This Practice Brief highlights various approaches used to promote gender equality in the agriculture; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and renewable energy (RE) sectors in Asian countries. SNV Asia has provided extensive capacity-building support in these sectors while putting ‘inclusive development’ at the forefront of the development agenda. The Practice Brief is an attempt to document practices from the field based on successful experiences of SNV in Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Vietnam. It aims to be a quick reference for development practitioners (within and outside SNV) who are committed to mainstream gender in these three sectors.

In Surkhet District in Nepal, poor women of Dalit and ethnic minorities are triply marginalised by poor income, gender and caste discrimination. In a pilot project, Beautiful Nepal Association, in collaboration with SNV supported by IFAD, facilitated the formation and mobilisation of new and existing producers’ groups. In total, 506 women and 534 men were organised into groups and cooperatives to participate in the Chiuri (butter tree nuts) value chain, where previously women’s involvement was minimal.

Forty-two year old Dilsari Pun lives with her husband and two sons in Surkhet District; she became a member of one such group and started collecting Chiuri seeds after learning about the Chiuri business. Initially, Dilsari found it hard to believe she could make a living from the free available Chiuri seed; although she had used Chiuri domestically she hadn’t been aware of the commercial potential. As she explained to SNV, “Before, being able to earn Rs. 5,000 a year, just by myself, was more than I could have imagined, but Chiuri made it possible, in fact it was possible in just two months! These unnoticed Chiuri Bijula (seeds) had, for the past several years, been wasted; they just rotted in the forest”.

Her success encouraged her to spend more time on the project and collecting Chiuri became a routine during the season. It took no particular time or effort as she did it while doing her work in the forest. The extra income earned from collected Chiuri seeds enabled her to afford household expenditures as well as her children’s education needs, where she had previously struggled. She has now become self-reliant and her role has shifted to become the breadwinner in her family.

In Asia, SNV, in partnership with the International Water and Sanitation Centre supported by DGIS, AusAID and DFID is developing, testing and combining different tools and strategies for gender and social inclusion, as part of its Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All programme in Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Vietnam in collaboration with the respective governments. As the programme aims at access to sanitation for all, addressing disparities and gender related issues is key to its success. The approach includes: the use of harmonised monitoring tools for both practical and strategic gender needs; strategic partnerships to provide leadership and decision-making opportunities; recognising the role of men and women in hygiene and sanitation supply chain development; and putting an emphasis on learning and exchange.

The experiences across countries highlight the need for analysis in terms of understanding the gender dimensions of sanitation decision-making within the household. Mobilising women, for whom sanitation is normally a priority can increase collective sanitation demand and raise awareness. However, over-representation in the process can also be a risk, if it becomes perceived that sanitation becomes the responsibility of women alone. Sanitation hardware is a significant investment for any household and requires both men and women to take part in the decision-making process.

In this pilot project, SNV-Nepal adopted a market-led business approach, which has not only empowered women economically through increased income but also strengthened women’s institutions and improved their access to finances.
Inclusion and Accountability Proofing Tool throughout the project’s life cycle, the SNV Asia governance advisors have helped ensure that the interests and needs of women and men living in poverty are considered. Gender analysis differs. Men and women have different perceptions about women’s roles (from different groups within society) and understand the dimension when programmes. Gender analysis can come from existing information or information collected by the project or programme.

I. Setting the stage for gender

A crucial first step towards designing any new project or programme is a thorough analysis of the current situation in the concerned sector in that particular context. This must include looking at whether women and men (from different groups within society) are experiencing the same reality and if not, how it differs. This analysis is the starting point for effectively mainstreaming gender into projects and programmes. Gender analysis does not need to be a separate exercise; it is about integrating a gender dimension when carrying out regular sector context analysis. Through gender analysis we seek to understand the different roles, needs, opportunities and constraints of women and men and their relationships in that given context. The analysis can come from existing information or information collected by the project or programme.

To help ensure that the interests and needs of women and men living in poverty are considered throughout the project’s life cycle, the SNV Asia governance advisors have developed a tool: ‘The Social Inclusion and Accountability Proofing Tool’. This is structured around the three major stages of planning, monitoring and evaluation.

