

Empowering women in agribusiness through social and behaviour change



Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises

Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

SNV



 Female rice farmer working in her rice field in Quang Binh province, Vietnam.

The **'Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises' (EOWE) programme** is being implemented by SNV and local partners between 2016 and 2020 in 4 provinces in Vietnam, Quang Binh, Binh Dinh, Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan. The programme aims to boost the start-up and development of women's businesses in agriculture in rural areas through a combination of enterprise development, social transformation and policy advocacy interventions. The programme is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands under the **'Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women' (FLOW) framework**.

This publication presents experiences and the initial impact at household level of the first round of gender-transformative Household Dialogues and community level interventions that were conducted in 2017 under the EOWE programme in Vietnam. It documents the stories of men and women from different regions on their process of rethinking gender norms that limit women's economic empowerment and gender equality in agricultural value chains and presents the programme's key findings on the patterns of change.

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Introduction

In Vietnam, women face difficulties to start and develop their own agricultural businesses as their capacity for entrepreneurship is limited by a series of structural barriers. Women working in agribusinesses often have limited access to resources and business assets and face barriers due to gendered differences in behaviour and roles. For example, in most agricultural communities, gendered division of labour determines women's role in and outside the household, which subsequently affects their opportunities in and benefits from productive activities in agricultural value chains.

The success of women in agribusiness is not only determined by the level of access to resources and business assets, but also by gendered-specific behaviour and roles, which influences women's decision-making power and control around these resources and business assets. Tackling the inequalities that exist between men and women in many rural agricultural societies therefore also requires a change in the deeply entrenched gender norms that are at the root of these inequalities. As an entry point to reflect on and transform restrictive gender norms and power relations, the EOWE programme developed a contextualised Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) strategy in order to create more equal income and business opportunities and a socially enabling environment for women entrepreneurship in agricultural value chains.

The SBCC strategy consists of interventions at household and community level. At household level, the programme organises facilitated Household Dialogues among targeted family and/or community members to critically reflect and discuss on norms that prevent women from fully participating in and benefitting from economic activities. To ensure sustainability and scale of the positive behaviour change in the communities, the programme organises SBCC interventions at the community level like commune festivals and photovoice, and encourages participants of the household dialogues to share their experiences with other members in the community.

This publication presents the initial impact at household level of the first round of gender-transformative Household Dialogues and community level interventions in 2017 in Vietnam.

Balancing Benefits

In line with SNV's Balancing Benefits approach, the Household Dialogues and community level SBCC interventions, are matched with efforts to increase women's business skills, connect women to markets, boost capacities and opportunities for women's leadership and build the capacity of government and civil society actors to advocate for, develop and implement gender-sensitive policies and plans.

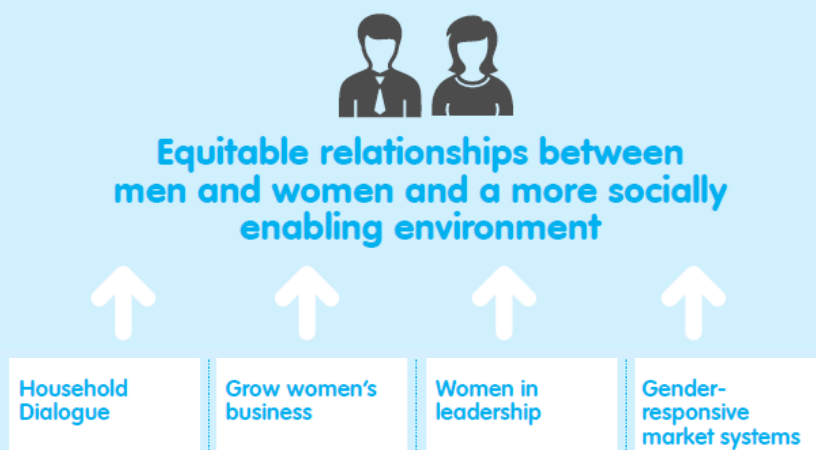


Figure 1: Overview of the four components in SNV's Balancing Benefits

① Key gender norms affecting women in agribusiness

To get a better understanding of the barriers that female farmers and entrepreneurs face and to ensure that the EOWE programme, including the SBCC strategy, responds to the needs of the women to run a successful business and to the context of the challenge(s), the programme conducted three in-depth studies in Vietnam:

- ❖ Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)¹
- ❖ Gender Analysis
- ❖ Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) study

These studies show that women farmers and entrepreneurs in agriculture indeed lack access to resources and business assets, but the studies also show that gender norms and intra-household power relations influence women's control over resources and decision-making power in their households and the community. Figure 2 below provides an overview of the key gender norms that affect women's economic empowerment in Vietnam.



