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IKI INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE VIETNAM

Gender Mainstreaming in Biodiversity and Climate Policies and Actions

Insights from IKI projects in Viet Nam

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Preface

Biodiversity and climate policies and actions are not gender neutral. Gender inequality, the drivers and impacts of climate change, and biodiversity loss are deeply interconnected and often reinforce one another. However, when addressed in an integrated and strategic manner, these issues have the potential to generate a positive multiplier effect, advancing gender equality while enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of environmental outcomes.

Recongnising this, the International Climate Initiative (IKI) has identified gender equality as a key success factor in its operational approach. Gender justice is embedded in both the objectives and implementation of IKI projects, ensuring that climate and biodiversity actions are inclusive, equitable, and impactful.

This knowledge product, named "***Gender Mainstreaming in Biodiversity and Climate Policies and Actions: Insights from IKI Projects in Viet Nam***" has been developed to foster cross-learning and knowledge exchange among IKI implementers. It documents practical experiences, gender-responsive approaches, achievements, and lessons learned from mainstreaming gender into project operations.

The publication begins by exploring the nexus between gender equality, climate change, and biodiversity, followed by an overview of the current state of gender, climate, and biodiversity issues in the context of Viet Nam. It also outlines key elements of IKI's gender strategy and action plan. The core of the publication features four good practices from IKI-funded projects in Viet Nam, showcasing concrete examples of how gender responsive approaches have been applied on the ground.

Finally, the publication offers a way forward, providing recommendations to strengthen collaboration, mutual learning, and collective efforts among IKI implementers to further advance gender equality in biodiversity and climate policies and actions.

We hope this publication serves as a valuable resource for IKI project teams, policymakers, civil society organisations, and development partners in promoting gender-responsive climate and biodiversity action. By learning from one another and building on proven practices, we can collectively enhance the impact of climate and biodiversity efforts which are ensured to be inclusive, equitable, and effective for all.

IKI Interface Viet Nam

Note: The names of partner agencies and provinces in this document are listed according to Viet Nam government structure before the political system reform in 2025

BACKGROUND

The nexus between gender and climate change, biodiversity loss

Gender inequality remains a persistent global issue, while climate change and biodiversity loss have emerged as one of the most pressing challenges to humanity and the environment in the 21st century. In recent decades, there has been a growing body of research proving the critical intersection of gender equality, climate change, and biodiversity loss. These issues are deeply interconnected, reinforcing each other and compounding vulnerabilities and inequality.

In particular, climate change and biodiversity loss can exacerbate gender inequality by causing food insecurity, poverty, diseases, and displacement, which disproportionately and negatively affect women and girls[1]. When addressed together, however, they may have the potential to generate a positive multiplier effect. For instance, a study in 2020[2] identified a two-way relationship between improved gender equality and increased climate resilience. This study report highlights that countries with lower levels of gender inequality tend to take more action on climate change and are less vulnerable to its adverse effects. Similarly, a study analysing environmental and social indicators across 114 countries[3] revealed that nations with higher levels of inequality tend to have lower environmental well-being and vice versa.

Two key points are underscored in the discourse on the nexus of gender equality, climate change, and biodiversity loss, including:

- *The impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss are not gender neutral:* Women and men are not a homogenous group, and they experience climate change and diversity loss differently, depending on their socio-economic background and demographic and societal factors. The gender roles and expectation often shape the exposure, vulnerability and adaptive capacity of women and men in different ways[4]. Furthermore, many studies show that women, especially indigenous women and girls, older women, LGBTIQ+ people, women and girls with disabilities, migrant women, and women living in rural, remote, conflict, and disaster-prone areas, are often more vulnerable to climate change impacts than men. This is due to structural inequalities and discriminatory practices, including limited participation in decision-making processes, limited access to and control over resources (e.g. land, finance, and technology), and systemic barriers to the full realisation of their rights. It is also well documented in a study by UN Women and UNICEF that the gendered impacts of climate change are contextual and event-specific. Different climate hazards, for example, floods, hurricanes, and droughts, may impact women and men, girls and boys in different ways.
- *Integrating gender equality into climate actions can significantly enhance both their effectiveness and efficiency.* Evidence shows that women are not only disproportionately affected by climate change and biodiversity loss but also play a critical role in building climate resilience and biodiversity conservation. Their contributions span a wide range of areas, from sustainable land and natural resource management to last-mile delivery of renewable energy solutions such as solar panels[7]. Due to traditional gender roles and socio-economic structures, women are often responsible for the management of essential household including seeds, soil, firewood, and water. They are also key custodians of traditional agricultural knowledge and typically make crucial decisions regarding the selection, use, and disposal of household appliances, with impacts

1 OECD. (2023). The gender equality and environment intersection: An overview of development co-operation frameworks and financing.
2 Andrijevic et al. (2020). Overcoming gender inequality for climate resilient development. Overcoming gender inequality for climate resilient development | Nature Communications https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-19856-w
3 Care & WWF. (2021).Gender inequality, biodiversity, and environmental degradation.
4 UNFCCC. (2019). Differentiated impacts of climate change on women and men; the integration of gender considerations in climate policies, plans and actions; and progress in enhancing gender balance in national climate delegations. Synthesis report by the secretariat
5 Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected | UN Women – Headquarters https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2022/02/explainer-how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected
6 UN Women /UNICEF. (2019). Gender and age inequality of disaster risks
7 Women are key to tackling the effects of climate change | World Economic Forum https://www.weforum.org/stories/2022/02/women-gender-equality-climate-change-leadership/

on the energy efficiency and consumption levels of households[8]. Moreover, women's participation in decision-making processes leads to stronger climate outcomes at the policy level. A 2019 study found that countries with higher representation of women in national parliaments tend to adopt more stringent climate policies[9]. A report of the European Investment Bank[10] emphasises that diversity speeds up climate actions and environment sustainability. Particularly, companies with gender diverse boards are 60% more likely to reduce energy consumption, and 40% are more likely to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, strengthening women's voice in climate and biodiversity conservation-related decision-making, ensuring equal access to and control over resources, and advancing their rights are not only matters of social justice, but they are also strategic imperatives. Empowered women can enhance their own adaptive capacity and play a pivotal role in helping their families and communities respond more effectively to the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss (see example of inspiring stories).

The state of gender equality, climate change, and biodiversity conservation in Viet Nam

Viet Nam has undergone a significant socio-economic transformation in recent decades, transitioning from one of the poorest countries in the world to a lower middle-income country. Today, it is considered one of the most dynamic emerging economies in the East Asia region.