SNV and Gender in Asia

SNV is dedicated to a society in which all people, irrespective of race, class or gender, enjoy the freedom to pursue their own sustainable development. SNV believes in inclusive growth and development as an essential feature for lasting development success. In other words, the organisation recognises that sustained poverty reduction requires women and men living in poverty to both contribute to and benefit from growth while having access to quality basic services. Inclusive development actively listens to and engages with both women and men living in poverty, be they producers, workers or consumers.

SNV works in the three sectors mentioned above (agriculture, WASH, and RE) and plays three mutually reinforcing roles in each sector:

• delivering capacity building ‘advisory services’ to clients, which aims at creating effective solutions with local impact;
• ‘knowledge networking’ to expand knowledge bases for sustainable poverty reduction; and,
• ‘evidence based advocacy’ to improve the institutional arrangements and enabling environment.

Limited access to improved sanitation and RE services affect women more severely than men. In Asia, women and men in poor rural communities continue to rely predominantly on traditional biomass for cooking and indoor heating, which pose significant health risks, especially for women and children. Similarly, women and girls suffer more indignity, health problems, and face risks of sexual harassment and rape as a result of a lack of sanitation and hygiene improvements, which are often low on the list of household investment priorities. With limited access to improved water, sanitation and RE services, women and girls spend a considerable amount of time fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, and doing other household chores. This time spent on domestic activities can prevent them from accessing available educational and economic opportunities, and taking part in development activities.

While significant progress has been made on shrinking the gender gap in Asia (particularly in education and health), gender disparities remain in a number of critical areas. Although female labour force participation rates in the region are relatively high, important gender inequalities in economic opportunity remain. They also exist in access to and control of productive resources, including land, financial capital, agricultural extension services, and new information technologies, with women having less access and control than men. Women constitute a substantial proportion of the labour force in the agricultural sector (about 35% in South Asia and almost 50% in East and South-East Asia). Women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable employment since they tend to work in the informal sector and in poorly remunerated occupations and sectors. They continue to earn less than men earn for similar work. Female-led enterprises tend to be smaller and more precarious than male-led enterprises. Traditional perceptions about women’s domestic roles (with them being expected to take primary responsibility for the household) constrain economic opportunity for women. Moreover, women in Asia still have a weaker voice and less influence than men, whether in the public or private domains.

Closing these gender gaps represents a substantial challenge for SNV Asia in its efforts towards achieving more inclusive development.

SNV experiences in mainstreaming gender in Agriculture, WASH and RE

This is the 5th publication in a series of Practice Briefs published by SNV - Netherlands Development Organisation. It is based on successful experiences shared by advisors working for SNV in Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Vietnam. You can access the other Practice Briefs by clicking here. 

Editor: Kat Birch  
Contributions: Manju Thapa Tuladhar, Tshering Choden and Wilbert Schouten  
Author: Laurence Levaque  
Production: Nguyen Dao  
Tuyet Nga  

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

SNV is dedicated to a society in which all people, irrespective of race, class or gender, enjoy the freedom to pursue their own sustainable development. SNV believes in inclusive growth and development as an essential feature for lasting development success. In other words, the organisation recognises that sustained poverty reduction requires women and men living in poverty to both contribute to and benefit from growth while having access to quality basic services. Inclusive development actively listens to and engages with both women and men living in poverty, be they producers, workers or consumers.

SNV works in the three sectors mentioned above (agriculture, WASH, and RE) and plays three mutually reinforcing roles in each sector:

• delivering capacity building ‘advisory services’ to clients, which aims at creating effective solutions with local impact;
• ‘knowledge networking’ to expand knowledge bases for sustainable poverty reduction; and,
• ‘evidence based advocacy’ to improve the institutional arrangements and enabling environment.

Limited access to improved sanitation and RE services affect women more severely than men. In Asia, women and men in poor rural communities continue to rely predominantly on traditional biomass for cooking and indoor heating, which pose significant health risks, especially for women and children. Similarly, women and girls suffer more indignity, health problems, and face risks of sexual harassment and rape as a result of a lack of sanitation and hygiene improvements, which are often low on the list of household investment priorities. With limited access to improved water, sanitation and RE services, women and girls spend a considerable amount of time fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, and doing other household chores. This time spent on domestic activities can prevent them from accessing available educational and economic opportunities, and taking part in development activities.