Figure 2: Key gender norms that hinder women's economic empowerment in Vietnam

Balancing time between productive and reproductive work

In Vietnam, rural women working in agriculture especially struggle with balancing their time between work in the household (reproductive work) and income generating activities (productive work). Vietnam is a patriarchal society, meaning men are considered to be superior to women and the head of the household. This also means that women are expected to take care of the household and its members. As one man says: "Men do big things, women do small things."

In Vietnam, women are supposed to take care of their family and the household, while also substantially contributing to the income of the household. Our baseline studies show that in Vietnam, women spend on average over 6.2 hours a day on productive and another 4.1 hours a day on reproductive tasks, resulting in a total of 10.3 hours per day.

The high workload, expected responsibility of women when it comes to taking care of their households and the lack of decision-making power around time-use hinder women from creating viable or more profitable businesses.

¹ Alkire et al., The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, *IFPRI Discussion Paper*, 01240, 2012.



📷 Household Dialogue session in Ninh Thuan province, Vietnam.

Control over income

Another gender norm that is affecting women's economic empowerment is control over income. In Vietnam, 42% of women indicate to earn less than their spouse and that the husbands are the main breadwinners. Whereas women hold decision-making power over minor household expenses, like groceries, it is the men that predominately decide over major household expenses.

Though women in Vietnam are respected by men for their ability to effectively manage minor household finances, most women from male-headed households are not able to make large financial decisions in the household without consent from their husbands. For women owning businesses, being able to at the very least co-decide over major expenses, such as those that could benefit their business, could have a large positive effect on women's economic empowerment and overall management of women's businesses.

Leadership

In Vietnam, women are involved in different kinds of groups in their communities, with 75% of women being members of civic groups and 26% of women being part of agriculture groups. However, only 2.5% of women are members of trade or business associations, which could support women in creating and developing sustainable and viable enterprises.

SNV's studies also show that women in Vietnam have little influence in the groups that they participate in and that women are often not perceived as leaders in their communities. When women were being asked to rate the extent of their influence in their community, 35.5% of women indicated to have very little or no influence. In addition, 43% of women indicated to never voice their opinion in public.

2 Gender-transformative household dialogues

As an entry point to reflect on and transform the key restrictive gender norms and power relations in Vietnam, the EOWE programme organised gender-transformative Household Dialogues among targeted family and/or community members. Through intensive facilitated dialogue sessions, the programme aims to translate these reflections into positive behaviour change to give women as well as men more control over their lives and agribusinesses. The behaviour change is built up in different stages from awareness and self-analysis on gendered differences within the household to getting commitment for specific actions. Both women and men in households are included in the dialogues to concertedly shift attitudes and practices among various members of the society.

Participatory sessions with women entrepreneurs and their husbands

The primary audience of the household dialogues are women who run small-scale agribusinesses and their husbands. The focus is on households, as households are the most important institution and basic unit of society where values, societal norms, and gender roles are formed and practiced. Households are also the place where power dynamics and relationships between men and women are formed.

The households come together in groups of 10-15 households with four to six trained facilitators, half female and half male. Through a variety of participatory tools and methods which are designed to address specific gender norms, the couples develop skills to analyse their own reality and develop their own plan for change. In follow-up sessions the couples reflect on progress and discuss any challenges that they encountered in the implementation of their plan for change, which enables the households to act, reflect and learn.

Content of the sessions

In 2017, 152 households participated in the facilitated household dialogues in Vietnam. A total of six gender-transformative household dialogues focused on time-use / heavy workload of women, as this turned out to be the biggest barrier for women to run a successful business. In 2018, two new modules that focus on women's lack of control over the use of income and women's leadership will be introduced.