Alongside its economic progress, Viet Nam has also made notable strides in promoting gender equality and women's rights, particularly by strengthening the legal and policy frameworks. The country typically ranks in the mid-range of global indices on gender equality and women's empowerment. According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2024[11], Viet Nam ranked 72nd out of 146 countries, an improvement from 87th in 2021. Meanwhile, on the Gender Inequality Index[12], which measures disparities in reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation, Viet Nam ranked 91st out of 166 countries in 2024.

Despite these advancements, Vietnamese women are still more disadvantaged than men in the country's development progress, such as underrepresentation in leadership positions, a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, persistent gender pay gaps, limited access to resources, and prevalence of gender-based violence, among others.[13].

Viet Nam is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change, which has been threatening food security, livelihoods, and the lives of millions of people through the increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters. The impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss are experienced differently by the local community because each individual has different backgrounds, opportunities, and capacities to take preventive measures, and to cope with the adverse effects. Compared to men, Vietnamese women, due to structural and systematic barriers, often have less access to and control over resources and a limited voice in decision-making processes related to climate change and biodiversity, so their vulnerabilities may be exacerbated.

The Government of Viet Nam has demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing gender equality, climate action, and biodiversity conservation.

8 IPCC, 2019: Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.- O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, , R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)]. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157988.001

9 Mavisakalyan, Astghik & Tarverdi, Yashar, 2019. "Gender and climate change: Do female parliamentarians make difference? https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/poleco/v56y2019icp151-164.html," European Journal of Political Economy https://ideas.repec.org/s/eee/poleco.html, Elsevier, vol. 56(C), pages 151-164.

10 European Investment Bank. (2024). Gender equality and women's empowerment overview.

11 Global Gender Gap Report 2024 | World Economic Forum https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/

12 Viet Nam is in the High Human Development category: UNDP New Report | United Nations Development Programme https://www.undp.org/vietnam/press-releases/viet-nam-high-human-development-category-undp-new-report

13 UN Women. (2021). Country gender equality profile – Viet Nam

This is reflected in its active participation in the key international agreements such as the Paris Agreement, the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). By endorsing these frameworks, the parties are required to develop and implement gender responsive and inclusive climate policies and actions. However, there are some key challenges for Viet Nam to translate these commitments into effective practice. They include:

- *Climate change and biodiversity are not explicitly addressed in the gender equality legal framework.* Viet Nam is known as a country where women enjoy formal equality under the law. For instance, equal rights for women and men in all areas are enshrined in the Constitution and detailed in the Gender Equality Law (2006). The Land Law (2013, revised in 2024) further strengthens gender equality by requiring that both spouses' names appear on land use certificates and property deeds. The State Budget law regulates that promoting gender equality is one of state budget management principles. Besides, the recent National Strategy on Gender Equality sets ambitious targets, such as reducing the adolescent birth rate; increasing women's enrollment in vocational education and training; promoting educational inclusion for ethnic minority boys and girls; and improving access to health services for LGBTIQ people[14]. However, climate change and biodiversity loss are notably absent from these key legal and policy documents.

- *Gender equality is not consistently integrated across the legal and policy frameworks related to climate change and biodiversity conservation.* Gender equality is often only mentioned as a general principle in some laws, such as the Law on Environmental Protection, the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control, the Law on Forestry, and the Law on Biodiversity. For example, the Law on Environmental Protection (2020) stipulates that environmental protection must align with social welfare, children's rights, and gender equality, while the Law on Forestry includes a provision that forestry planning should ensure gender equality. However, the corresponding implementation decrees for these laws make no reference to gender equality, weakening their practical application. In contrast, gender equality is more thoroughly integrated into strategic documents such as the National Climate Change Strategy to 2050 and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) with concrete measures. The updated 2020 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) also acknowledges the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women. Despite this, gender considerations are notably absent from the Paris Agreement implementation plans developed by key ministries, including the former Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the former Ministry of Transport (MoT), the Ministry of Construction (MoC), and the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT), etc. Also, in the area of biodiversity conservation, gender equality is not mentioned in the 2023 National Plan for Implementing the Glasgow Declaration on Forests and Land Use at all.

- *Gender norms significantly influence the division of labor between women and men in climate change response and biodiversity conservation.* In Viet Nam, men are often perceived as breadwinners and suitable for physically demanding and strenuous tasks, while women are considered as caregivers and to be suitable for manual and domestic work. This is well reflected in the labor division in climate change response and biodiversity conservation. For example, various studies show that women's economic roles are often linked to meeting household consumption needs, for example, collecting fuelwood and wild foods, and selling non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in local markets. In contrast, men are more commonly involved in the exploitation of timber and higher-value NTFPs for commercial purposes[15]. Similarly, men are typically responsible for operating machinery

14 Country Gender Equality Profile Viet Nam 2021 (CGEP) | UN Women – Asia-Pacific https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/10/country-gender-equality-profile-viet-nam-2021
15 Edwin Shanks. (2020). Situation and analysis of gender and FLEGT in Viet Nam

and implementing climate-resilient agricultural practices, while women tend to carry out manual labor. For instance, in Mekong Delta, female hired labor is typically engaged in planting, caring for fruit (e.g., putting covers on mangoes and guavas, shaping dragon fruit, and removing unwanted grapefruits or oranges), and harvesting[16]. In addition, social norms on gender roles continue to limit women's participation and representation in decision-making processes related to climate change and biodiversity conservation. For example, a study by RECOFTC[17] found that women are significantly underrepresented in decision-making positions within the forestry sector at both national and local levels. Similarly, the National Steering Committee established to implement Viet Nam's climate change commitments under COP26, formed through Prime Minister's Decision No. 2157/QĐ-TTg, dated 21 December 2021[18], was overwhelmingly male-dominated, with only one woman appointed as a member. Even when women play an important role in climate response and biodiversity conservation, their contribution is not equally recognised and valued.

- *Women have limited access to resources to build their resilience:* A study[19] shows that reducing or eliminating the barriers women face in accessing resources, such as land, agricultural inputs, machinery, and credit, could reduce the current gender productivity gap by 20–30%, thereby increasing agricultural productivity in Viet Nam. However, in practice, Vietnamese women, particularly ethnic minority and migrant women, remain more disadvantaged than men in preparing for and responding to climate change and biodiversity loss due to limited access to critical resources. For example, 60% of women are unaware of climate change, compared to 36% of men[20]. Despite their important role in agricultural production, women have limited access to vocational training needed to adopt climate-resilient farming techniques. One study found that 71% of rural women laborers lack access to vocational training, compared to 60% of men[21]. Harmful practices related to land rights further hinder women's ability to access credit programs essential for undertaking climate change adaptation measures, diversifying income sources, and recovering from climate-related losses. For instance, in 2019, only 15.8% of ethnic minority households headed by women received preferential credit loans from the Bank for Social Policies, almost 5 percentage points lower than the rate for households headed by ethnic minority men (20.7%)[23].

