–2020

The overarching goal of this plan is to reduce the gender gap and enhance the status of women in agriculture and rural development (ARD). The plan has six specific objectives related to women's labour and employment, women's training and education, health care, managerial and leadership positions, gender-based violence; and capacity of the sector's staff on gender equality work. Specific targets are set for each objective.

It is noteworthy that among the six objectives of MARD's Gender Action Plan, only the first objective focuses on women farmers while the other components target working women in the public sector in agriculture and rural development. The targets for the first objective (*Exercise equal rights of women in the field of labour and employment*) are:

Target 1: Each sex comprises at least 40 percent out of the total people getting new jobs or employed yearly.

Target 2: Fifty percent of rural women labourers under 45 years old receive vocational and technical training by 2020.

The targets focus on working women involved in ARD in the public sector and are related to increasing the ratio of women with postgraduate degrees, increasing women's representation in key leadership positions at the department and division levels, and enhancing ARD public servants' awareness of domestic violence and unpaid care work sharing. Additionally, the Plan identifies targets for strengthening capacity of the sector's staff on gender equality work through training and gender mainstreaming in legal normative documents of the sector.

The MARD's Gender Action Plan 2016–2020 defines six specific objectives regarding women's employment, human resource development, leadership participation, health care, gender-based violence and capacity of the sector's staff on gender equality work. Based on the national-level plan, departments of MARD in all provinces and cities are expected to formulate their respective gender action plans to contribute to these objectives.

3.5 Challenges and gaps related to policy, legal and institutional context from a gender perspective

Review of the above-mentioned documents from a gender perspective suggests the following key concerns:

- Gender is not integrated systematically into the laws and policies related to agriculture, food and nutrition security. It is scattered in some policies, with few sex-disaggregated indicators and data. Hardly any policies, programmes or projects fully and effectively integrate gender, as mandated by the Law on Gender Equality and documents guiding gender mainstreaming in policy development and implementation.
- Some policies on maternity protection regard women as solely responsible for nutrition care and childcare. As a result, they are likely to promote the perpetuation of gender stereotypes regarding women's roles in care work and nutrition.
- There are almost no analyses that focus on women's needs vis-à-vis the actual living conditions of women and men and that suggest appropriate interventions/policies accordingly.
- Generally, the interventions/solutions promoted within the above-mentioned policies and programmes are all gender-neutral. These programmes have not paid sufficient attention to gender.
- Interviews indicated that resources for the implementation of gender mainstreaming have not been allocated, or if allocated, in amounts insufficient compared to what is required.
- Limitations in awareness and capacity among the organizations and individuals charged with gender mainstreaming in processes of development and implementation of policies on agriculture, food and nutrition security have not received sufficient attention.

4

ASSESSMENT OF GENDER INEQUALITIES IN AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY



4.1 Gender inequalities in agriculture

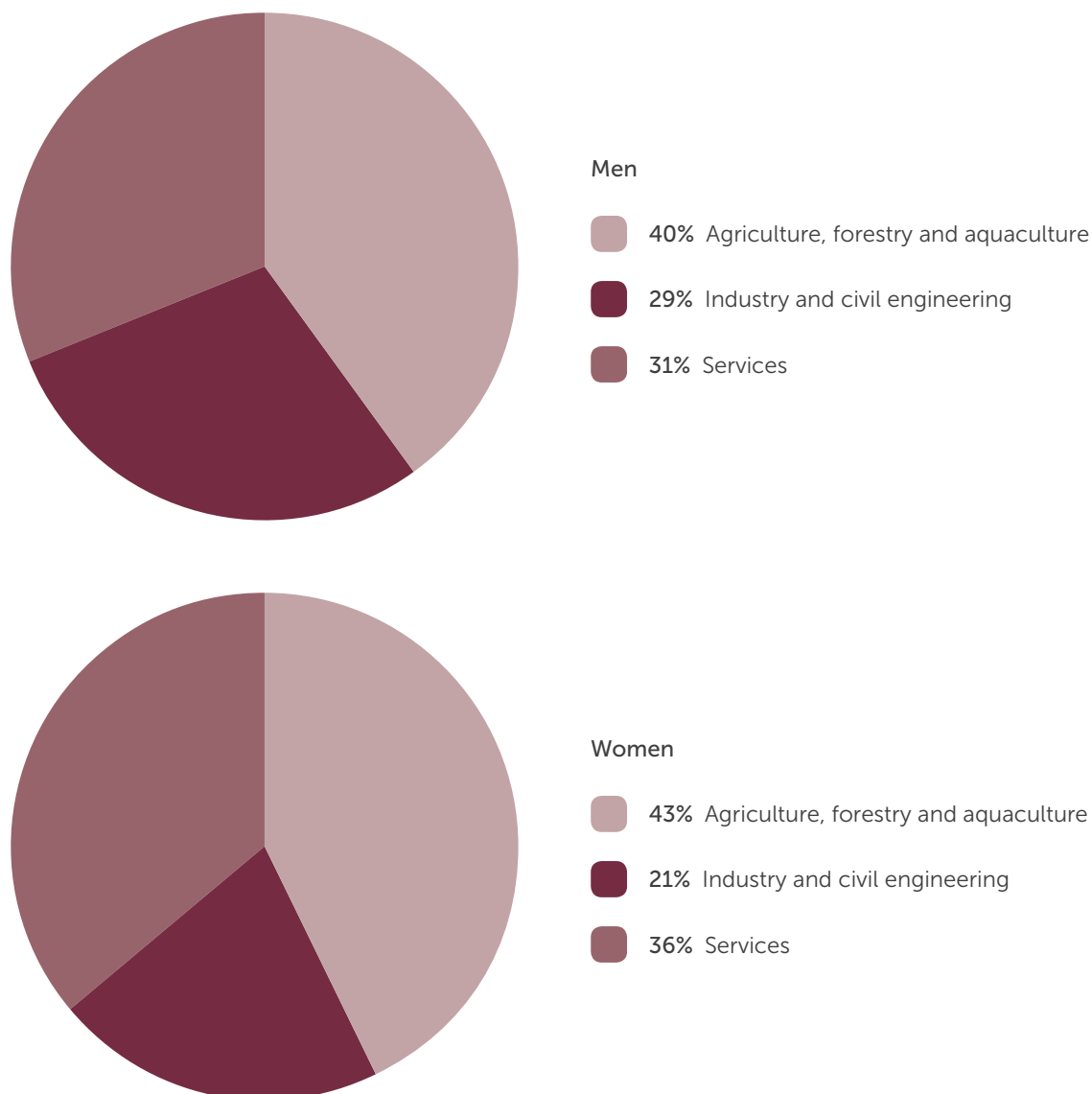
4.1.1 Labour and employment

Both globally and regionally, Viet Nam ranks well in female labour force participation. The female labour force participation rate was 72.13 percent in 2016 (compared to 81.66 percent of men), which is one of the highest in the region. Out of the total labour force, women constitute 48.6 percent (GSO, 2016).

While overall the share of the workforce engaged in agriculture declined from about 62 percent in 2000 to 46 percent in 2012, agricultural employment is still

important for both women and men, although more so for women than for men, especially in rural areas. As of 2014, 48 percent of the female workforce and 45 percent of the male workforce were engaged in agriculture (GSO, 2015a). In rural areas, this gender difference is even more pronounced, with 63 percent of working women engaged in agriculture compared to 57 percent of working men (UN Viet Nam, 2016). In 2016, out of the total labour force, agriculture, forestry and aquaculture accounted for 41.86 percent (40 percent for men and 43 percent for women) (GSO, 2017).

Figure 3: Structure of employment by economic sectors (percent)



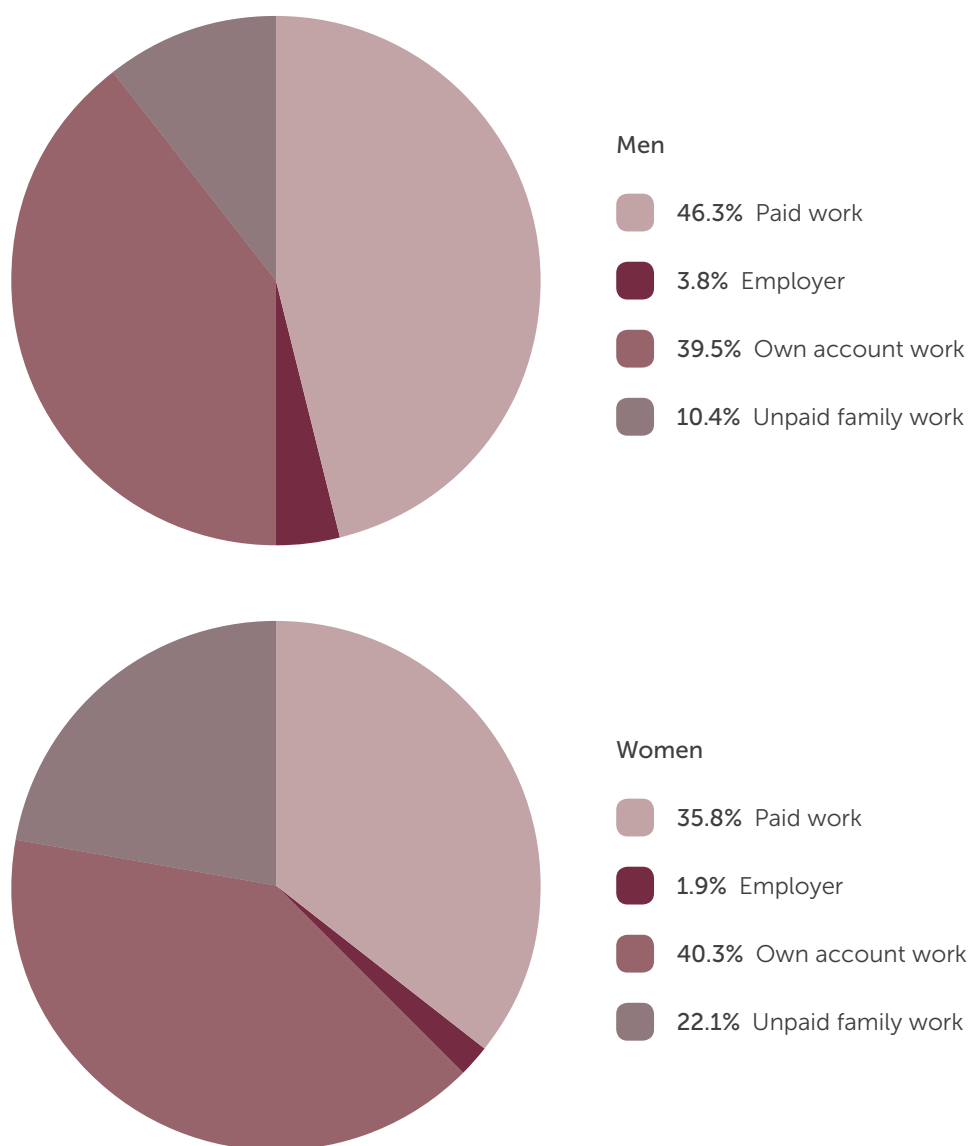
Source: Labour Force Survey 2016 (GSO, 2017).

