

SOWING THE SEEDS OF GENDER EQUALITY

Women Empowerment Case Study

"Countries with higher levels of gender equality have higher economic growth. Companies with more women on their boards have higher returns. Peace agreements that include women are more successful. Parliaments with more women take up a wider range of issues - including health, education, anti-discrimination, and child support."

Ban Ki-moon

Sowing the Seeds of Change - Community-based climate change mitigation through sustainable rice production (SSC) project is funded by Australian Government through Community-based Climate change Actions Grants and implemented by SNV Netherlands Development Organisation in Vietnam from 2012 to 2015.

The project targets to improve income for more than 10,000 poor rice-cultivating farmers in Quang Binh and Binh Dinh provinces, and at the same time to reduce massive volume of GHG emissions from rice cultivation by applying advanced farming techniques which is "low inputs, low carbon and low risk" (SRI – System of Rice Intensification).

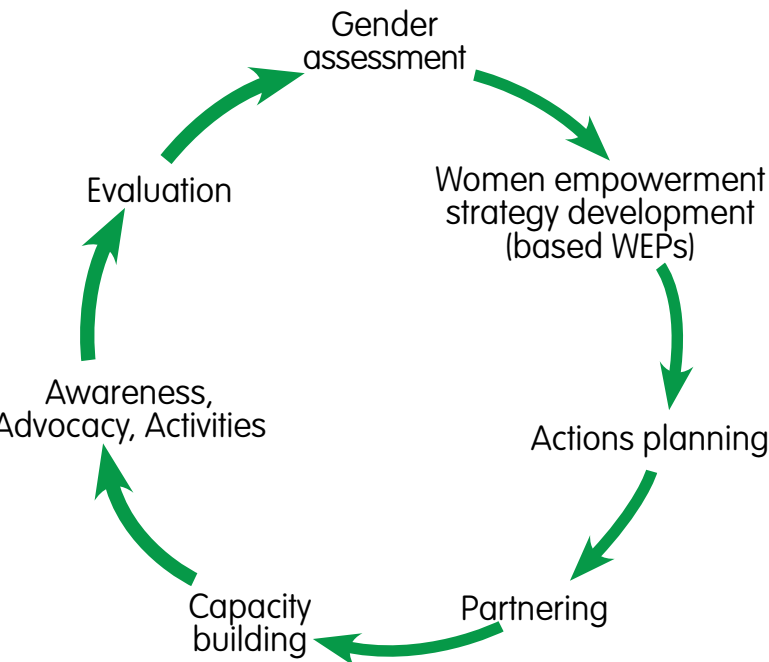
The project focuses also on development of market linkages and create "green rice" market opportunities for rice produced by the SRI production system which will increase farmer incomes. To ensure the full cycle of sustainable rice production, the project promotes generating renewable energy from rice residues of husks and straws to reduce environmental waste and contamination.

The project aims at women empowerment and capacity building for local stakeholders, including male and female farmers, cooperatives, local government, agriculture sector, women union and other mass organizations and private sector as the most important entry point to ensure sustainability of socio-economic development, agriculture livelihoods success, gender equality and community development .

Creating a knowledge platform and evidence-based advocacy to raise awareness, to advocate for influencing the national and local agriculture policies, and to widely share lessons learnt from the project is among key pillars that ensure the sustainability and success of the project.



SSC Project Gender Intervention Steps



SSC Project Women Empowerment Strategy

MESSAGES

- ▶ **EQUALITY IS PROSPERITY**
- ▶ Gender equality, it is not just for women and by women. It is about equal rights, opportunities, roles and appreciation of women and men. Men must be an important actor of solution.
- ▶ Partnering with Women Union and other local partners shall be harmonized to ensure holistic impacts
- ▶ 3A principle is crucial: Awareness, Advocacy, Activities



1. INTELLECTUAL ROLE

Strong awareness raising and advocacy local government, technical and scientific partners for creating opportunities for women to play key intellectual roles in the project, hold very crucial and high technical positions in agronomy, agriculture technology, scientific researching, technical guides and services.

1.1. Farming technology

Photo: Dr. Nguyen Thi To Tran (3rd from left), Director of Agriculture Extension Center, Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) of Binh Dinh, and technical team discuss with farmers on the rice growth in SRI field (SSC project).

Dr. Tran is a focal person – project coordinator representing DARD in the SSC project. She has a special important role in researching and promoting SRI as an advance farming technique to agriculture sector, as well as promoting image of a woman leadership in agriculture. This is the 5th SRI crop that she companions with agriculture officers to support farmers sowing and harvesting the success from fields. In 2014, Dr. Tran, with support from DFAT/Australian Aid CCCAG programme, has represented for local partners and farmers to attend DFAT’s Knowledge workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal; the 8th International Community-based adaptation Conference and a number of policy dialogues with Ministries nation-wide.



1.2. Scientific research and GHG emission measurement

Ms. Bui Thi Phuong Loan - Head of Simulation Division, Institute of Agriculture Environment (IAE) is taking GHG samples from a pilot rice field.