Gender in the International Climate Initiative (IKI)

The International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the Federal Government of Germany supports projects in the areas of climate change mitigation, adaptation, conservation of biological diversity and preserving and restoring carbon sinks. Within the Federal Government, the IKI is anchored in the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUKN). Selected individual projects are also the responsibility of the Federal Foreign Office (AA)[25].

16 World Bank. 2021. Agricultural Land Use and Sustainable Livelihoods in the Mekong Delta: Alternative Scenarios and Policy Implications
17 RECOFTC (2015) Understanding women's participation in forestry
18 Thành lập Ban Chỉ đạo quốc gia triển khai thực hiện cam kết về biến đổi khí hậu (moit.gov.vn) https://moit.gov.vn/phat-trien-ben-vung/thanh-lap-ban-chi-dao-quoc-gia-trien-khai-thuc-hien-cam-ket-ve-bien-doi-khi-hau.html
19 FAO, IFAD, and ILO. (2010). Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty. Status, trends and gaps. Rome
20 UNDP. (2029). Opportunities to empower women with enhanced access to climate information services for transformative adaptation actions in Viet Nam's agricultural sectors. Technical brief.
21 UN Women. (2021). The State of Gender Equality and Climate Change in Viet Nam
23 UN Women. (2021). Policy brief: Gender issues of ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.
24 IKI Gender Action Plan | Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (IKI) https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/iki-media/publication/iki-gender-action-plan-1902/
25 The Strategy of the International Climate Initiative up to 2030 | Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (IKI) https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/iki-media/publication/the-strategy-of-the-international-climate-initiative-up-to-2030-1812/

Striving for gender justice is identified as one of the success factors in the IKI. The IKI strategy states that climate and biodiversity protection projects achieve their maximum impact only if gender aspects are taken into account throughout the project cycle. This strategy also sets a target that at least 60 percent of all IKI projects pursue gender-specific project goals , thereby contributing specifically to gender justice through gender-responsive and gender-transformative approaches.

Specifically, the IKI Gender Strategy promotes gender responsive processes as a minimum standard at the project level. IKI projects are required to actively prevent gender-based disadvantages and discrimination. A targeted approach to accommodating context-specific gender relations will be used to improve activities related to climate action and biodiversity conservation[27].

Gender Integration Continuum

GENDER NEGATIVE	GENDER BLIND	GENDER SENSITIVE	GENDER RESPONSIVE	GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE
Unequal gender roles, relations and norms are upheld.	Ignores unequal gender roles, relations and norms and gender-based discrimination.	Recognises unequal gender roles, relations and norms, but does not actively address them.	Recognises unequal gender roles, relations and norms and attempts to actively combat them.	Addresses the deep roots of unequal gender roles, relations and norms.

Source: IKI Gender Strategy

Furthermore, the IKI Gender Action Plan (GAP) formulates specific objectives, work packages, and measures for implementing the five strategic areas of action identified in the IKI Gender Strategy. Notably, the strategic fields of action (in the box) (i) & (v) create the necessary implementation framework and gender considerations within organisations. The remaining areas are geared toward the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming at the program and project levels. Furthermore, the IKI Gender Guidelines are to support implementing organisations in drafting and conducting a Gender Analysis and developing a Project Gender Action Plan (P-GAP) to fulfil IKI's standards.

Five action areas for implementation[28]

i. **Governance, scope and accountability: The successful implementation of the IKI Gender Strategy can be achieved only if this implementation is supported at all organisational levels within the IKI's stakeholder institutions and if structures for implementation are available.**

ii. **Criteria for implementing organisations and adaptation of processes: Gender mainstreaming requires the all-encompassing review and modification of all IKI-specific business processes in terms of their impact on gender justice.**

iii. **Gender competence (internal and external): Anchoring gender aspects at the heart of all IKI processes and activities requires all stakeholders to receive training in gender competencies.**

iv. **Knowledge management and communication: To establish and disseminate learning effects, knowledge management and communication are needed, and must be embedded in existing processes.**

v. **Resources and budget: An adequate volume of human resources and funding must be provided for the measures outlined in the IKI Gender Action Plan.**

27 Gender strategy | Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (IKI) https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/about-iki/values-responsibility/gender/
28 Gender strategy | Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (IKI) https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/about-iki/values-responsibility/gender/

GOOD PRACTICES OF IKI PROJECTS

IKI in Viet Nam

Viet Nam is among 14 priority countries of IKI worldwide. Since 2008, IKI has financed 99 projects in Vietnam, with a total budget of over 840 million Euros. As of September 2025, there are 22 ongoing projects and 77 completed projects. IKI's portfolio in Viet Nam now includes bilateral, regional, and global projects under four funding areas: , (i) mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, (ii) adapting to the impacts of climate change, (iii) preserving and restoring natural carbon sinks, (iv) conserving biological diversity.

In response to the requirements of the IKI Gender Strategy and the specific context of Viet Nam, IKI implementers have undertaken various initiatives to promote gender equality in climate change response and biodiversity conservation at both local and national levels. Below are some notable examples of good practice.

Good practice 1: Gender Responsiveness in the Village Development Facilities

A Focus on Gender Equity and Conservation-Oriented Community Development

WWF - CarBi II

Background

The Central Annamites Landscape (CAL) is a reservoir of rich and unique biodiversity. However, it is under intense anthropogenic pressures, primarily from large-scale legal and illegal forest conversion, logging, and poaching. These activities have significantly reduced the populations of the region's most important threatened and endemic species.

For generations, communities, particularly the ethnic minorities, living around the protected areas have relied on forests for their daily needs and livelihoods. This includes the collection of firewood, non-timber forest products, and the grazing of livestock. Due to traditional gender roles, women are primarily responsible for carrying out these activities. However, this heavy dependence on forest resources can contribute to ecosystem degradation, ultimately threatening the sustainability of local livelihoods, especially those that women are tasked with maintaining. Furthermore, women often have little voice in decision making process related to biodiversity conservation as well as limited access to resources for developing their livelihoods[29].

Shifting to sustainable alternative livelihoods has enabled families living around the protected areas to increase their household income while actively contributing to biodiversity conservation by reducing pressure on the forest ecosystems. In response, the Carbon and Biodiversity Project phase II (CarBi II), implemented over a 5-year period (2019 – 2024) by WWF in Viet Nam and Laos through KfW, and part of the International Climate Initiative (IKI), took an initiative of establishing of the Village Development Facilities (VDF) . These facilities aimed to provide equal access to financing for income-generating activities in agroforestry and alternative livelihoods for both women and men.