Viet Nam, as with many other developing countries, is experiencing shifts in its employment structure, in which women’s transition out of the agricultural sector is slower than men’s. Barriers to women shifting away from agriculture are rooted in gendered roles within both labour markets and families. Traditionally, women are more involved in agriculture, which has typically been their main job option, as they are burdened with unpaid care work and have less education and thus fewer technical qualifications than men.

Considering the employment status identified by ILO, it is obvious that women’s work is more vulnerable than that of men. In 2016, the proportion of women

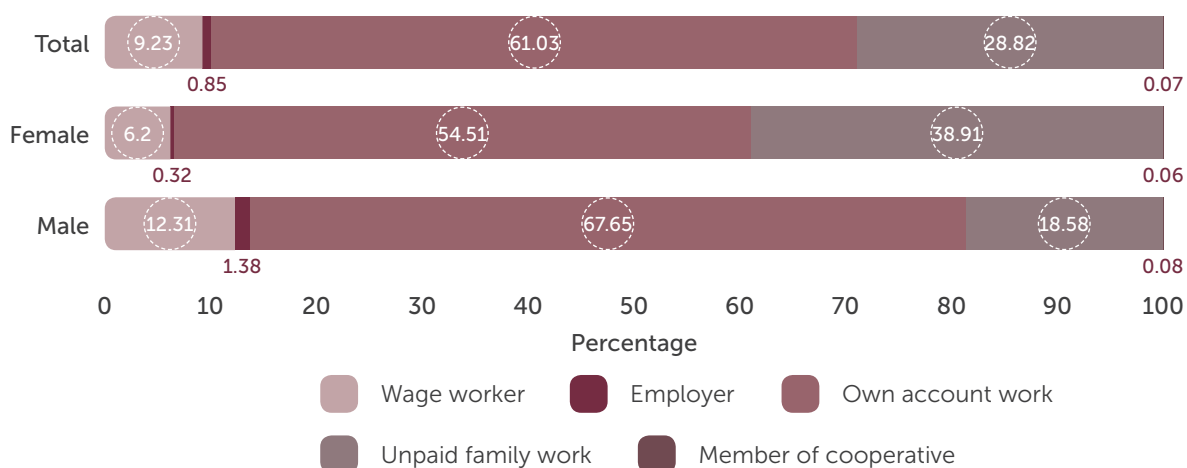
engaged in unpaid family work was 22.1 percent, almost double that of men, at 10.4 percent. This is vulnerable work under poorer conditions than in other sectors. Labour in this area is not regulated by the Labour Code nor is it subject to compulsory social and health insurance. In contrast, in categories such as business owners or waged workers, the proportion of women is always lower than that of men. In 2016, the percentage of business owners among women was 1.9 percent, compared to 3.8 percent for men. The proportion of women in the “salaried” group was 35.8 percent, compared to 46.3 percent for men.

Figure 4: Jobs by employment status (percent)



Source: ILSSA’s calculation from Labour Force Survey 2016

Figure 5: Structure of jobs in agriculture, forestry and fishing by employment status (percent)



Source: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey 2016 (GSO 2017)

Table 3: Gender wage gaps by economic sector, 2016 (Unit: thousand VND)

	Economic sectors		
	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	Industry and construction	Services
Average wage (VND thousand)	3 027	4 355	4 833
Men's wages (VND thousand)	3 368	4 655	5 173
Women's wages (thousand VND)	2 327	3 883	4 422
Difference by sex (thousand VND)	-1 041	-773	-751
Gender Gap Indicator (women/men)	0.69	0.83	0.85

Source: Calculated from the GSO's annual Labour and Employment Survey (ILSSA, 2016)

Figure 6 below shows that in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, men are more engaged in wage work than women. Women are in more vulnerable jobs in these sectors, for example, own-account work and unpaid family labour, forms of labour, which tend not to meet the requirements of decent work, such as the provision of social security.

The gender earning gap has widened over the last ten years, with women's earnings dropping from 87 percent of men's earnings in 2004 to 80 percent of men's earnings in 2012 (UN Women, 2016). In 2016, wage difference between men and women

by economic sector is clear, as indicated in Table 3. While wages from agricultural work are on the whole lower compared to industry and service, the gender gap in agriculture, forestry and fisheries is the largest, at 0.69.

4.1.2 Access to land

The revised 2013 Land Law stipulates that both the husband's and wife's names are to be included on a Land Use Rights Certificate (LUC). However, this is not well-enforced in the implementation process. The process of LUC issuance with both names is slow and women's access to land use rights is limited.

Furthermore, there is no regulation or requirement on reissuance of LUCs that in the past had been issued with only one name (usually the head of household, and mostly men).

Families living in urban settings were more likely to have both partners named as joint owners compared to the families living in rural settings. In regard to land rights, the most vulnerable women were found to be the ones from patrilineal groups and in rural and mountainous areas (UNDP, 2013).

The majority of the population in Viet Nam follows kinship-based practices of inheritance and patrilocal marriage. Division of household property is often related to patrilineal succession, which results in men having a greater share of land ownership.

4.1.3 Rural finance and credit

The Vietnamese Government has put in place favourable policies for rural women's access to credit. The National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2011–2020 set several targets, including that 80 percent of women labourers in poor rural areas or ethnic minority regions have access to preferential loans through employment or poverty reduction programmes by 2015 and that 100 percent do by 2020.

The Viet Nam Bank for Social Policies provides credit to the poor, including poor women farmers, through the Farmers' Association, Women's Union and Youth Union. The Women's Union provides extra support for poor and near-poor women in accessing preferential credit sources from VBSP and microcredit projects. Annually, there are approximately 2.5 million poor women who receive loans, accounting for 42 percent of the total outstanding loans from VBSP (IFGS and UN Women, 2016). For better-off households and farms, credit sources for ARD managed by the Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development are important channels providing capital support for women.

However, there are problems in credit policies for agriculture. Despite the VBSP and micro finance programmes that serve the poor, the fact remains that farmers who own land or other assets as a guarantee/collateral have easier access to finance. In general, many farmers encounter difficulties in accessing formal credit, making them dependent upon informal credit networks. Studies indicate, furthermore, that rural women in particular have

fewer opportunities to access credit (FAO and GSO, 2010; VHLSS, 2012). This means that poor farmers, especially women, have very limited access to larger loans and to commercial banks. Moreover, if women do not have control over loans or have no or limited business/financial knowledge, credit access does not necessarily contribute directly to their empowerment or change existing gender relations. Many microcredit programmes have not in fact helped poor and ethnic minority women to break out of the cycle of poverty (IFGS and UN Women, 2016). Though credit programmes offered by the VBSP have enhanced the access of rural farmers, including women, to credit for investments in their own food production, recent analysis of social protection policies reports that these programmes tend to be fragmented and poorly coordinated with training and extension programmes (UN Women, 2015).

4.1.4 Rural advisory and agricultural extension services

In Viet Nam, the state-run agricultural extension service system, which has four levels (central, provincial, district and communal), plays a key role in agriculture and rural development. Currently, agricultural extension service centres administered by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development are available in all 63 provinces and cities in Viet Nam. These centres support farmers in applying new techniques based on advanced technology to improve national productivity, while improving quality and boosting competitiveness in international markets. The centres provide technical training for farmers and organize field workshops on cultivation, livestock and aquaculture. They also run outreach activities, including agricultural extension services, competitions, fairs, exhibitions, forums and study tours and exchanges.

While agricultural extension brings knowledge and new production methods to farmers, helping them to move away from inefficient production practices and improve production skills, as well as providing financial assistance, gender bias is observed in access to agricultural extension. Male farmers, especially the most successful large-scale farmers, are the primary recipients of agricultural extension services. For example, only 20.6 percent of women farmers reported being instructed by agricultural extension staff in 2009 (Nguyen Quang Vinh, 2009). According to the 2012 Viet Nam Household Living Standard Survey, the proportion of male-headed households benefiting from the development projects in

agriculture, forestry and fishing was 8.2 percent compared to 3.7 percent of female-headed households.