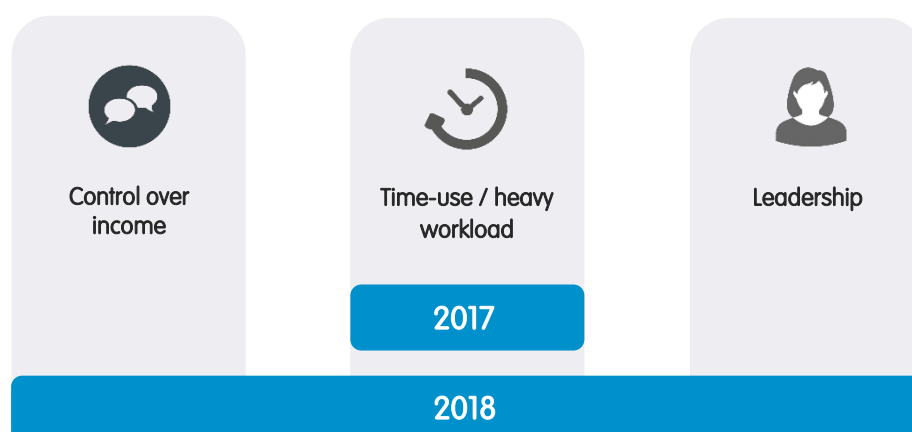


Figure 3: Key gender norms addressed during Household Dialogues in 2017 and 2018 in Vietnam

③ Initial impact of the household dialogues

The gender-transformative household dialogue sessions under the EOWE programme in Vietnam have helped women entrepreneurs and their husbands to initiate and implement effective reflection and communication, especially on matters that traditional culture has created demarcations on between spouses, like time-use / heavy workload and control over income. To measure the initial impact of the household dialogue sessions that were implemented in 2017, the EOWE programme collected most significant change stories from both male and female participants of the household dialogues in Quang Binh province. Men and women were asked to reflect on the question: what is the most significant change that you have noticed in your household around the gender norms discussed since the start of the household dialogues?

The household dialogues facilitated positive shifts towards gender equitable attitudes, relations and behaviour in the households that participated in the sessions. This chapter presents the key findings of the EOWE programme on the patterns of change and selected stories of men and women from different regions in Vietnam on their process of rethinking gender norms that limit women's economic empowerment and gender equality in their household and the community.

Balancing time between productive and reproductive tasks

In 2017, the gender-transformative household dialogue sessions mainly focused on understanding the importance of time in starting, running and developing agribusinesses. The sessions also focused on exploring changes in contemporary society and the technologies that have been invented to realise time efficiency in relation to reproductive and productive work. The couples reflected on and discussed how they use and divide their time between productive and reproductive work. Through this exercise more than half of the participants came to the realisation that women spend most of their time on reproductive work, while being unaware of the impact this has on women's businesses.



Farmer couple working together in their rice field in Quang Binh, Vietnam.



The household dialogue sessions increased participant's understanding that sharing household work does not only benefit the wife, but also has substantial advantages for husbands. Men indicated that reflection and discussion around household work increased their understanding and appreciation of the workload that comes with household and caretaking tasks. Moreover, participants became aware of the impact of unequal division of tasks on the success of women's businesses and the overall economic situation of the household.

The most significant change stories of participants show that the gender-transformative household dialogues increased awareness around the economic benefit of sharing household tasks and decision-making between men and women. After participating in the household dialogue sessions most of the men felt encouraged to share the responsibility for gender-neutral tasks, like livestock feeding. A few of the participating men even shared the responsibility for tasks that are commonly seen as a 'woman's job', like preparing meals and washing clothes.

In addition to sharing household tasks, men also supported their wives to participate in technical and social activities in the communities, such as being farmer group leaders and to participate in farmer group meetings and commune festival events. These opportunities enable women to share experiences with each other, not only about their own families but also about work and social life. The support from their husbands and the community also increased women's confidence in taking on leadership roles in agribusinesses.

Both men and women expressed that sharing household tasks made them a happier family and many female participants of the household dialogues indicate they noticed an economic improvement of their business since their participation.



 Rice farmer sharing his vision for change within his household during household dialogue session in Ninh Thuan, Vietnam.



“ My name is Nguyen Thi Tham and I am a rice farmer. In the beginning when I heard about the household dialogues in my village, my husband was not confident to participate in such a group activity. Luckily, I could eventually persuade him to join.