IAE is a strategic technical partner of SNV in implementing SSC project. Ms. Loan is a co-lead of the technical team that implement a number of important missions for SSC project from 2012, including: Measurement of GHG emissions in rice field in various crops; Assessment of resilience of rice of advanced farming techniques (SRI, 1P5G, AWD); Chemistry test of rice etc. Ms. Loan has just been nominated to participate in SNV’s Global programme to build leadership capacity for partners



2. LEADING ROLE

As part of advocacy and awareness raising, a set of criteria and support scheme have been agreed with local stakeholders to have considerable women taking management and leading positions within the project at different levels, namely leaders in project management boards, farmers groups, capacity-building components, and important events.

2.1. Farmers group leaders

The farmers groups are soul of the project due to its characteristics of sustainability. There are 206 farmers groups in 2 provinces of the SSC project, effectively operational in organising farmers to learn and apply the new farming technical, coaching and supporting in the application of the protocol, sharing manpower and resources in crop peak days. Farmers Group leaders are responsible for leading group operation, supporting farmers in field, in recording crops in logbook to manage costs and protocol, in bridging voices of farmers with cooperatives and communes. About half of group leaders are women. It's effectiveness is obviously seen and recognized by farmers and local authorities.

2.2. Project and organizational mission

National and local plant protection system is a technical implementation partner of SSC project. District Plant protection centers are the most direct technical provider to farmers via Farmer Field Schools and field services. Farmer Field School (FFS) is special effective and friendly capacity building progress for farmers – hundreds of Farmer Field Schools have been undertaken in framework of the project. A number of women of the system are taking leading roles in FFS, and later become recognized leaders in organisations.



Photo: Rice storing at Thong Nhat Cooperative, Quang Binh - High number of women playing leading role in Farmers Group in Quang Binh and proving great success in operation.



Chi Vinh (2nd from right) is Deputy Head of Plant Protection Center, Tuy Phuoc district, Binh Dinh province. She has about 30 years working in rice field with farmers. Acting as a district leader of FFS in supporting farmers to apply SRI techniques, Chi Vinh is a lead facilitator, responsible for coordinating and facilitating FFS in communes of Tuy Phuoc district, Binh Dinh province. Chi Vinh get special high appreciation from farmers for her excellent expertise and commitment.

3. BUSINESS

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. The private sector is a key partner in efforts to advance gender equality and empower women. Current research demonstrating that gender diversity helps businesses perform better signals that self-interest and common interest can come together. Yet, ensuring the inclusion of women's talents, skills and energies-from executive offices to the factory floor and the supply chain-requires intentional actions and deliberate policies.

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3.1. Market linkages

Photo: Business contract signing ceremony at the market linkages forum on SRI clean rice production, distribution and consumption, Binh Dinh province.

"Inclusive business and Market linkages" is a crucial approach of SNV and SSC project. The approach is for effective connect between farmers and market, ensuring both economic and social impacts, especially equal roles and participations of women and men. Business women are bright focus of the project.



3.2. Women with VietGAP and Inclusive business



Photo: Farmers review SRI/VietGAP logbook

Women are key factor to make Hoai My cooperative a successful pioneer of promoting a model of combining Inclusive business and Market linkages with certification in rice production. The SRI rice of Hoai My cooperative with VietGAP certification has reached international market, bringing greater benefit for poor farmers in disaster prone commune



Photo: Women's talent in financial management - A financial controller of My Loc Thuong cooperative, Quang Binh province - a top successful cooperative in SSC project.

4. OVERALL DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN

4.1. Knowledge and spiritual life:



Photo: Contest on SRI farming technique and Gender equality, Dai Trach commune, Quang Binh province.

The combined events “SRI and Gender equality” were intensely organised and led by Women Union in all project communes in 2 provinces, bringing great impacts of raising knowledge for both women and men on gender equality, agriculture and health, family caring etc. and smiles for villagers, authorities, men and women in community.

4.3. Capacity development (Women and Women Union)

Women are trained to be capable in applying technology, in managing the community tasks, and organisational missions. Women’s capacity development is indicator of political and socio-economic development of the country.



Photo: Women-led SRI field in Phuoc Thang commune, Binh Dinh is an initiative and success of Women Union of Binh Dinh province that creates strong base for cooperation between Women Union and Agriculture sector for disseminating and up-scaling sustainable rice production model in provinces.

4.2. Income increased



Photo: Active learning and applying SRI - advanced low inputs/low risks/low carbon farming techniques and values added of market linkage intervention bring remarkable income increase for male and female farmers.



Photo: Meeting of VWU delegation with Ms. Julie Bishop - Minister for Foreign Affairs in Australia’s Federal Coalition Government. Ms. Pham Thi Thu Hong – Chairwomen of Provincial Women Union of Binh Dinh (1st from right) is a member of VWU delegation to visit to Australia (together with the visit of PM Vietnam 2015).

4.4. Active participation



Photo: Women, especially those who are most vulnerable, are encouraged to participate in all project period and activities, playing important role in decision making of agriculture production, community agenda and project assignment. This creates evidences and motivations for women to participate and take roles in decision making process at broader scope of community life.

4.5. Women’s voice is heard and image is appreciated

Women’s voice heard and image respected is result of long and meaningful process of community awareness raising and advocacy, as well as active participation and capacity development of women.



Photo: Community development dialogue in project areas.

4.6 And, equality at home is essential, as well





The 7 Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

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