Generally, women have less access to both extension services and the market. The degree of access to knowledge and skills by women differs depending upon their social-economic context, household conditions (e.g. whether one's husband has migrated to an urban area for a paid job) and the subsector in which one is engaged. Rural women's time constraints and their lower levels of education may limit their participation in courses offered at agricultural extension centres. Social norms may also hinder women's mobility and their interaction with extension officers, who are mostly men.

National data on agricultural extension staff is not available, but research indicates that only a small proportion of extension officers are women and that the understanding of gender-related issues among them is limited (Pham Thu Hien and Nguyen Thi Huong, 2014). There is therefore an effort underway to target women and members of ethnic minority groups to be trained to become agricultural extension officers.¹²

4.1.5 Technology transfer and application in agricultural production

A variety of training opportunities, including vocational training, exist. Study materials and travel costs for these trainings are subsidized. However, a recent literature review (IFGS and UN Women, 2016) shows that women have fewer opportunities to access training and field workshops. Men are overrepresented in technology transfer involving new livelihood strategies (e.g. shrimp farming, orchard plantation), new machinery and cultivation techniques and non-traditional crops that are seen as commercially promising. On the other hand, women farmers remain confined to more traditional types of training such as in small-scale animal husbandry and rice and vegetable cultivation (Pham Thu Hien and Nguyen Thi Huong, 2014).

According to MARD data, 71 percent of rural women labourers have been unable to access vocational training, compared to 60 percent of rural men (UN Women and FAO, 2014). The type of vocational training available to women is often short-term.

This limited access to technical agricultural training leads to further gender inequalities in access to and adoption of new technologies and methodologies for higher productivity.

Women's participation in training is also partly determined by other factors. One is the question of who organizes the training, as the Women's Union attracts more women participants than the Farmer's Association (IFGS and UN Women, 2016). Another is geography, with women's attendance of training the lowest in mountainous areas compared to women's attendance in the delta regions. The reasons are various and range from a heavy burden of unpaid care work to unsuitable training organization (e.g. venue, duration) to limited adaptation of content to women's needs and realities (IFGS and UN Women, 2016). It also reflects a lack of gender sensitivity in agricultural services (Government of Viet Nam, 2013). For the last ten years, technological developments have reduced time spent by women and men farmers on hard labour. For instance, irrigation systems have helped save both labour costs and time. Such developments have also contributed to changes in the division of labour between women and men, with women better able to manage their production and less reliant on their husbands in this regard (IFGS and UN Women, 2016). However, there is still much that needs to be done, as research indicates a trend of the "feminization of agriculture" in Vietnamese rural areas due to men's migration to towns and urban areas for non-agricultural jobs (Pham Thi Minh Hang, 2010; Nguyen Thi Thanh Tam, 2012).

Regarding mechanization, the overall percentage of agricultural households that own ploughing machines, tractors, pesticide spraying machines and water pumps is small. The proportion of male-headed households benefiting from machines and materials to support production is 5.1 percent, which is 2.6 percentage points higher than that of female-headed households (GSO, 2012). While a lot of work in the agricultural sector is being mechanized to lighten farming tasks, this mostly benefits men who tend to be in charge of the parts of farm work most directly related to mechanization, such as tillage, harvesting, post-harvest jobs and transportation. This implies that the mechanization of agricultural production is more beneficial to men since it is the work requiring physical strength (done mostly by

¹² Article 12, Resolution No 02/2010/ND-CP



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men with buffaloes previously) which can be done by machines operated by men (Pham Thu Hien and Nguyen Thi Huong, 2014).

4.1.6 Climate change and disaster risk management

Viet Nam is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. It has been identified as one of the five coastal developing countries most seriously affected by climatic change (Government of Viet Nam, 2015). Climate change and an increased frequency of natural disasters are posing new challenges to gender equality and women's empowerment. More specifically, in Viet Nam, women's vulnerability to climate change is increased by their greater concentration in the agricultural sector, particularly in small-scale subsistence production in rural areas, and in the informal sector. Climate change affects women in three areas: their roles in production, their reproductive roles and their roles in community activities. Most new labourers in the agriculture sector are women (UN Women, 2016). Women, especially those from poor and ethnic minority households, are more likely to be less resilient to the impacts of climate change because they have limited access to resources, services and coping strategies. Their lack of decision-making power also impedes their ability to respond to crises. Additionally, women's greater care responsibilities (for children, spouses, other relatives and others in the community) influence the decisions they make in response to disasters, which become more difficult when resources are scarce.

The last decade has seen the passage of key laws and policy documents in Viet Nam related to climate change and disaster risk management in which gender issues have also started to be mentioned. These have incorporated gender mainstreaming requirements for the full participation of women and women's organizations. For example, the National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change (2008) includes gender equality as a guiding principle.¹³ Taking a step further, the National Strategy on Climate Change (2011) has gender equality as one of its objectives. Viet Nam has also submitted its intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs, 2016) which mainstreamed gender into the

adaptation component of the INDCs.¹⁴ However, the implementation of these policies has not been consistent and no specific guidelines have been put into place regarding gender mainstreaming and how to ensure that the programmes are gender-responsive (UN Viet Nam, 2016). It also bears highlighting that there are very few studies on the gendered impacts of climate change in Viet Nam, which could provide evidence for policy formulation.

4.2 Gender and food and nutrition security

Food security, which evolved from the concept of "freedom from hunger," has four dimensions: Availability, Accessibility, Utilization and Stability.

Food availability means that adequate food is at people's disposal. Availability of food is affected by food production, purchase and/or donation (Gross *et al.*, 2000). While food production is affected by a number of factors, those particularly relevant concerning gender are participation in processes of production as well as access to and control over productive resources.

As mentioned earlier, as a crucial part of the agricultural labour force, women play an important role in food production in Viet Nam. However, they tend to work as unpaid labourers on family farms and as paid or unpaid workers on other people's farms and agricultural enterprises. Women, furthermore, own less than 10 percent of commercial farms (UN Women and FAO, 2014).

There are a number of factors that hinder women's participation in food production. First, women are constrained in food production due to their triple roles in production, reproduction and community work. In Viet Nam, a time-use survey indicated that, on average, women spend 314 minutes and men spend 190 minutes per day on unpaid care work, and that there is little difference in the time spent on unpaid care work by women of different education levels and marital statuses (Action Aid, 2016). This limits women's opportunities for wage labour, as they carry out most of the household farming

¹³ This programme stresses the need for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Viet Nam Women's Union to be responsible for conducting vulnerability assessments at the sectoral, regional and community levels and raises awareness of gender issues through activities in response to climate change.

¹⁴ Other examples are the National Target Programmes on Sustainable Poverty Reduction and on New Rural Development (2016–2020).

work, which is more flexible and can be balanced with responsibilities of domestic work. Second, unequal access to and control over key resources in agriculture hampers women's effective participation in food production. As discussed above, women have restricted access to land, training, technology and credit. Third, women have less decision-making power at the household, community and societal levels, which may exclude them from active engagement and participation in the development and implementation of programmes in agriculture and rural development.

The above analysis of gender gaps in access to land, markets, technology, training, infrastructure and finances, as well as disparities in unpaid work, sheds light into the barriers to food availability faced by women even as they constitute a large workforce in agriculture.

Food access is ensured when all households and all individuals within those households have sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet (Riely *et al.*, 1995). Household resources (such as labour and capital), control over productive resources, access to educational opportunities and intra-household division of labour are key determinants for food access. Women's economic access to food does not only depend on their own production but also on sufficient income from waged employment. Social protection measures provided by the government are also a channel for supporting the food access of the specific target groups.

During times of food crop shortage, women-headed households are more vulnerable to food insecurity. The data indicates that in the whole country, approximately 2 percent of households did not have enough food crops for consumption, and it is worth noting that more women-headed households (2.2 percent) were lacking adequate access to food than men-headed households (1.5 percent respectively) (GSO, 2015b).

Adequate utilization, which concerns nutritious and safe diets for proper health, touches upon both biological and social aspects. One factor in adequate utilization is how households make decisions on what food is to be purchased and how it has to be prepared, consumed and distributed within the household (Gross *et al.*, 2000). Another factor is imbalances in the nutritional composition of the

consumed food, which may be affected by socio-economic, cultural/customary factors and household members' knowledge and habits.

From a gender perspective, women's and men's knowledge and education are among the determinants for nutritious outcomes in food utilization. Recent research by UN Women and the Institute for Family and Gender Studies (IFGS and UN Women, 2017) on nutrition care for pregnant women and infants (examining the case of Ha Giang province, Viet Nam) indicates that studies on the nutritional status of ethnic minorities is very limited and that research on the nutrition of ethnic minority women during pregnancy and childbirth is almost non-existent. This research points to key barriers to the nutrition security of pregnant women and infants in ethnic minority areas. It indicates that the nutritional awareness of women of reproductive age of the Mong and Dao ethnic minority groups is low and mainly informed by tradition. There is a lack of awareness of basic nutritional knowledge, especially with regards to pregnancy and early childhood. The nutrition of a great many pregnant women and women with small children is negatively impacted by a lack of antenatal care, healthy meals and rest. Many engage in strenuous labour over the course of their pregnancies. The scarcity of food and households' low incomes lead to food and nutrition insecurity for ethnic minority women, particularly for pregnant women and women with small children. Such challenges have significant impacts on nutrition among the women of the Mong and Dao ethnic groups. Furthermore, unequal gender relations reflected in the division of labour and decision-making in households have an influence upon nutritional care of women (e.g. in terms of the burden of unpaid care work and the lack of women's voices in food access). Implementation of nutrition-related policies and strategies for pregnant and lactating women in upland districts is inadequate, though the government has a number of support programmes, and women's individual constraints, such as education and age, limit their access to information on nutrition.