While significant progress has been made on shrinking the gender gap in Asia (particularly in education and health), gender disparities remain in a number of critical areas. Although female labour force participation rates in the region are relatively high, important gender inequalities in economic opportunity remain. They also exist in access to and control of productive resources, including land, financial capital, agricultural extension services, and new information technologies, with women having less access and control than men. Women constitute a substantial proportion of the labour force in the agricultural sector (about 35% in South Asia and almost 50% in East and South-East Asia). Women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable employment since they tend to work in the informal sector and in poorly remunerated occupations and sectors. They continue to earn less than men earn for similar work. Female-led enterprises tend to be smaller and more precarious than male-led enterprises. Traditional perceptions about women’s domestic roles (with them being expected to take primary responsibility for the household) constrain economic opportunity for women. Moreover, women in Asia still have a weaker voice and less influence than men, whether in the public or private domains.

Closing these gender gaps represents a substantial challenge for SNV Asia in its efforts towards achieving more inclusive development.

SNV experiences in mainstreaming gender in Agriculture, WASH and RE

I. Setting the stage for gender

A crucial first step towards designing any new project or programme is a thorough analysis of the current situation in the concerned sector in that particular context. This must include looking at whether women and men (from different groups within society) are experiencing the same reality and if not, how it differs. This analysis is the starting point for effectively mainstreaming gender into projects and programmes. Gender analysis does not need to be a separate exercise; it is about integrating a gender dimension when carrying out regular sector context analysis. Through gender analysis we seek to understand the different roles, needs, opportunities and constraints of women and men and their relationships in that given context. The analysis can come from existing information or information collected by the project or programme.

To help ensure that the interests and needs of women and men living in poverty are considered throughout the project’s life cycle, the SNV Asia governance advisors have developed a tool: ‘The Social Inclusion and Accountability Proofing Tool’. This is structured around the three major stages of planning, monitoring and evaluation.
It includes three key guiding questions related to social inclusion which must be considered during context analysis. These are:

1. Which groups of people (e.g. women/men; girls/boys; elderly women/men; women/men living in poverty; women/men living with HIV/AIDS, etc.) do not get equal rights and do not enjoy equal benefits compared to others in the programme or project area of intervention?
2. What are the key challenges these groups face in terms of voicing concerns; contributing to and influencing decision-making; access to information; access to services and access to resources?
3. What are, in general, the reasons for these challenges?

The following case shares the experience from SNV in Nepal where gender analysis was made an integral part of the context analysis and planning of the National Renewable Rural Energy Programme (NRREP, 2012-17).

**Gender Mainstreaming in the Design of the National Renewable Rural Energy Programme (2012-17) in Nepal – experience shared by Anuj Dhoj Joshi and Manju Thapa Tuladhar**

Analysis of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) was conducted at three levels to identify key entry points for gender and social inclusion mainstreaming:

- **Macro level**: a policy audit – a review of all national policies, legislations and strategies to assess constraints and opportunities for the incorporation of GESI dimensions;
- **Meso level**: a programme audit – a review of programmes, technologies, and institutional structure and mechanisms, to assess the incorporation of GESI dimensions;
- **Micro level**: an assessment of access to and the benefits of technology and programmes reaching different social and ethnic groups, disaggregated by gender at individual and household levels.

This analysis showed that even though large investments had been made in the energy sector in Nepal, there was no formal consideration of women’s energy needs, nor their access to and control over energy resources. The analysis provided information that was used to ensure the inclusion of GESI into the NRREP during its formulation. GESI became a central theme within the programme, and is reflected throughout, from the overall and immediate development objectives, to outputs and activities, management, monitoring, indicators and targets. A description of specific activities to make the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre a GESI pro-active institution has been produced.

The idea of conducting a gender analysis at the context analysis stage is so that we can use the findings to inform the planning stage, and more particularly the formulation of projects and programmes. Based on the findings, gender specific objectives and targets can be set. Experiences from SNV-Nepal and SNV-Vietnam in agriculture and SNV Asia in WASH reveal that having gender specific objectives, indicators and targets and a gender focused approach in the intervention enables the development of contextualised methodologies and tools that actively address gender issues. It is also the starting point for accountability when reporting on gender results and impacts.