Intervention approach

The Village Development Facilities (VDF)[30] is a model of self-reliance and community-based governance. It was financed through diverse sources, including support from the CarBi II project, Payments for Forest Environmental Services (PFES), and contributions from both community members and village authorities. The fund was used to promote village development and provide livelihood alternatives through village-level microfinance programs. In addition, WWF provided capacity-building support, conservation communication and behavior change activities, equipping community management boards with skills in financial management, accounting, and development planning. These efforts have enhanced transparency and effectiveness, helping to build trust among all stakeholders.

A gender-responsive approach was applied throughout the establishment and operation of the VDFs to ensure equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, as well as equitable access to capacity-building opportunities and financial resources. In particular, three key intervention strategies have been implemented:

- *Inclusive participation:* Both women and men jointly discussed and developed the regulations on using PFES funds for community development. Furthermore, women representatives were selected as members of the VDF's management boards, serving not only as joint bank account holders of the VDF but also holding equal authority in decisions related to fund allocation. To ensure that women's voices were heard and to minimise the influence of men in decision-making processes, men and women were often divided into separate groups during consultation meetings and training workshops. This approach allowed each group to express their independent opinions and ideas more freely.
- *Capacity building:* Both female and male farmers received training on the application of farming techniques and business skills for livelihood development. In addition, they were trained

29 Agarwal, B. (2001). Participatory exclusions, community forestry, and gender: An analysis for South Asia and a conceptual framework. World Development, 29(10), 1623-1648.
30 Village Development Facilities: Empowering community-led biodiversity conservation in the Central Annamites | WWF https://vietnam.panda.org/en/?388559/Village-Development-Fund-Empowering-community-led-biodiversity-conservation-in-the-Central-Annamites

in effective financial management, including bookkeeping and record-keeping skills.

- *Resource allocation:* In addition to the criterion of residing in the buffer zone of the protected area, priority for borrowing from the VDF was given to poor households, forest-dependent households, particularly those headed by women. To ensure the shared responsibility for loan repayment, both the husband and wife were required to sign the loan agreement when borrowing money from the fund.

Achievements:

- *Inclusive Participation of Women and Ethnic Minority Groups:* Women's participation in project activities reached 49.75%, marking significant progress toward inclusive engagement of women and ethnic minority communities.
- *Women in decision making:* By the end of the project, women now hold 36% of leadership positions at the management boards of the 30 VDFs, a substantial increase from 0% prior to the project's intervention. Notably, it was the first time that villages opened bank accounts, enabling local communities, including ethnic minority women, to manage and allocate the funds effectively for their livelihood improvement, community development, and forest management. As members of the management boards, women have had a meaningful voice in decision-making processes related to the fund allocation.
- *Women's Economic Empowerment:* Among the 1,255 forest-dependent households across the 30 VDFs, 573 households received financial support to pursue alternative livelihoods by December 2024. Equipped with improved knowledge and skills in financial management and agricultural production techniques, many women played an active role in deciding how to invest the funds to support household livelihood development.

Lessons learnt

- It is important to create a safe and inclusive space for both women and men to participate throughout the project cycle, from planning to implementation, monitoring & evaluation by acknowledging and valuing their diverse perspectives regarding biodiversity conservation and management. This was seen as a strong focus of CarBi II.
- Gender roles and needs must be carefully considered when organising training, meetings, and events. For example, due to language barriers, mobility constraints, and the burden of unpaid care work, it is advisable to select accessible venues (e.g., central locations within the village) and schedule activities at convenient times. These were well considered in the CarBi II project's logistic preparation. However, women's burden of unpaid care work should be further considered in future interventions. Additionally, using visualised training materials and incorporating hands-on, practical field exercises can further support ethnic minority participation inclusively and effectively.
- It is also essential to promote community ownership and engagement in biodiversity conservation and management of both women and men. This helps ensure the effective use of resources and maximises benefits for the entire local community, while fostering long-term sustainability and inclusive development.

Human stories

©WWF

Mrs. Xua presents the results of her group discussion on the value of ecosystem
©WWF

"We've learned not only how to manage the fund but also how to monitor and report its use. This has greatly improved our confidence in managing communal resources," said Mrs. Nguyen Thi Xua, a management board member of A Xach's VDF in Nam Dong commune, Thua Thien Hue province.

"Our family's primary food source relies on farming, but more is needed. I also weave rattan/ bamboo fabric, and Zeng for sale to supplement my income, yet the profit is not much. I rallied fellow women to venture into the forest, harvesting bamboo shoots and collecting snails to increase our earnings. The forest's specialties were highly sought after. I heard from my village about the fund of CarBi II. I hesitated about taking a loan as I was still determining my repayment capability. Eventually, I borrowed US$ 200 from the fund and ventured into fish farming. At first, many fish died; fortunately, the project provided fish farming training, helping me overcome this challenge. Consequently, I successfully repaid the loan, invested more in fish breeding, and improved the quality of living for my family" said Ms. Blup Thi Hang, Ta Oi ethnic minority, A Roang commune, A Luoi district, Thua Thien Hue province.

©WWF

Mrs. Hang is feeding the fish
©WWF

(*) For more information of the CarBi II project's results, kindly find Here

(**) For a story of change, kindly find Here

Good practice 2: Women Economic Empowerment in Deforestation-free Value

SNV - Café-REDD

Background

In the Central Highlands of Viet Nam, the K'Ho ethnic minority have traditionally practiced nomadic upland cultivation, employing field rotation within forested areas as a sustainable method of natural resource management for generations. However, relocation from forest-based settlements to designated residential areas has led to a shift toward more intensive farming practices. In particular, the expansion of coffee farming was a major driver of land-use change, contributing significantly to the loss and degradation of forested landscapes.

At the same time, climate change is becoming more severe and unpredictable, and it has made the local ethnic minorities struggle to maintain their livelihoods through conventional crop production. They are aware that they must adopt more sustainable agricultural practices. Achieving this goal requires the meaningful participation of local communities including both women and men, primary producers and business community, in decision-making processes related to forest restoration, management of natural resources as well as equitable access to resources necessary for sustainable, deforestation-free coffee production.

Regarding gender equality, a matrilineal structure is evident in the K'Ho community, where women are traditionally recognised as heads of households and hold important symbolic roles within the family and community. Women have historically held the authority to organise production, maintain family harmony, and were respected even in cases of disagreement with their husbands[31]. They are also mainly responsible for caregiving and managing household duties. Meanwhile, men are commonly perceived as the primary breadwinners and tend to hold more influence in the economic and community activities. Despite the matrilineal structure, men continue to dominate in practice, holding the majority of leadership and decision-making roles in local entities such as government bodies, associations, cooperatives, and business services.

Within the context of sustainable economic development aligned with forest restoration, strengthening women's economic empowerment and leadership can create a mutually reinforcing relationship between livelihood improvement, environmental conservation, and meaningful development values. By balancing the needs and priorities of families and communities with the goals of forest restoration, women's active involvement helps ensure that both development and conservation objectives are achieved in a more inclusive and sustainable manner.