Women's vulnerability in terms of employment, income and time can affect the stability of their food access. Emergency situations such as food price shocks, natural disasters and climate change cause food shortages. Unfortunately, there is a lack of information, data and analysis on how gender intersects with these issues in Viet Nam. However,



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in the context of patriarchy and cultural traditions, Vietnamese women are expected to reduce their food intake during times of crisis. As analysed above, women have unequal access to land, productive assets, information, technology, extension services and finance. This restricts women’s opportunities

and their capacity for resilience to food crises and shortages. This in turn leads to the perception of women as mere victims in such crises as opposed to change agents, given their lack of voice in decision-making related to resilience building (UNDP Viet Nam, 2017).

5

CASE STUDY OF NINH THUAN
AND LAO CAI PROVINCES



5.1 Description of the surveyed areas

General information on Lao Cai province and two surveyed communes

Lao Cai is a mountainous province lying in between Northeast and Northwest Viet Nam and sharing a border with China. The province has a natural land area of 6 383.88 km² (accounting for 2.44 percent of the total area of the whole country). With a climate suitable for temperate tree species, it has an advantage over other provinces in the production of cold-temperature specialty products such as flowers, fruits, herbs and cold-water fish.

Administratively, the province is comprised of one city and eight districts, with a total population of 674 530 as of 2016. It is inhabited by 25 ethnic minority groups, which account for 64.09 percent of the total population, while the Kinh group (the main ethnic group in the country) accounts for 35.9 percent of the total population. Of the ethnic minority groups, the Mong group has the highest population (22.21 percent), followed by the Tay group (15.84 percent), the Dao group (14.05 percent), the Giay group (4.7 percent) and the Nung group (4.4 percent) (Lao Cai Statistics Office, 2017).

Thao Chu Phin commune, located in Si Ma Cai district, is a rural commune comprised of 497 households (totalling 2 471 people) from two major ethnic groups, the Mong (80 percent) and Thu Lao (18 percent), as well as other groups such as the Kinh, Hoa, Tay, Nung and Dao (2 percent). The poverty rate of the commune is at 49.30 percent and the near-poverty rate is at 11.5 percent. The ratio of malnourished children under 5 years old was at 19.1 percent in 2017 (People's Committee of Thao Chu Phin commune, 2017).

Nam Mon commune, located in Bac Ha district, is a rural commune comprised of 627 households (totalling 2 983 people) from six ethnic groups: Mong, Tay, Nung, Phu La, Dao and Kinh. The 2017 poverty rate was 48.64 percent, and the near-poverty rate 9.9 percent. The ratio of malnourished children under 5 years old was approximately 19 percent in 2017 (People's Committee of Nam Mon commune, 2017).

General information on Ninh Thuan province and the two surveyed communes

Ninh Thuan is located in the South-Central coastal area with a natural land area of 3 358 km². It has seven administrative divisions including one provincial city and six districts. Ninh Thuan's topography is a mixture

of three types: mountainous areas (63.2 percent); hills and mounds forming a half mountain, half plain landscape (14.4 percent); and delta coastal areas (2.4 percent). The climate is typically tropical monsoon, which is hot and windy. Water resources in Ninh Thuan are not evenly distributed, with water concentrated mostly in the north and the centre of the province. The province's population is 601 000 people. It is unevenly distributed and mainly concentrated in the delta coastal areas. Inhabitants come from three main ethnic groups – the Kinh group (76.5 percent), the Cham group (11.9 percent) and the Raglay group (10.4 percent), among others. In terms of labour structure, the labour force working in agriculture, forestry and fisheries accounts for 51.99 percent, in construction and industry, 15 percent, and in services, 33 percent (Ninh Thuan Statistical Office, 2017).

Cong Hai commune, located in Thuan Bac district, is a rural commune comprised of 2 114 households with total population of 7 910 people, with 64 percent from the Raglay ethnic group and the rest (36 percent) from the Kinh, Nung and Hoa ethnic groups. As of 2017, 26.92 percent of households (543) were poor and 12.64 percent (255) near-poor. The ratio of malnourished children under 5 years old is 16.2 percent.

Bac Son commune, located in Thuan Bac district, is a rural commune comprised of 1 983 households. The number of poor households is 863, accounting for 43.52 percent. The ratio of malnourished children under 5 years old was 18.85 percent in 2017.

5.2 Gender Issues in agriculture, food and nutrition security

5.2.1 Employment and livelihoods

In the surveyed localities, agriculture is the main source of employment and livelihoods for both men and women as well as being the most important source of food for local people. Agricultural production makes up around 90 percent of the communes' GDP, while about 10 percent of their GDP comes from other sectors, including industry, small industries and handicrafts, and commercial (i.e. small private services serving agricultural production and local people's basic needs in daily life).

For most women, especially ethnic minority women, own-account agricultural production is the only employment opportunity and sole source of income.

Hardly any women have second jobs as entrepreneurs or wage workers. They often seek paid work in construction or other forms of manual, unskilled labour locally or in surrounding areas.

“Purely agricultural households account for a considerably high ratio (from 85 percent to more than 90 percent). There are few households engaged in other occupations such as small industries and handicrafts and small private services serving agricultural production and local people’s basic needs. At different intervals of the agricultural cycle, people frequently engage in paid jobs such as agriculture and civil engineering; youth tend to go further to look for jobs in urban areas. More men than women take a paid job.”

“Ethnic minority women rarely work far from home; most stay at home and only engage in agricultural production and small businesses.”

Focus group discussion with women and men farmers in Ninh Thuan on 22–25 November 2017 and Lao Cai on 26–29 November 2017

Factors limiting the employment of women include responsibilities in housework and family care, especially in the case of ethnic minority women, as well as language barriers and timidity.

5.2.2 Traditional division of labour in agriculture

In agriculture, the division of labour between men and women commonly depends on the physical nature of the work and whether it is skilled or unskilled work. For example, in crop production, men often do jobs that require greater physical strength (e.g. ploughing and raking with buffaloes and horses) and/or accessing harmful chemical substances (e.g. spraying crops with pesticides). Women are assigned to do the work that is meticulous and time-consuming, such as sowing seeds, transplanting seedlings and weeding. Men tend to be the ones to determine production techniques.

In small-scale animal husbandry, while both women and men are involved in the raising of small livestock (e.g. pigs, chickens, ducks, geese), women tend to be more involved since this can be done from the home in combination with housework. For medium-, larger- and industrial-scale animal husbandry (e.g. buffaloes, cows, sheep, horses, goats), men are in charge of almost all technical aspects, from buying breeding animals and animal feeds to disease prevention and treatment, while women tend to the daily care of the animals and sell the products.

This type of traditional division of labour in agricultural production obviously places men at an advantage when it comes to engaging in agricultural jobs for commercial purposes. Additionally, processes of mechanization and agricultural industrialization are typically more advantageous for men, as the main ones to use the machines and apply new technologies. This helps them to have more access to markets and more opportunities to have jobs with higher incomes than women, who do most of the subsistence agricultural production.

“Ploughing and raking require buffaloes and oxen. This is quite hard work since, in many fields, the soil is firm so only strong men can do it... Men are also involved in larger-scale animal husbandry.”

“Spraying chemicals is mainly reserved for men since the tank that goes on one’s back is big and heavy, and the person is exposed to toxic chemicals... If women had to do that, people would laugh at their husbands.”

“Women transplant seedlings, care for them and weed in the fields... Men sometimes join, but less so than women.”

“The wife and husband plant maize and rice together. Hard work like ploughing and raking is done by the husband. Transplanting seedlings, weeding and applying fertilizer is done by the wife. While harvesting, the wife picks and the husband carries the load and transports it if needed.”

“With vegetables and other food crops, the husband does the ploughing, if any, while the wife is mainly in charge of daily care such as weeding, applying fertilizer, etc.”

“In forest-based production, both husband and wife participate in clearing land, and in weeding the areas planted with *Amomum villosum*, as it is far away so it is better if husband and wife can go together.”

Focus group discussion with women and men farmers in Ninh Thuan on 22–25 November 2017 and Lao Cai on 26–29 November 2017

There are various factors affecting the division of labour in agriculture between men and women, including:

1. All the surveyed communes are midland and mountainous so agricultural land is fragmented, small, narrow, sloping and firm, not facilitating the usage of machinery.

Agricultural production, therefore, mainly requires human physical strength.

2. Women, especially ethnic minority women aged 30 and over who do not speak Vietnamese, have low levels of education and so face difficulties in accessing new production techniques;
3. Women are associated with certain forms of work and employment due to gender stereotypes.

5.2.3 Decision-making power in agricultural production and investment

It is worth noting that gender equality in accessing and controlling agricultural land in the surveyed localities has seen a positive change over time, indicating improvement in the position of women in agricultural production. Survey results reveal that women are increasingly participating in discussions and decision-making processes in agricultural production, such as selecting crops and animals to raise, determining production techniques, buying fuels and raw materials and selling agricultural products. Women who have received training in agricultural extension have more knowledge and tend to participate more actively in agricultural decisions with their husbands. In the matrilineal ethnic minorities (Raglay, Cham), wives usually have more voice in decision making.

However, men still have more voice in medium- and large-scale investment in agricultural production as compared to women, who are not considered the “real decision makers.”

As regulated by law, the Certificate of Land Use Rights should have the names of both husband and wife to place them in equal positions. Nevertheless, there are differences by region and by ethnic group in decisions related to agricultural land. In matrilineal ethnic minorities, women are granted Certificate of Land Use Rights and play an important role in decisions related to the household’s land. Group discussions with female farmers from matrilineal ethnic minorities show that wives highly value their husbands’ opinions and that they seek their husbands’ agreement before taking a decision. Most of the matrilineal ethnic minority women interviewed still ask for their husbands’ opinions and only make decisions on their own when their husbands do not want to be involved.