I am very happy that we experienced this together. My husband still goes to work during the day, but he comes home earlier to share the tasks of cooking, teaching our children and to make products out of bamboo for additional income. I now have more time to participate in social events in the village and to relax. We learned a lot from the programme, from technical knowledge on rice production and economic development to how to look at our life style and live a happy life.”

Nguyen Thi Tham from Quang Binh, Vietnam



“ I am Nguyen Viet Can and I grew up in a poor village. I go out every day to go fishing and to repair fishing nets, while my wife is selling the fish. I always expected that there would be food for me when I came home from work. And I used to be very angry when my wife would come home late.

During the household dialogues I started to understand my wife better and I realised that I treated my wife badly. Recently I surprised my wife by cooking a meal and we ate together when she came home from the field. When we were eating I realised the food was too salty, but my wife said ‘it’s ok, we will just drink some more water.’ The meal we had was very cosy and happy and I will encourage other men to try to understand their wives and share household tasks.”

Nguyen Viet Can from Quang Binh, Vietnam



“ I am Dang Van Dong. My wife and I used to focus only on our own work and we never helped each other. I participated in social work, while my wife took care of noodle making, pigs raising, household tasks and the farming activities on our 3,500m² rice field.

Since I participated in the household dialogues, I realise that I need to share household tasks to ensure that we both have a good health and time to relax. Every day, I wake up early to prepare our products for the market and I support with cooking breakfast, lunch and dinner. It is interesting to see that just arranging my time, made us both so much happier.”

Dang Van Dong from Quang Binh, Vietnam



“ My name is Nguyen Van Duan and I used to strongly believe in the traditional saying ‘men build houses, women build homes’. That’s why I only used to focus on income generating activities and I never cared about household tasks as this was the responsibility of my wife. After work, I used to read the newspaper, watch television or drink tea.

The discussions on gender equality and the experience of being pregnant and doing household tasks during the commune theatre changed how I look at my wife and household tasks. I appreciate the work that my wife is doing and when I come home from work I wash the clothes, clean the house and feed the poultry while she is cooking. One time, I broke the dishes when washing and my wife happily asked me if my hands were hurt.”

Nguyen Van Duan from Quang Binh, Vietnam

4 Sustainable social and behaviour change at scale

The gender-transformative household dialogue sessions impacted on rural women and men that they are now open to reflecting on and rethinking gender norms. The household dialogue sessions also facilitated positive shifts towards gender equitable attitudes, relations and behaviour in the households that participated in the sessions. The couples indicated that the changes in behaviour led to substantial benefits on a social and economic level for both men and women, which offers motivations to keep implementing gender equitable behaviour. However, there is a risk that the women and men who participated in the household dialogues fall back in old behaviours if the gender norms in their communities, which affect the way people act, feel, and think, remain unchanged.

To reduce this risk and to facilitate sustainable behaviour change towards women's economic empowerment and gender equality at scale, the Social and Behaviour Change Communication strategy under the EOWE programme also targets a wider audience in the community through interventions like commune festivals and photovoice activities and exhibitions. In addition, couples that participated in the household dialogue sessions are encouraged and supported to share their experiences to inspire neighbours and other community members.

Photovoice

In 2017, the EOWE programme conducted a photovoice pilot, which is linked with the Household Dialogue interventions, in Quang Binh and Ninh Thuan province. Photovoice is a method that enables participants of the Household Dialogues, both men and women, to use photography to share how they see the world and capture the factors that impact gender equality and women's economic empowerment in their household and the community.

The photovoice intervention was designed to support the following objectives:

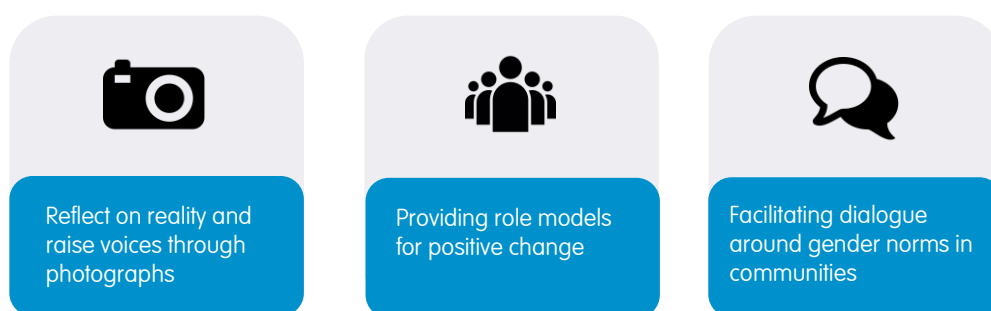


Figure 4: Key objectives of the photovoice intervention in Vietnam

In both provinces, a total of 15 households, 6 facilitators and 1 staff member of the provincial Women's Union were trained on how to tell stories through photographs. Through a rotating scheme, each household would have the camera for a specific period of time in which they were asked to express their points of view by photographing scenes that highlight challenges or changes around gender equality and economic empowerment in their household. The facilitator's also visited the households to guide the couples and to capture challenges and changes from their perspective.

The participatory method supported the Household Dialogue participants to document and reflect on their own reality. The photos taken by the participants were used in the Household Dialogue sessions to reflect on and explore key gender norms from different perspectives.

Commune festivals

In addition to the gender-transformative Household Dialogues, the EOWE programme organised commune festivals as part of the broader Social and Behaviour Change Communication strategy. The organisation of commune festivals is one of the approaches to upscale the gender transformation beyond the selected households in the



Men experiencing to be pregnant while doing household chores during commune festival in Quang Binh.

Household Dialogues to the wider community. Different forms of edutainment are used during the festivals to engage communities and promote civic dialogue within the communities around gender norms.

The commune festival consists of different interactive sessions, including role plays, quizzes and traditional dance performances. In one of the shows, men from the community dress up like pregnant women while washing clothes. This helps men in understanding the struggles that women face during pregnancy and doing household chores. The sessions are designed to increase understanding and reflection around gender norms and how they affect the well-being of individuals and families.

The commune festivals attracted more than 4,300 visitors. The commune festival and photovoice has created opportunities for dialogue about the daily challenges of women and men around gender equality and women's economic empowerment. It is through these dialogues that social norms are shifted and communities move into action.

In the two communes where photovoice was piloted, there was an exhibition of a selection of the photographs from the photovoice intervention together with the story behind the photographs. The following pages show a selection of these photographs and the stories that were developed by men and women in Quang Binh and Ninh Thuan in 2017.



Ms. Do Thi Hoai Thanh sharing her story during a household dialogue session, Quang Binh province

*Photo credit: Ms. Nguyen Phuong Huyen
Quang Binh Women's Union*

"Like many women in the commune, I used to be shy when participating in public activities, especially with speaking in public. While participating in the trainings and meetings of SNV's FLOW/EOWE programme, I felt I became more confident as I was being selected to be the leader of the SRI rice production group and a core member of the household dialogues. I am really happy with the participation and support of my husband. **We are trying to become a role model of 'sharing housework' so that more and more women will be happy like me." Ms. Do Thi Hoai Thanh**



“My husband and I attended the household dialogues on gender, gender equality and women's workload. I am very happy and thankful that my husband now shares the responsibility of doing household chores and taking care of our children, as well as engaging in asparagus cultivation. After the household dialogue, my husband confided to me that sharing housework was something that should be done. **One day, before he was going to work, I saw my husband and our son happily cleaning the dishes. That really made me happy.** I am very grateful for SNV's FLOW/EOWE programme, as it had a lot of impact on my way of living and thinking as well as on my work and family expenditure.” *Ms. Bui Thi Kim Thao.*

** Mr. Tu Cong Y is cleaning the dishes with his son*

Photo credit: Ms. Kim Thao, Tuan Tu village, An Hai commune, Ninh Thuan province



“Previously, my husband was only responsible for making money. He was away from home from 5 A.M. to sunset. I had to take care of everything, because no one could help and my child was small. **After attending the household dialogues, my husband changed a lot.** My husband now shares the care of my child and is coming back home from work earlier to help me with household chores, like preparing dinner. He also decided to decrease his time spent on going out with his friends.” *Ms. Ba Thi Ngoc Ngan.*

** Mr. Tu Ngoc Nga is cutting nails and talking with his son, Tu Ba Trung Nghia
Photo credit: Ms. Ba Thi Ngoc Ngan, 41 years old, Ninh Thuan province*



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For more information about the EOWE programme, please visit:

<http://www.snv.org/project/enhancing-opportunities-womens-enterprises-eowe>

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