The Coffee Agroforestry and Forest Enhancement for REDD+ (Café-REDD) project, funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI), aims to reduce forest degradation by addressing the conversion of forest to agriculture within a priority conservation landscape, the Lang Biang Landscape (including Bidoup Nui Ba National Park and its buffer zone). Café-REDD operates on the belief that slowing deforestation begins with supporting farmers and entrepreneurs to develop diverse, high-quality farms and secure stable incomes. This is achieved through strategic partnerships for forest restoration and conservation, implementation of traceability systems for deforestation-free coffee, active engagement of smallholders in sustainable coffee production and agroforestry, and inclusive financial mobilisation for conservation efforts. Gender equality is a cross-cutting priority and is established as a crucial pillar throughout the implementation of these interventions to ensure equitable and lasting impacts.

Interventions

Café-REDD implemented targeted efforts to enhance women's economic empowerment and leadership in support of sustainable forest restoration and conservation. Key interventions included:

- *Gender responsive planning:* The project created gender-responsive criteria for SME beneficiaries, ensuring participation of women and supporting companies that hired high/

31 Vo Tan Tu & Nguyen Dinh Nghiep. (2024). The role of wife and husband in the family of K'Ho people in Lac Duong district, Lam Dong province, Viet Nam.

certain percentage of women, especially ethnic minority women.

- *Women-led cooperatives:* Facilitated the establishment of two new women-led coffee cooperatives as well as provided roasting machines, agricultural dryers, and office equipment to enhance their operational capacity and market presence.
- *Financial flows:* Provided Accelerator Fund support to agricultural businesses, including women-led enterprises, to strengthen two deforestation-free coffee value chains, two mushroom value chains, and one local agricultural supply chain, promoting job creation, particularly for women working in coffee value chains.
- *Entrepreneurship capacity building:* Delivered technical assistance to 10 women-led businesses to develop business plans, improve financial management skills, and implement effective marketing strategies to scale their operations. Leadership training and coaching were provided frequently for female field/group leaders. Besides, women champions were invited to participate in events as inspirers/role models and advocates for gender equality, and women-led businesses.
- *Access to technology:* Supported enterprises and businesses, with specific attention to women-led ones, in adopting traceability and digital monitoring systems to ensure sustainability and compliance with EUDR (EU Deforestation Regulation) requirements.
- *Access to formal financial resources:* Partnered with banks to conduct credit scoring for farmers, including women, to improve their access to formal financial services.
- *Promotion of indigenous people participation and leadership enhancement:* Implemented the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process for land use and conservation decisions, with active participation from ethnic minority groups, village heads, including female leaders, to promote inclusive forest governance.

Achievements:

By leveraging women's empowerment and gender equality throughout its interventions, Café-REDD created meaningful opportunities for both women and men to actively and equally participate in economic activities and benefit from deforestation-free coffee production and value chains. This contributed to more inclusive, gender-responsive social and economic development of K'Ho community and Lang Biang area.

Key results include:

- ***Enhanced women's economic participation and entrepreneurship:***
  - ✓ Two women-led cooperatives were successfully established and are now operational.
  - ✓ A total of 197 farmers, including 141 women, benefited from off-forest livelihood models.
- ***Enhanced women's access to resources:***
  - ✓ 15 companies, including 09 women-led ones, adopted traceability and digital monitoring systems for deforestation-free coffee production in line with EUDR compliance.
  - ✓ Five agricultural businesses, including four women-led enterprises, received support from the Accelerator Fund.
  - ✓ 375 farmers (62% of whom were women) gained access to formal credit through partnerships with local banks.
  - ✓ 39% of the project beneficiaries were women, who were supported to transition to sustainable agroforestry models via trainings on sustainable coffee production and the supply of high-quality seedlings and fertilisers.
- ***Enhanced women's leadership roles:***
  - ✓ 10 village heads including 05 female leaders, were engaged in participatory farm mapping and the development of village land use plans.

- ✓ One-third of the leadership positions in 30 farmer groups and 16 community-based forest collaborative management groups were held by local/ethnic minority women.

These outcomes contribute to the sustainable economic development of local communities while advancing forest conservation and climate adaptation in an inclusive and gender-responsive manner.

Lessons learnt[32]

Two key lessons learnt from project interventions for integrating gender transformative approaches into future projects.

- *Addressing the systematic barrier for gender equality, especially in matrilineal community:* even when being recognised as heads of household, K'Ho women remain primarily responsible for unpaid care work and rarely voted/assigned to keep the political or formal system roles, e.g., in local government, association, cooperatives, business entities. Despite increasing participation in economic activities, this burden and underestimation have not diminished; in many cases, it has doubled. Thus, it is essential to challenge the existing gender norms by facilitating the joint discussion and mutual understanding between women and men on the shared responsibilities and decision-making within the household and community. This shift is also critical to ensuring equal access to resources for both genders.
- *Understanding different needs and priorities of both women and men:* To design more targeted support programs and financial mechanisms (e.g., credit scoring), it is vital to collect detailed gender disaggregated data on the demand and needs of individual company for business development. Furthermore, it is important to create funding mechanisms with gender responsive and socially inclusive selection criteria, operational and delivery methods. For example, a gender-responsive funding mechanism within the Accelerator Fund can help address disparities in access to financial resources, contributing to a more level playing field for women and men entrepreneurs.

32 https://www.snv.org/assets/downloads/f/191310/x/5de37c46a0/cafe-redd-summative-impact-report-2018-2024.pdf

Human stories

From Shy K'ho Woman to Community Leader: Ms. K'Cham's Journey Through Café-REDD

When the Café-REDD project first arrived in her village, Ms. K'Cham, one of the ten village heads, saw it as an opportunity, not just for herself, but for her community. Though once a quiet and reserved member of the K'ho ethnic group, she quickly emerged as an active and engaged participant, demonstrating a deep enthusiasm for learning and a commitment to change. With the support from Café-REDD, Ms. K'Cham received training on a wide range of topics including sustainable coffee production, inclusive business models, marketing, and digital traceability systems. Driven by a vision to uplift her community, Ms. K'Cham founded Yu M'nang coffee, a startup coffee brand dedicated to promoting the high quality of Da Sar coffee. Her efforts paid off when SNV signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Yu M'nang coffee, officially recongnising it as a partner in the Café-REDD project. Ms. K'Cham was recongnised as a role model for both women and local entrepreneurs.