“I should ask my husband, and only make a decision if he agrees.”

“At present, women are joining training quite a lot, so that they know more about cultivation and animal raising techniques... Sometimes they may know more than their husbands... if they (women) know, they can discuss with their husbands.”

In-depth interview with matrilineal ethnic minority women in Ninh Thuan province

5.2.4 Challenges faced by women in obtaining and applying technical knowledge in agricultural production

There has been a growing trend that more and more women are taking part in training in all four surveyed communes. The reasons include: 1) men have to work in the fields from day to day and are involved in paid jobs at certain intervals of the agricultural cycle, during which they are absent from their homes/communities; 2) men are engaged in strenuous work, leaving them tired and wanting to rest after work hours; other work, including attendance at trainings and meetings, is therefore done by their wives; and 3) participation in community activities, including studying and attending meetings, is commonly considered to be the responsibility of women in the households. Additionally, in some matrilineal ethnic minorities, more women than men tend to participate in community activities because women are heads of their households, so they are the ones responsible for these activities.

There is arguably a contradiction between women’s limited voice and decision-making power and their increasing attendance of technical trainings. In ethnic minority communities, it is men who tend to make important decisions related to the application of technical knowledge. The effectiveness of women’s participation in extension trainings is therefore reduced if they are not then empowered to apply what they have learned. As a consequence, very few ethnic minority households have successfully absorbed and applied scientific and technical advances in agricultural production.

“When a representative of household is invited, in most cases, women will attend... The invitation should name the person [i.e. the man of the household], then men might be more inclined to attend.”

“This is the time in the agricultural cycle in which almost all men are working far from home as builders, only coming home once every several weeks... Some men stay at home but hesitate to attend, then send their wives as replacements”

Focus group discussion with women and men farmers in Ninh Thuan on 22–25 November 2017 and Lao Cai on 26–29 November 2017

While women's increased participation in trainings could be seen as a positive trend, concerns include: 1) How do they perceive the training sessions? Does the training meet women's needs and/or take into consideration their barriers to obtaining knowledge and skills? 2) How and to what extent are they able to actually apply the knowledge in agricultural production that they acquire?

The survey results indicate that those from ethnic minorities, particularly those who do not speak Vietnamese, hardly attend the training. Even if they do attend the trainings, limited technical language communication abilities (even if they can speak Vietnamese), may limit their capacity for absorption. Additionally, most of the trainers are men and not from ethnic minority groups, which may serve as a further barrier to full participation of women in terms of sharing their ideas and challenges in their agricultural-related work.

"Since women over 30 years of age in some ethnic minorities such as Mong, Raglay and Thu Lao can hardly speak the Vietnamese official language (Kinh language), they face many difficulties in gaining knowledge and skills in the training courses."

"Hardly any women over 30 years of age among the Mong and Thu Lao can speak the Vietnamese (official) language, so they cannot attend training courses or meetings with other ethnic minority people due to language... hence, they hardly know about production techniques."

Group discussion with female farmers in Thao Chu Phin commune, Si Ma Cai district, Lao Cai province

5.2.5 Challenges to maternal health care during pregnancy and child nutrition

According to the surveys, the food supply in the areas studied is diversified, satisfying the fundamental food and nutrition needs of both men and women.

"Thao Chu Phin commune (in Si Ma Cai district, Lao Cai province) faced regular food shortages ten years ago due to there being limited wet paddy land and having only one crop per year with low productivity, as water sources for agricultural production depend upon nature. The paddy harvested was only enough for one to two months of household consumption. People had to plant

maize in the fields as the main food (mèn mén in local language). Food shortage (famine) was stopped when people were trained in the cultivation of a cross-bred rice variety that could tolerate drought. The new rice variety could be planted two crop cycles a year and its productivity was three times higher than the old one. From then, food shortage was completely addressed. People now have enough rice for the whole year. Maize planted in the fields has since been for livestock production only."

In-depth interview with communal officers in Tao Chu Phin commune (Si Ma Cai district, Lao Cai province).

"Although the market fair in the commune is not open on a daily basis, there are still many small private stalls serving food in hamlets, villages and population clusters."

"Everything is available, not scarce, in the commune/village. And it is no more expensive than in communal/district markets, and it is even more convenient."

Group discussion with female farmers in Thao Chu Phin and Nam Mon communes, Lao Cai province

"Processed food is always available; there are rows of food stalls for breakfast with various kinds of dishes"

"In the commune, there is also a stall selling nutritious soup for children. Ethnic minority women also buy processed nutritious soup for their children as it is convenient and at a reasonable price"

"Ethnic minority people often borrow rice or buy rice on credit for daily use when they run out of money. They pay the rice back when harvesting or settle payment by selling products."

"There is no famine today; the only issue is that when little money is left, the food amount has to be reduced"

Group discussion with female farmers in Bac Son, Cong Hai communes – Ninh Thuan).

However, in socio-economically disadvantaged areas and areas with high ratios of ethnic minority groups, malnutrition is still a problem, especially for children under 5 years old and pregnant women.

"By 2017, the ratio of malnourished children under 5 years old in Cong Hai commune (the commune

that has the lowest ratio of ethnic minority people) was 16.2 percent; while in Bac Son commune it was 18.85 percent, in Thao Chu Phin commune 19.1 percent and in Nam Mon commune 19 percent.”

Reports of Cong Hai, Bac Son, Thao Chu Phin and Nam Mon communes

Some ethnic minority people have imbalanced diets, including low consumption of vegetables and fruits, and household meals, even for children and older persons, may not be nutritionally balanced. Among some ethnic minorities, mothers in their pregnancy and breastfeeding stages are not provided with adequate, balanced nutrition to ensure maternal and child health. Ethnic minority mothers tend to feed their children soups and rice at very early months following birth that may cause negative impacts on the children’s health and physical development.

“Mong people (Lao Cai) and Raglay people (Ninh Thuan) often consume few vegetables in their daily meals. They eat vegetables when they have them in their gardens; they hardly buy additional vegetables in the market.”

“Many ethnic minority mothers still make soup without meat and vegetables due to their backward customs.”

“There are cases where the kids are being fed with flour soup from as young as one to two months old, and fed rice at the age of six months and then adult’s food once they can walk.”

“Our children have recently drunk milk; however, they only drink it sometimes, when we have money.”

“With this type of child care, ethnic minority children are often shorter, smaller and have higher ratios of malnutrition.”

Group discussion with male and female farmers in the four surveyed communes.

5.2.6 Gender stereotypes regarding family nutrition and health care

The survey results show that women in the family (e.g. grandmother, wife, elder sister) are responsible for most of the work surrounding nutrition and health care. The planning and arranging of meals, the purchase of food, the cooking and the feeding of children and older persons in the family is done by women. Even in matrilineal ethnic minorities, the wife is mainly responsible for these tasks.

Almost all training and knowledge cultivation courses on issues of nutrition and health care are attended by women. The main reason is that men are hardly interested in the contents, and consider this as the duty of women.

“Women go to market, cook and take care of children... Men do this only when the wife is absent or ill... temporarily for some meals.”

“Men hardly join training courses as they have to work far from home and they are not interested in the contents.... There are meetings and training courses with female participants only.”

“The mother takes care of children when the child gets ill... if a child has to go to hospital, both the father and mother will take him/her, but the mother is still the key person to take care of him/her.”

“In fact, matrilineal ethnic minority men hardly do housework. They work in the fields and gather in the evening to drink alcohol. Women have to do most of the housework... In matrilineal systems, women often manage all properties of their households, yet decisions regarding the properties still require men’s opinions.”

“If my husband does not agree, I cannot decide by myself.”

Group discussion with community people in Lao Cai and Ninh Thuan provinces

This pattern of division of labour makes women disproportionately burdened. It does not promote shared responsibilities in nutrition and health care between women and men. The roles and responsibilities of men in household nutrition and health care are often overlooked.

5.2.7 Women’s and children’s disadvantages in health and nutrition care among ethnic minority communities

The survey results suggest that the most disadvantaged groups in nutrition care include:

- Pregnant women and breastfeeding women/those with babies in some ethnic minority households (Mong, Raglay, Thu Lao). Due to a combination of customs and disadvantaged economic conditions, nutrition is not attended to during a woman’s pregnancy, and many go without prenatal medical attention altogether. The custom of home birth is practiced in many ethnic minority families. After giving birth, ethnic minority women follow a

restricted diet for one month, with meals consisting of rice and meat only and hardly any vegetables or fruits. After one month, they can eat normally, just as other family members. Balanced nutrition to support healthy breastfeeding and postpartum recovery is not well attended to.

- Ethnic minority children in poor households. A practice among ethnic minority people is to feed their children flour soup, as well as feeding children soup and rice at an earlier than recommended age. Nutrition is often not considered and there is a common perception that a child's nutritional needs have been satisfied if the child does not cry or ask for food. Ethnic minority children from birth to three years of age receive little health care, which slows their development and makes them more susceptible to malnutrition, reflected in their weight and height. The most disadvantaged ethnic minority groups are the Raglay, Mong and Thu Lao.
- Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding and/or caring for young children. Expecting and new mothers and in some ethnic minorities do not receive adequate health care.
- Older persons. Older persons rarely have meals that are appropriate for their age and health; they eat the same meals as other family members.
- Men of working age. It was reported that men of working age do not attend to their health or undergo medical check-ups, while facing health risks through behaviour such as drinking alcohol, smoking and doing heavy/harmful work.