Ms. Lieng Jrang K'Cham, Representative of Yu M'nang Coffee Enterprise
© SNV

"The support from Café-REDD has not only deepened our understanding of sustainable production but also equipped us with the necessary tools to improve production processes, ensure traceability, and build our brand. This has fostered customer trust and opened up many opportunities in international markets"

Her leadership extended beyond business. In 2021, she was elected to the District People's Council for the 2021–2026 term. One of her key action areas as a council member has been to ensure the sustainability of coffee production and to enhance the livelihoods of coffee farmers in Da Sar and Lac Duong districts, efforts aligned closely with the Café-REDD project's goals. Furthermore, in 2022, Ms. K'Cham stood confidently on an international stage, presenting her journey and business at the International Rubber Value Chain Workshop in Ho Chi Minh City. Subsequently, she passionately shared her story and inspired international delegates at the Regional Knowledge Exchange Event on 'Climate-resilient Approaches in Regional Commodity Value Chains' held in Cambodia in 2024. They were moments that captured her extraordinary evolution, from a shy young woman to a bold business leader and public figure.

Ms. K'Cham's story is a compelling example of how targeted support, inclusive training, and genuine partnership can transform lives. Through Café-REDD, she has helped promote sustainable coffee farming, improved local livelihoods, and inspired a new generation of women leaders in her community.

To know more about her story, kindly find Here

Good practice 3: Promoting Women's Access to Agro-Climatic Advisory in the Mekong River Delta, Viet Nam

CIAT- DeRISK SEA

Background

The Mekong River Delta (MRD) is Viet Nam's key hub for agricultural production and exports. However, the safety and well-being of millions of smallholder farmers are increasingly threatened by climate change, particularly through severe droughts and saltwater intrusion. To sustain their livelihoods, it is crucial for farmers in the region to adopt more climate-resilient agricultural practices. Climate-informed advisory services, along with complementary support delivered through digital tools and platforms, present promising opportunities to help farmers apply these practices[33]. To ensure their effectiveness, these solutions must be accessible, engaging, and designed to enhance digital capacity, tailored specifically to the diverse needs of farmers in the region[34].

Due to prevailing gender norms, women and men in the MRD play distinct roles in agricultural production. Men typically hold key decision-making positions and have greater influence in agribusinesses, while women are often responsible for unpaid care work and tend to take on supportive roles in farming activities. Women also face limited access to essential resources-such as finance, technology, and information, etc. that could strengthen their livelihoods and improve their ability to adapt to climate change impacts. For instance, compared to men, women have less access to seasonal forecasts, advisory services, and early warnings of extreme weather events, whether disseminated via television, local authorities, or mobile phones[35]. Moreover, female farmers are less likely than male farmers to use digital tools to check input prices, seek crop-related advice, or obtain market information[36], further limiting their ability to make informed decisions and respond effectively to climate risks.

Within this context, the project "Applying seasonal climate forecasting and innovative insurance solutions to climate risk management in the agriculture sector in Southeast Asia" (DeRISK SEA) aimed to improve seasonal climate forecasting capabilities in Southeast Asia countries to better prepare smallholders farmers for future climate extremes and to increase climate resilience[37]. This project took a gender responsive approach to ensure women's access to climate advisory service in the MRD, Viet Nam.

Interventions

In the Viet Nam component, the project collaborated with partners to develop Agro-Climatic Bulletins (ACBs), which are based on seasonal, monthly, and 10-day weather forecasts. These bulletins are produced through the coordinated efforts of various stakeholders along the climate services value chain. This value chain encompasses the generation, translation, dissemination, and practical application of local-specific climate recommendations. Key actors include staff from hydrometeorological centers, agricultural officers, water management personnel, extension workers, and both female and male farmers[38].

In order to address the specific and different needs of female and male farmers on climate advisory service, the project took some specific actions, including:

- *Need and preference assessment:* Ensured the inclusion of both female and male farmers in research activities to identify potential gender-specific differences in access to and use of climate advisory services.

33 Luong, V.L.; Nguyen, C.T.; Giles, J.; Le, T.T.; Swaans, C. (2024). Climate services user needs assessment - Mekong River Delta, Vietnam. Hanoi (Vietnam): The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
34 Luong, V.L.; Nguyen, C.T.; Giles, J.; Le, T.T.; Swaans, C. (2024). Climate services user needs assessment - Mekong River Delta, Vietnam. Hanoi (Vietnam): The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
35 Luong, V.L.; Nguyen, C.T.; Giles, J.; Le, T.T.; Swaans, C. (2024). Climate services user needs assessment - Mekong River Delta, Vietnam. Hanoi (Vietnam): The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
36 Luong, V.L.; Nguyen, C.T.; Giles, J.; Le, T.T.; Swaans, C. (2024). Climate services user needs assessment - Mekong River Delta, Vietnam. Hanoi (Vietnam): The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
37 De-RISK South East Asia Factsheet. https://deriskseasia.org/factsheets/Factsheet_WMO_De_Risk.pdf
38 Training report. Agro-Climatic Bulletin Development and Dissemination in Mekong River Delta, Vietnam https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/fd7e17f1-cffd-42ff-a4a3-c8e07df7e23b/content

- *Product development and design:* Took into account the different needs and perspectives of both genders in the ACB development. A gender-sensitive approach was applied in the ACB design and communication products (e.g., gender-balanced imagery, use of locally relevant language and terms).
- *Dissemination of the product:* Disseminated ACB information through multiple channels, including loudspeakers, local radio systems, printed posters, community meetings, trainings, agricultural cooperatives, and local authorities—to ensure it reached both women and men according to their accessibility and preferences. In addition, women were encouraged to join Zalo (a cross-platform messaging application) groups to facilitate easier access to agro-climatic advisories.
- *Feedback for improvement:* Both women and men had an equal opportunity to provide feedback on the usability and their experiences with the ACB through the Human-centered design approach (HCD), to support the continued improvement of this product.

Achievements

The project has enhanced women's access to agro-climatic information, strengthening their ability to manage agricultural production more effectively, including:

- The number of farmer participants (both women and men) in the Zalo groups has gradually increased in the Mekong Delta. Notably, the number of female participants rose from 6,384 during the 2023 Summer–Autumn rice season (May–October 2023) to 8,675 in the 2024 Summer–Autumn rice season (April–June 2024). Encouragingly, during the same period, the proportion of female technical working group members involved in developing the Bulletins also rose significantly, from 33% to 41%.

Proportion of women and men in the technical working group for developing the ACBs

- The ACB has enabled women to communicate more confidently with their husbands, participate in farming decisions, and to better prepare for agricultural production in response to climate impacts. According to woman farmers, the ACB, especially its latest improved version, provided them with timely weather, risk information, and detailed advisories that were presented through clear images, kept them informed, and supported their family's crop production. Even those less directly involved in farming, they could still contribute by sharing the information with family, neighbors, and friends, further strengthening their role.

Lessons learnt

- *Developing diverse and inclusive communication channels*: Utilising a broad range of climate service communication channels can enhance outreach to various user groups. However, to effectively target specific groups, especially women, it is essential to understand their specific information needs and capacity to access and use the channels. For example, younger women farmers often rely on smartphones and social media for quick updates, while older women or those with limited literacy may benefit more from oral

communication through village meetings, loudspeaker broadcasting in local languages, or illustrated guides. In some communities, women's unions provide trusted spaces where climate information can be shared and discussed in ways that fit women's daily routines and responsibilities.

- *Promoting gender-responsive digital climate service tools, combined with capacity building:* Digital tools hold significant potential to improve women's access to climate services. In the MRD, platforms such as Zalo groups, Facebook pages of farmer cooperatives or women's, mobile apps, etc. providing weather and pest forecasts, or SMS-based early warning systems delivered timely and relevant information. However, digital illiteracy remains a key barrier limiting women's ability to benefit fully from these tools. To bridge this gap, awareness-raising efforts should focus on demonstrating the benefits of digital climate service tools for farm decision-making and household livelihoods, while capacity building can be provided through hands-on training on using the ACB on smartphones, reading advisories, and applying it adaptively. These activities can be delivered via women's unions, agricultural extension services, cooperatives, or peer-to-peer mentoring, with materials designed to be practical, visual, and in local languages. This ensures that digital tools are not only accessible but also effectively used by women in their daily lives.

Human stories

From administrative burden to farmer-centered support: Ms. Huyen Nhung's journey with the ACB

Ms. Nguyen Thi Huyen Nhung, a thirty-five-year-old Deputy Head of the Crop Production and Plant Protection Division in Long My District, Hau Giang Province (now Can Tho City), is dedicated to helping local farmers with effective crop production and practical advice. She faces challenges due to the large farming area, frequent natural disasters, and her administrative duties, which limit her ability to directly support farmers.

Ms Nhung shared her ideas and opinions at a meeting on the improvement of ACB in August 2024.

With the support from the DeRISK project, Ms. Nhung participated in training on ACB development approach. Applying the ACB approach has saved her time on administrative tasks, allowing her to spend more time meeting and directly exchanging ideas with farmers. The process of producing the bulletin has also been continuously improved, helping agricultural officers save time and enhance the quality of the information through close coordination among stakeholders via the Technical Working Group. For instance, in the latest version, the bulletin template includes a set of advisory cards based on historical data, allowing Ms. Nhung and her colleagues to simply select and adapt them instead of drafting advisories manually. This new feature has saved her time and ensured the quality of the information in the ACB.

One significant change is the way Ms. Nhung develops recommendations for farmers. Before, she used the provincial planting calendar and local experience to set planting schedules, but farmers often complained about planting during rainy or flooded periods. Now, she incorporates weather forecasts, hydrometeorological, and agricultural data to provide more accurate advice. Ms. Nhung explained, *"the 10-day bulletin now provides daily forecasts. For example, when it rains, farmers can easily decide when to soak or plant their seeds accordingly."* She has also updated pest forecasts by adding weather factors such as temperature and humidity. This allows farmers to apply pesticides more accurately, reducing waste and protecting the environment.

Tran Thi My Linh – An Giang

Empowered by information: Ms. Linh cultivates success

Ms. Tran Thi My Linh is a thirty-seven-year-old officer of the Vong - The Communal Women's Union and Fatherland Front in Thoai Son district, An Giang province. She and her husband support each other in rice farming, sharing tasks such as seed preparation and fertilizer application. With the weather forecasts and warnings provided in the bulletins, they often discuss and decide on the best farming practices.

At each stage of rice growth, Ms. Linh pays close attention to the most relevant issues. For example, during the sowing, she checks the weather conditions and sowing calendar to decide the most suitable sowing date, while also preparing seed soaking and incubation. When pest or disease warnings are issued, she and her husband will immediately inspect their field to assess the situation. If pests persist despite spraying, they turn to bulletin for guidance on effective prevention methods, reviewing the recommended active ingredients before purchasing the right pesticide.

As a community officer, Ms. Linh also plays an important role in disseminating information. When farmers have questions about the bulletin, she is ready to guide them and explain how to make use of it.

Ms. Linh finds the bulletin easy to understand, practical, and very useful. By following the Winter-Spring 2023–2024 ACB recommendation on whitefly treatment, her family eliminated the pest effectively, reduced losses, and saved on production costs. She explained that before using the bulletin, her family relied on traditional methods that were ineffective. With timely weather updates, she also delayed sowing to avoid unfavorable conditions, thus preventing seed loss.

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Good practice 4: Working in Partnership: an Accelerated Effort to Advance Gender-Responsive Climate Policy and Action

GIZ - VN-SIPA

Background

International commitments, alongside national policies and actions, play a critical role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing the impacts of climate change. In this context, Viet Nam ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016 and was among the first countries to develop an action plan for its implementation. The country's mitigation targets and adaptation priorities are outlined in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). At the local level, provincial climate action plans demonstrate how international commitments are being translated into concrete, context-specific actions. These efforts are more likely to be effective and sustainable when gender equality is meaningfully integrated into the development and implementation of these policies and plans. However, persistent gender stereotypes, policy gaps, limited capacity among government officials, and insufficient resources remain significant challenges to mainstreaming gender equality in climate action.

The project "Support to Viet Nam for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement" (VN-SIPA), funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI), aims to support Viet Nam in pursuing a development pathway consistent with a just Net Zero transition by 2050 and aligned with the Paris Agreement, the Global Biodiversity Framework, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender mainstreaming was a key focus of the project. One of its core interventions was to provide technical support to government partners for integrating gender considerations into the development and implementation of the NDC and provincial action plans on climate change response.

Interventions

Taking gender responsive climate actions requires sustained effort and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Such collaboration enables the pooling of resources and expertise and enhances the design and implementation of effective, targeted, and impactful interventions on policy development. Strengthening the commitment and capacity of local government partners is also essential to ensure that climate actions are accessible and practical for vulnerable groups, including women. The VN-SIPA project has adopted both approaches, particularly:

(i) Partnership in Action

- VN-SIPA I joined forces with UN Women, UNDP, CARE International, and Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) to support government partners in mainstreaming and advancing gender equality in the review and update of Viet Nam's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) 2020. This support included: (i) sharing international experiences and national good practices; (ii) identifying gender gaps in the current NDC and recommendations for improvements; (iv) developing a policy paper and identifying entry points for gender integration; (v) providing technical inputs for gender mainstreaming in drafting process of NDC.
- In late 2023, GIZ , UNDP, UN Women, and CARE International jointly initiated the formation of the Gender and Climate Change Working Group (CCWG). This platform seeks to enhance coordination among government stakeholders and strengthen gender mainstreaming in Viet Nam's climate change policies.