"Men hardly ever have medical check-ups. Roughly 40 people per day go to the communal medical station for check-ups and medicines; of these, only about 5 out of 40 are men, and mostly older men who have severe diseases."

"Although ethnic minority men have health insurance cards or free-of-charge health care cards, they only seek medical examinations and treatment when seriously ill... If they get an illness that is not too severe, such as a flu, cough or fever, they go to the chemist's to buy themselves medicines and do not go to the health centre."

5.2.8 Heightened impacts of natural disasters on the food and nutrition insecurity of poor and ethnic minority women

Poor households and ethnic minority households living in remote areas with limited roads and limited financial resources are less likely to store food and medicines.

In instances of natural disaster, it is considerably more difficult for them to ensure nutrition and food safety for their households. Women, especially ethnic minority women, who are mainly in charge of housework and family care, are impacted the most. Furthermore, when faced with food shortages, women tend to give up the available food for elders, their husbands and children, resulting in women being the most malnourished group.

"Severe drought occurred in Bac Son commune (Ninh Thuan province) for three consecutive years, causing shortages of vegetables and other fresh food for people and livestock... Nevertheless, after the drought, farmers received technical support in re-establishing both their cultivation and livestock rearing. After several months, the food supply became stable."

"In 2015, the State had to provide food aid to 100 percent of the population of Bac Son commune, with 15 kg of rice per capita per month for three consecutive months..."

"During the drought, vegetables could not be planted, chickens died... food (meat, fish) was reserved for elders and children first due to lack of money... My husband had to work hard so he needed food to save strength for work. I myself (woman) could have what food was left, if any, to overcome the difficult time."

Group discussion with commune staff in Bac Son commune, Thuan Bac district, Ninh Thuan province

5.3 Initiatives of gender mainstreaming in local programmes

Local authorities have an important role to play at the implementation level, yet they receive limited direction and guidance regarding gender equality in general and gender equality in food and nutrition security in particular in the implementation of government programmes.

However, during the process of implementing policies, programmes and projects, some local authorities have focused on targeting groups of disadvantaged men and women to support them in developing solutions. Preliminary results in the project localities indicate that officers and local people have demonstrated some initial changes in their awareness of and attitude towards gender equality.

"When "gender mainstreaming" was mentioned in workshops and group discussions, audiences including both officers and a number of local people were familiar with it as they had heard of it before."

A number of programmes supported by international organizations include activities on gender equality such as training courses in communication to boost people's awareness and knowledge of gender equality and discussions on gender equality and domestic violence prevention and control in village regulations. Some projects have paid attention to gender balance among project participants and beneficiaries.

"Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has held training courses in gender equality and domestic violence prevention and control. During club activities, solutions and methods for communicating on gender equality and domestic violence prevention that are appropriate to local customs and culture have been identified."

[Many men participating in the club have changed their conception of work and of their wives' contributions.] "By doing exercises on daily time

management, I realized that 'miscellaneous' work takes my wife a lot of time and effort. Since then, I have voluntarily shared more housework with her so that she can have more time for taking care of herself."

"The FAO project on "Integrated nutrition and food security for children and vulnerable groups in Viet Nam" has focused on inviting men (i.e. the father of a family) to join a soup exchange club to promote the sharing of child care responsibilities between men and women. Attention is paid to the ratio of women and men participants in training courses and communication activities. Nevertheless, few men actually participated; there were only a few men in the club."

The International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) project targets women-headed households. Its activities include production development support, education support, and eradication of illiteracy through evening classes. All these activities invite both men and women to participate.

Group discussion with provincial staff in Lao Cai and Ninh Thuan province.

Box 2: Joint Project between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the United Nations for the period 2015–2017 in the surveyed area

The project "Integrated nutrition and food security for children and vulnerable groups in Viet Nam" was conducted during the period of 2015–2017 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Health and the United Nations (FAO, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO).

The project organized training in gender equality in agriculture and nutrition security for participants and beneficiaries. Trainees greatly appreciated the training contents and methodologies, as they were relevant to their qualifications and close to the local culture. There have been many suggestions of replicating trainings in gender equality with the same contents and methodologies.

"The training contents and methodologies of the project were interesting. The participatory approach made participants feel that they were at the heart of the training course. They made suggestions and developed ideas and content on their own and drew conclusions and lessons for themselves."

"The training methodologies were easy to understand and could be applied immediately in the daily activities and work of officers and local people... This was useful."

However, the training was held in the last year of the project timeline. This was a limitation. Overall, the project had limited results on gender equality, other than the results from the training. The reasons for this, according to the local people, include: 1) a lack of direction from higher levels (e.g. no available guidelines on implementation); 2) insufficient capacity on the part of the local officers participating in the project and local people benefitting from it to implement gender integration on their own; and 3) a lack of budget allocation at the local level for gender integration.

Source: Survey results from two provinces: Lao Cai and Ninh Thuan

6

MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



6.1 Main findings

The analysis indicates that while substantial progress has been made, gender inequality in the agricultural sector and in the area of food and nutrition security is evident. There are gender gaps in both legislation and implementation, with the most visible limitation being weak enforcement.

At the macro level

- Gender is not integrated systematically into laws and policies related to agriculture, food and nutrition security at the national level. It is scattered in some policies, with few sex-disaggregated indicators and data. Hardly any policies fully and effectively integrate gender, as mandated by the Law on Gender Equality.
- Some policies on maternity protection regard women as being solely responsible for nutrition care and childcare. As a result, they are likely to promote the perpetuation of gender stereotypes regarding the role of women in care work and nutrition.
- The findings also affirm that local policies do not have specific directions, requirements or guidelines on gender mainstreaming in agriculture, food safety and nutrition security. There are almost no analyses that focus on women's needs vis-à-vis the actual living conditions of women and men and suggest appropriate interventions.

At the meta level

- In general, the implementation of policies and programmes is gender-neutral. Most of the data, including indicators related to agriculture, food and nutrition security, are not sex-disaggregated. These programmes have not paid sufficient attention to gender.
- Where gender equality principles are included in agricultural programmes and strategies, these are not always translated into specific action plans and tasks.
- Guiding materials on gender mainstreaming in the agriculture and rural sector are not available.
- Insufficient attention has been paid to limitations in the awareness and capacity of the organizations and individuals charged with gender mainstreaming in the development and implementation of policies on agriculture, food and nutrition security.

- Staff of state agencies overseeing agriculture, food and nutrition security are not fully aware of the necessity of gender mainstreaming in their programmes and so are insufficiently motivated to tackle this.
- Insufficient resources have been allocated toward gender mainstreaming (e.g. human resources, time, budget). Furthermore, gender mainstreaming in the area of agriculture, food and nutrition security requires effective coordination among the many different entities involved in this area, which has yet to happen to the extent necessary.

At the micro level

- Although women play an important role in ARD as well as in the food and nutrition security of their households and communities, they occupy more vulnerable jobs, such as contributing family labour and own-account employment, and these lack the benefits of decent work.
- In the ARD sector women are less engaged in wage labour and have less farm ownership. Average wages for agricultural jobs are low compared to industry and service jobs, and women's wages are lower than those of men.
- Rural women have limited access to land, finance, agricultural extension and technology for various reasons, including cultural gender bias that hinders women's participation in decision-making. Women find it more difficult to access agricultural extension services due to constraints of time, mobility and education level.
- The analysis indicates that gender inequality in agriculture, food and nutrition security is caused by various factors. The prejudiced belief that women's primary role is in housework and nutrition care endures. Women therefore remain largely responsible for unpaid care work including health and nutrition care. The survey results from the ethnic minority areas in Ninh Thuan suggest that the matrilineal system among the ethnic minority groups does not necessarily support greater empowerment of women. They face a greater workload of both productive and reproductive activities, with limited social networks.
- Inadequate awareness of nutrition by both women and men, insufficient quality of nutrition and health care, and poor eating habits based on custom are among the critical factors influencing food and

nutrition security. In the context of climate change, extreme weather events and natural disasters, poor and ethnic minority women are the most vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity. Due to the conditions they face, they also have fewer resources and lower capacity to support their resiliency in the face of such challenges.

- The multifaceted nature of gender inequality in agriculture, food safety and nutrition security is explained by socio-economic conditions, culture/customs and availability and quality of social services (e.g. health, education), which interact with gender stereotypes, age and ethnic differences. This calls for an integrated and inclusive approach for addressing gender issues in agriculture, food and nutrition security.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Recommendations for FAO

At the macro level

- At the national level, promote policy dialogue and provide technical assistance for policy making on gender and ARD with all stakeholders, including rural women.
- Support partners to review government policies and programmes related to agriculture, food and nutrition security from a gender perspective, proposing to include gender-responsive results, mainstream gender in the established monitoring systems (markers and indicators) and incorporate gender budgeting. The partners (e.g. MARD, Ministry of Health or DARD, Department of Health) could select their programmes/policies for review (e.g. National Food Safety Strategy). Such a measure would provide inputs into policy dialogues on gender vis-à-vis agriculture, food and nutrition security and proposals for gender mainstreaming in the implementation of these policies and programmes.
- Develop a communication strategy on gender as part of a consistent approach to gender mainstreaming in the collaborative work with the government to deliver a strong message on the mandate to promote gender equality.
- Promote policy research and analysis on gender and sustainable development of the agriculture sector, on New Rural Areas, as one of the two big national target programmes, and on sustainable poverty reduction and food security.

At the meso level

- Provide capacity development on gender equality, gender mainstreaming and rural women's empowerment for all FAO staff including, including programme and operations staff and managers, to ensure that they have a good understanding of substantive gender equality and knowledge of implementation tools to integrate gender into FAO's programmes and projects.
- Incorporate gender-related responsibility into all staff job descriptions to build staff commitment to gender mainstreaming in their daily work.
- Ensure that gender is mainstreamed in the annual work plans of FAO programmes and the work plans of the partners involved.
- Develop gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation. Ensure sex-disaggregated data collection/reporting in all programme activities, with corresponding templates for activity reporting. Periodic reports should require provision of sex-disaggregated data and gender information.
- Support existing inter-institutional mechanisms, particularly MARD's CFAW, to efficiently integrate gender equality issues and rural women's empowerment throughout their respective systems.
- Allocate budget for gender mainstreaming for partner organizations at both the central and local levels.

At the micro/beneficiary level

- Support capacity and commitment building for grassroots organizations involved in projects and programmes through diverse means, specifically at the local level. Organize gender mainstreaming training courses for local managers and programme staff to ensure gender-sensitive management of their respective programmes.
- Develop guidelines on gender mainstreaming in agriculture, food and nutrition security: Develop gender mainstreaming guidance in the different subsectors (e.g. crops and animal husbandry products) for the operation of nutrition security clubs and for trainings in agricultural occupations and agricultural expansion for farmers. The materials may be available in forms such as printed books, CDs and short videos.
- Support gender mainstreaming in subsectors (crop, livestock and fisheries/aquaculture):

- Encourage local partners to propose initiatives/ solutions and/or to pilot specific gender-related measures such as promoting women's employment and gender equality in their programmes.
- Identify rural women and men champions for the promotion of gender equality and rural women's empowerment at the local community level.
- Build a communication strategy to promote behaviour change and capacity building for gender equality. Build on good practices (see section 5.3) to combat the use of language and images that perpetuate gender stereotypes surrounding the responsibilities of men and women in order to promote healthy eating habits, dietary diversification, consumption of micronutrient-rich foods, and awareness of child and maternal nutrition among both women and men. Ensure that poor and ethnic minority women, men and children are reached in communication efforts (e.g. through attention to appropriate design, language and channels of communication).

6.2.2 Recommendations for the Government of Viet Nam

At the macro-level

- Review policies and programmes related to agriculture and rural development – such as the Programme on New Rural Development, Programme on Sustainable Poverty Reduction and Programmes for Poor, Disadvantaged and Remote/Ethnic Minority Areas (Programme No 30A and Programme No 135)¹⁵ – to ensure gender-responsiveness in the implementation and monitoring processes. These programmes cover multiple sub-programmes and public policies related to credit, business, rural infrastructure and agricultural technologies, all of which should include gender-responsive results, mainstream gender in the established monitoring systems (markers and indicators) and incorporate specific gender budgeting.
- Build strong enforcement of land policy to speed up the process of issuance of Land Use Rights Certificates with both women's and men's names. This requires greater effort by local governments, particularly by public servants working in these services. A communication strategy at the grassroots level is equally important to help women to understand the benefits of having their names on Land Use Right Certificates.

- Ensure that national extension programmes and services meet women's needs and promote women's access to services.
- Collect sex-disaggregated data and employ specific gender indicators. Establish monitoring mechanisms.

At the meso-level

- Develop gender capacity building for the state agencies working on agricultural and rural development, particularly those engaged in inter-institutional mechanisms for GE and rural women's empowerment (RWE) promotion.
- Build capacity of women leaders and managers working in the public sector and representatives from women's organizations and associations in the area of agricultural and rural development.
- Strengthen the supervision capacity of members of the National Assembly and People's Councils on gender and agricultural programmes, as well as on socio-economic development planning from a gender perspective.
- Review and evaluate gender mainstreaming models in the field of agriculture, food and nutrition security, with attention to sustainability after project closure.
- Promote initiatives on gender-responsive budgeting in the ARD sector to ensure financial resources for implementation of sector-specific gender action plans and gender mainstreaming in agriculture, food and nutrition security programmes.
- Provide credit and finance programmes for women complemented with non-financial support such as training, technology and information access, knowledge on markets and business, etc.
- Provide infrastructure and services geared towards meeting women's needs, for instance, reducing their time for unpaid care work (e.g. through childcare centres), increasing access to markets (e.g. through village roads to marketplaces and schools) and enhancing access to health care (e.g. through medical centres).

At the micro-level

- Develop guidelines on gender mainstreaming in the implementation of national target programmes such as the New Rural Development Programme,

¹⁵ These programmes focus on infrastructure, sustainable poverty reduction and job creation.

the Sustainable Poverty Reduction Programme and Programme for Poor, Disadvantaged and Remote Areas.

- Develop and implement communication programmes promoting gender equality that target household behaviour (e.g. the sharing of housework by men) and that help to shift perceptions of women in agriculture (e.g. promoting women's access to and use of machinery and technical equipment, women's participation in non-traditional vocational training, rural women's leadership, etc).
- Develop specific measures/solutions to promote women farmer's participation and voices in the formulation of agricultural policies, such as increased leadership by women in rural community organizations and farmers' organizations.

Building favourable conditions for implementation of gender mainstreaming policies in agriculture, food and nutrition security in FAO and MARD programmes

- There should be an agreement on gender mainstreaming between FAO and MARD for 2017–2021, which lays out the specific responsibilities of agencies and organizations in implementing gender mainstreaming.
- In terms of finance, it is necessary to allocate an adequate budget for gender mainstreaming in programmes, from the central to the local levels, from the beginning of a given project.
- Gender specialists should be recruited to guide gender mainstreaming within a given programme, providing technical assistance in the implementation of gender mainstreaming in programme activities from the central to the local levels.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Guidelines for focus group discussion with local officials

Duration: 120 minutes

Location: Department of Agriculture and Rural Development or People’s Committee Hall

Specific Objectives:

- Gather information and data on the situation of gender equality in the area of agriculture, food and nutrition security, especially in the context of natural disasters and climate change in Lao Cai and Ninh Thuan.
- Gather information on the results and lessons learned in mainstreaming gender issues into the area of agriculture, food and nutrition security in Lao Cai and Ninh Thuan provinces.
- Make recommendations for gender mainstreaming in the planning and implementation of the framework of the National Partnership Programme between FAO and MARD between 2017 and 2021 in Viet Nam.

Participants

- In each province, three workshops and several in-depth interviews with provincial and commune officials will be carried out.
- Provincial level: Representatives of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department of Health, Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (Gender Focal Point), Provincial Women’s Union and Provincial Farmer’s Association. (1 FGD)
- Commune level: Commune leaders, agricultural staff, agricultural, forestry and fishery extension workers, officials in charge of commune health clinics, staff of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs, members of the Women’s Union and Farmers’ Association. (1 FGD/ commune)

Guidelines for FGD

Topic	Detailed questions
1. What is the overall situation of local socio-economic development, especially in agriculture and rural development?	1.1 Overview of socio-economic situation in the last 3 years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the local socio-economic situation? • Overview of agricultural cultivation and rural development in the period 2015–2017? Achievements, constraints and causes?
	1.2 Overview of the food and nutrition security in the locality in the period 2015–2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty situation? Ratio of poor, nearly poor households? • In your locality, are there food shortages, specifically shortages in quantity? Is there lack of quality assurance, food hygiene and safety? Is there diversity in the categories and types of food to meet people’s nutritional needs? • Overview of basic health care for local people? Do people visit commune health clinics or district health centres? What is the malnutrition rate, etc.?

Guidelines for FGD (continued)

Topic	Detailed questions
<p>1. What is the overall situation of local socio-economic development, especially in agriculture and rural development? (continued)</p>	<p>1.3 Natural disasters, climate change, food and nutritional security of local people in recent times</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the situation of natural disasters and climate change? • How do disasters affect agricultural cultivation, food security and nutrition security of local people?
	<p>1.4 Overview of policy implementation in the field of agriculture and rural development and impact on food security and nutritional security in the locality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy on New Rural Development, Sustainable Poverty Reduction, etc. • Policies on health care, nutrition, food hygiene and safety <p>Are these policies gender-mainstreamed? If yes, what are the results? If there is no gender mainstreaming, why?</p>
<p>2. What are the current gender issues in the field of agriculture, rural development, food security and nutritional security?</p>	<p>2.1 Identification current gender issues in the agricultural sector in the locality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour division in the agricultural sector: What are the current roles of women and men in local agricultural cultivation? Who does what work both pre- and post-harvest? • Access to and control over resources in the agricultural sector: Who (men or women in households) accesses/controls lands, water sources (ponds, lakes, lagoons), production equipment and capital (credit, loans) for agricultural cultivation? Who (men or women) accesses/controls/participates in training courses on agricultural extension, forestry and fisheries? • Decision making in agricultural cultivation: Who makes decisions on agricultural investments and production (e.g. type of plants, number of crops and animals, production techniques, how and where to buy raw materials and input for agricultural production and where to sell products?)
	<p>2.2 Identification of current gender issues in the field of food security and nutrition security in the locality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are local people's and officials' perceptions of food security and nutrition security? • In the households, who (men or women) accesses/controls/makes decisions on households' nutritional care and health care (including cultivating/buying food, cooking, preparing meals for the whole day, allocating amount of food for each household member, decisions on health care, etc.)? • Who (men or women) in the households most often participates in training courses on nutrition and health care? • Which household groups and which household members (men or women) are most marginalized in nutrition care? How are they marginalized (e.g., insufficient food in terms of quantity, quality and/or type of meals; do not receive proper nutrition in accordance with age, gender, etc.; face poor food hygiene and safety)? • Who (men or women) in the households suffer from health care disadvantages? Why? What are the reasons for the marginalization? • In cases of being affected by natural disasters and climate change, which households and members (men or women) are more disadvantaged in terms of nutrition and health care (lack of food, lack of quality assurance, nutritional structure); health care deficits, etc.?