(ii) Translating Policy into Local Action

In its second phase from 2023 onwards, VN-SIPA II has been working in partnership with government partners in the former Quang Binh province (current Quang Tri province) to integrate gender equality in local plans, including:

- In 2024–2025, the former Quang Binh Province updated its Climate Change Response Action Plan (CCRAP) for 2025–2030, with a vision to 2050. As part of efforts to integrate Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA), gender-responsive approaches were discussed with the Department of Agriculture and Environment. An in-depth study and consultation with stakeholders across sectors, including natural resources, environment, tourism, health, and education, were conducted to identify the

gender awareness of officers and gender gaps in the sectoral planning. The findings were presented in a consultation workshop with the Department of Agriculture and Environment, consultants, and relevant stakeholders. The workshop highlighted the importance of gender mainstreaming and integration approaches in the CCRAP and related provincial plans. Following that, the project provided technical advice for integrating gender into CCRAP.

- To prepare local government officials for implementing the CCRAP with a gender perspective, a training needs assessment (TNA) on gender integration in climate action was conducted. Based on the results, ongoing gender training and coaching programs were developed and delivered.

Achievements

- An analysis by Care International from 2021 assessed to what extent different countries took into account gender in the 2020 NDC development. Viet Nam was rated among the progressive group with high ratings for the indicators on governance, planning and implementation. The Viet Nam NDC clearly acknowledges disproportionate adverse effects of climate change on gender.
- Gender equality is well integrated into the overall and sector-specific objectives, the content of each sectoral plan, and the implementation plan of the Quang Tri provincial Climate Change Response Action Plan (2025–2030), with a vision to 2050. The plan has been submitted to the Quang Tri Provincial People's Committee and is expected to be approved by the end of 2025 for implementation in the area former Quang Binh Province.

Lessons learnt

- ***Orientation towards joint strengths:*** It was acknowledged that gender mainstreaming in climate change, both in general and specifically in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), was a relatively new area in Viet Nam. As such, it was a "learning by doing" process for all parties involved. The government partners demonstrated openness and a willingness to learn through collaboration with development partners. In the meantime, the roles and responsibilities within this cooperation were clearly defined and agreed upon, based on the respective strengths of each partner. For instance, some organisations had direct partnerships with government bodies to support NDC development, while others brought valuable experience in implementing effective models of gender mainstreaming in local-level climate change initiatives.
- ***Commitment built on mutual understanding:*** To raise awareness for government officials and decision makers about the importance of gender mainstreaming in climate policies and actions, it is essential to provide evidence, practical approaches, and concrete implementation steps. Cross-sectoral consultation and engagement enable partners to learn from one another and build their own consensus. In addition, gender training and coaching are effective tools to strengthen their confidence and commitment, helping translate policies into concrete actions.

Stories

"The NDC is one of the most important documents reflecting Viet Nam's commitment and efforts to respond to climate change together with the global community. To achieve the promise of "No one left behind", we, during the review and update process of Viet Nam's NDC, proposed to GIZ, UNDP, UN Women and CCWG for providing technical support of gender integration in the NDC technical report. With the support of these organisations, we believe gender has been mainstreamed in this document (NDC update report). And through these activities, we, as the NDC Task Force, have also increased our gender knowledge and capacity."
Pham Van Tan, Former Deputy Director General, Department of Climate Change, former Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

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CONCLUSION & A WAY FORWARD

CONCLUSION & A WAY FORWARD

The examples of good practices above demonstrate that IKI implementers have adopted diverse approaches, based on their specific project contexts, to promote gender equality and women's rights in climate action and biodiversity conservation.

The CarBi II project (WWF) applied a gender-responsive governance approach within Village Development Facilities by ensuring women's equal representation and decision-making power on management boards. Both women and men were equipped with technical, business, and financial management skills to support livelihood development, while women-headed households and other vulnerable groups were enabled to access financial resources from the Village Development Facilities.

Similarly, the Café-REDD project (SNV) strengthened women's access to resources (technology, finance, information) essential for sustainable, deforestation-free coffee production through the Accelerator Fund, partnership with the banks, and traceability and digital monitoring systems. To further enhance women's agency and leadership, Café-REDD supported the establishment of women-led coffee cooperatives, provided production equipment, and delivered leadership training and coaching, while increasing the visibility of women role models through women champions. Women and ethnic minority groups were also facilitated to actively participate in Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes related to land-use planning and conservation decisions.

In parallel, the DeRISK SEA project (CGIAR) mainstreamed gender across the climate services value chain by assessing the distinct needs of women and men, designing gender-sensitive agro-climatic bulletins, and using diverse communication channels to effectively reach both groups. A human-centered feedback mechanism ensured that women and men could jointly shape and improve climate advisory services, thereby strengthening learning and accountability.

In the meantime, the VN-SIPA project (GIZ) joined forces with other development partners to provide technical support to government agencies in integrating gender equality into the update and review of Viet Nam's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in 2020. Furthermore, VN-SIPA supported partners in developing and implementing Climate Change Response Action Plans with a gender perspective, through consultations with diverse stakeholders and targeted capacity-building activities at the provincial level.

To sustain and strengthen these efforts, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ***Facilitate experience sharing and peer learning.*** Creating regular spaces for IKI implementers to exchange and learn from each other on integrating gender equality into climate response and biodiversity conservation activities is essential. Inviting external speakers can also enrich these discussions by offering new perspectives and encouraging IKI implementers to take a deeper reflection of their gender intervention approaches. The IKI Gender Community of Practice serves as a valuable platform to support and enhance this kind of exchange.
- ***Promote collaboration and joint initiatives.*** Beyond information sharing, fostering synergies among IKI implementers is key. For example, implementers could collaborate on policy research related to gender and climate change in Viet Nam, assess the integration of gender in local climate action plans, or document successful models of strengthening women's roles in biodiversity conservation, etc. These joint outputs could serve both as technical inputs for government partners in policy development and as resources for implementers to inform and refine their own gender-responsive intervention approaches.
- ***Establish a biennial gender competition.*** Organising a gender competition every two years among IKI implementers would be a valuable activity. It would offer an opportunity for IKI implementers to showcase innovation, reflect on progress, and exchange effective practices of integrating gender equality in climate actions.

- ***Conduct and maintain a gender activity mapping.*** Mapping gender-related activities of IKI implementers is essential to identify opportunities for collaboration, avoid duplication, and promote synergies in advancing gender equality in climate and biodiversity projects. This mapping should be maintained as a living document with regular updates.
- ***Develop toolkits and technical guidelines.*** Developing a toolkit or technical guidelines for mainstreaming gender equality throughout the project cycle, tailored to the Viet Nam context, would support IKI implementers in aligning their activities with the IKI Gender Strategy and Action Plan.

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