Guidelines for FGD (continued)

Topic	Detailed questions
2. What are the current gender issues in the field of agriculture, rural development, food security and nutritional security? (continued)	<p>2.3 Causes and consequences of gender issues in the field of agriculture, food and nutritional security in the locality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the causes of the gender issues (e.g. awareness and understanding of local people, conservative practices in nutrition and health care, gender stereotypes, etc.)? • How to overcome those issues and to support disadvantaged groups? • What measures have been taken to address/mitigate the impact of gender issues? How is the efficiency and what are the results? If no measures have been taken to address the current gender issues, please give the reasons?
3. What is the gender mainstreaming status in the Joint Project between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the United Nations for the period of 2015 to 2017?	<p>The Project on Integration of Nutrition into Food Security for Children and At-Risk Groups in Viet Nam for the period of 2015 to 2017 (MARD, MOH, FAO, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO)</p> <p>3.1 During its implementation, has the project addressed gender issues? If yes, through what activities? Have they contributed to addressing the causes of gender inequalities that existed before?</p> <p>3.2 If gender has not been mainstreamed, why? Which of the following apply?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not been guided • Insufficient capacity (lack of knowledge and/or skills in gender mainstreaming) [Follow-up: Have leaders and staff been trained on gender and gender mainstreaming? If yes, what are the contents of the training? Are they related to gender and food and nutrition security?] • No/insufficient resources (funds, time, human resources) to implement gender integration
4. What are recommendations to promote gender mainstreaming in the National Partnership Programme between FAO and MARD 2017–2021 and in the field of agriculture, food and nutrition security?	<p>4.1 Policies and solutions (central, local, FAO) to promote gender equality in the field of agriculture, food and nutrition security.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General policy • FAO policy • National partnership programme between FAO and MARD 2017–2021 in Viet Nam <p>4.2 Proposed conditions for implementation of policies and measures for gender mainstreaming into the field of agriculture, food and nutrition security.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the conditions for the policy framework? • What are the conditions for organizational structure and resources? • What are the financial conditions?
5. What reports and data are available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO Project Plan for the 2015–2017 period and the Annual Plan of Lao Cai • Preliminary and Full Report on FAO's annual activities and for the 2015-2017 period in Lao Cai • List of training materials and technical documents of the FAO project for the 2015–2017 period • Report on the project components implemented by DARD, DOH and VWU for the 2015–2017 period. • Annual reports of Lao Cai Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Lao Cai Department of Health, Lao Cai Women's Union, Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (Gender Equality) for 2016 and the first 6 months of 2017

Guidelines for focus group discussions with local farmers

Specific Objectives

- Gather information about the economic situation and agricultural cultivation of local households;
- Gather information about the situation of households and farmers (men and women) in access to and use of adequate, safe and nutritious food sources to sustain healthy and active lives at different times (non-harvesting time, just prior to harvesting time, times of natural disaster, etc.);
- Gather information about gender equality in farmers' households in relation to access to/control over and decision making on agricultural cultivation, food security and nutritional security.

Participants

- In each province/city, select two communes which have been involved in the implementation of the joint project between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the United Nations for the 2015–2017 period.
- In each commune, organize two focus group discussions (6 people/group) and several in-depth interviews with local farmers.
- Select farmers to participate in group discussions and in-depth interviews (6 males and 6 females).
- All the participants are working in the areas of cultivation, husbandry and aquaculture in the commune; some farmers have been affected by natural disasters in recent times.

Key contents of the FGD

Topic	Time	Detailed questions/methods used
1. Introduction	10 minutes	Each participant introduces his/herself and his/her household: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name, age, marital status, number of children, education attainment • Household economic status: poor, near-poor, not poor • Type of agricultural production (cultivation, animal husbandry, aquaculture) and the main products
2. Socio-economic situation and natural disasters of the locality	10 minutes	Village mapping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of areas where agricultural production is being carried out • Local food supplies (local markets, self-sufficiency) • History of natural disasters affecting agricultural production and people's lives: What disaster? Which areas and which farmers were affected? How were they affected (e.g. effects upon production; lack of food and foodstuffs; food hygiene and safety, etc.)? Which social groups were most affected (in terms of gender, age group, etc.)?

Key contents of the FGD (continued)

Topic	Time	Detailed questions/methods used
3. Agricultural production and gender equality in the locality	30 minutes	<p>Situation of agricultural production in the locality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide the group to develop a seasonal calendar for their local agricultural production (cultivation, animal husbandry, aquaculture). <p>Division of labour in agricultural production (cultivation, animal husbandry, aquaculture)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do women do? What do men do? (Who chooses what to produce, production techniques, purchase of raw materials, and how/what to cultivate, harvest, consume, etc.?) • Who participates in extension training courses on agriculture, forestry and fisheries? • Who (men or women) participate in, control and make decisions on each job? • Why? What are the reasons for such a division of labour? <p>3.3 Impacts of natural disasters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the context of natural disasters, how does agricultural production and the division of labour therein change? • How do the roles of women and men change?
4. Food security, nutritional security in the households	30 minutes	<p>4.1 Food security and nutritional security in households</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food sources for households (self-sufficiency, purchase): In the household, who makes decisions regarding food sources? Who implements the decisions? • Spending on food: Who decides? Who implements the decisions? • Preparing food, cooking: Who decides? Who implements the decisions? • Description of a typical household meal for a farmer's household (better off, medium, poor): Are there different diets among the elderly, working-age members and school children in the household? How about for children under five (male and female) and for pregnant and nursing women? • What are local customs and practices that affect nutrition, especially for pregnant women, small children, older children, the elderly, etc.? • What are the household's meals during a disaster? How can households ensure food and foodstuffs under natural disasters? • During the most recent disaster, did households receive subsidies or other forms of support from agencies, organizations and/or individuals? Which member(s) of the household benefited? Who distributes subsidies and other types of support to household members? <p>4.2 Health care for household members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for the health of household members: Who decides? Who implements the decisions? • Periodic visits for health care, nutrition counselling and treatment: Who decides? Who implements the decisions? • In the context of natural disasters, who is prioritized for health care, medical examination and treatment (if any)?

Key contents of the FGD *(continued)*

Topic	Time	Detailed questions/methods used
5. Recommendations to promote gender equality in agriculture, food and nutritional security	10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations to local authorities • Recommendations to the National Partnership Programme between FAO and MARD 2017–2021 in Viet Nam. Specifically: • How to promote equality between women and men in agricultural production (technology, loans, etc.), especially in the context of natural disasters? • How can we ensure food and nutrition in the household? What further policy and support is needed from the State and localities? • What are recommendations on job creation for women? • What are recommendations regarding general health care, reproductive health for women and child health care? • Other problems?
6. Direct observation and taking photos	30 minutes	Field visits to some agricultural households to collect information about gender equality in agricultural production and in household food security through a combination of observations, note-taking, photography and interviews.

Annex 2: List of those consulted

Name	Title/organization
1. Nguyen Van Vuong	Head of Division, Department of Cultivation, MARD
2. Nguyen Trung Kien	Director, Division of Commodity Markets, Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development, MARD
3. Nguyen Minh Nhat	Programme Officer, FAO Viet Nam
4. Vu Phuong Ly	Programme Specialist, UN Women Viet Nam
5. Le Lan Anh	Programme Officer, UNICEF
6. Nguyen Thi Thom	Vice-Director of Lao Cai Agricultural Extension Centre
7. Hoang Thi Thu Hang	Lao Cai Women's Union
8. Sung Thi Hanh	Lao Cai Famer's Union
9. Bui Thi Huong	Head of Plant Protection Division, Crop Production and Plant Protection Branch, Lao Cai DARD
10. Do Thi Thai Ha	Domestic Plant Quarantine Station, Crop Production and Plant Protection Branch, Lao Cai DARD
11. Nguyen Van Thao	Lao Cai DARD
12. Cao Thi Hoa Binh	Assistant Manager of Quality Assurance Branch, Lao Cai DARD
13. Giang Thi Thu	Head of Children and Gender Equality Division, Lao Cai DOLISA
14. Pham Thi Kim Thoa	Director of Centre for Reproductive Health Care, Department of Health
15. Nguyen Thi Ha	Lao Cai DARD
16. Le Thi Kim Hung	Lao Cai DARD
17. Trinh Thi Thanh Thuy	Ninh Thuan Women's Union
18. Truong Thi Nhu Y	Ninh Thuan Famer's Union
19. Nguyen Van Thu	Children and Gender Equality Division, Ninh Thuan DOLISA
20. Tran Quang Trung	Ninh Thuan Department of Health
21. Nguyen Thi Kim Huong	Ninh Thuan DARD
22. Phan Hai	Plant Protection Division, Crop Production and Plant Protection Branch, Ninh Thuan DARD
23. Phan Le	Ninh Thuan DARD

Name	Title/organization
24. Hong Hai Cach	Ninh Thuan DARD
25. Nguyen Van Minh	Ninh Thuan DARD
26. 10 staff members	People's Committee of Bac Son commune
27. 10 staff members	People's Committee of Cong Hai commune
28. 10 staff members	People's Committee of Thao Chu Phin commune
29. 10 staff members	People's Committee of Nam Mon commune
30. 6 female and 6 male farmers	Bac Son commune
31. 6 female and 6 male farmers	Cong Hai commune
32. 6 female and 6 male farmers	Thao Chu Phin commune
33. 12 females	Nam Mon commune

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