When development agendas are set without first doing a proper gender analysis, interventions can have negative, unintended effects on gender equality such as overburdening women, reinforcing gender stereotypes, causing the loss of development opportunities for women and marginalised groups. Experience from SNV-Bhutan in the agriculture sector particularly in the MAGIP project supported by IFAD and implemented with the Social Forestry and Extension Division also reiterates the importance of putting emphasis on gender at the project design stage and the early stages of value chain analysis. In this particular case, gender analysis was used as part of the monitoring process, with the aim of looking at ways on how to improve the programme.
Gender analysis is often seen as a complex and challenging task. Experience from SNV-Cambodia shows that it does not need to be. Simple pictorial tools were used to discuss gender roles. The information that resulted will be used to ensure better gender mainstreaming in the project activities.

**A pilot project on climate change adaptation in the agriculture sector - experience shared by Thoin Sean Lay, SNV Cambodia**

The road journey tool was used to explore how roles differed between men and women during drought, specifically looking at activities linked to tending and watering vegetable crops. More particularly it provided a way of discussing 1) the traditional roles of women and men during drought, before the intervention, 2) the roles of women and men during droughts, during the intervention and 3) the setting of monthly family plans to jointly secure water beyond the life of the intervention. The tool also helped identify differences between the activities of men and women in disease and pest management. Discussions that arose by using the tool provided evidence that women’s livelihoods are more vulnerable than men’s to the impacts of climate change in general and drought specifically. One reason is that they rely more on natural water resources for their livelihoods.

One major finding from the analysis was that although the auction increased sale prices, it had the unintended effect of decreasing the role of women in decision-making. Doing this assessment provided the programme with evidence of the need to provide women with the support they needed to meaningfully participate in NTFP group meetings and at the auction.

**II. Addressing gender in practice: approaches**

SNV-Asia has promoted a variety of approaches to address gender concerns in practice in the agriculture, WASH and RE sectors while providing capacity building advisory services. Below are some of the most common practices that were drawn from SNV’s experiences in different Asian countries. Many of those mentioned are inter-related and therefore should not be considered in isolation. Moreover, it is important to note that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach but that effective and lasting solutions need to be adapted to the specific needs and opportunities in the local context.

Our experience revealed that we focus on two fronts: women’s empowerment and working with men for achieving gender equality and poverty reduction.
**Evidence-based lobbying and advocacy, and creating gender awareness**

SNV advisors in Asia have used the information gathered through their own and other’s research on the gender situation in their project area as evidence for lobbying and advocacy, and to create awareness on gender and the need for gender mainstreaming. It is very important that key stakeholders in the programme, especially at local levels, understand what gender is, why it matters, and know more about the particular gender issues in their context in order to enlist their full support and encourage action for the promotion of gender equality.

**Gender Mainstreaming in a climate change adaptation project of SNV Vietnam – experience shared by Tran Tu Anh**

**Awareness** and **Advocacy** are central elements of the SNV gender mainstreaming approach in the project “Innovative financing for building community resilience to climate change in coastal Vietnam” supported by BMU. The findings of the gender gap analysis conducted as part of the project not only served to design gender related interventions, but were also used for creating awareness and advocating for change. Creating gender awareness among villagers and local authorities in the five project communes, as well as with the other implementing partner organisation formed an integral part of the overall awareness-raising programme which had a primary focus on climate change adaptation. Advocacy efforts were targeted at local government leaders and key personnel of the five project communes in Nghi Loc district. By providing information gathered during the gap analysis SNV helped policy-makers better understand gender and its relation to climate change; and in turn influence them to improve local policies, procedures and practices that could promote gender equality in the project communes. The project found that the most successful form of advocacy was in-person lobbying and inspiration through a series of meetings, trainings, presentations and field discussions.

In Nepal, previous assessments and research (including a gender audit that SNV supported during a Mini-Energy-Grid programme) showed that the RE sector had failed to address gender concerns adequately. SNV used these findings to advocate for the need to mainstream gender into the design of a single harmonised national RE programme and for the inclusion of gender and social inclusion experts in the programme design team.

**Multi-stakeholder sector development for the promotion of gender equality**

SNV adopts a multi-stakeholder approach towards improving a sector’s performance. SNV’s experiences in Asia show that women and excluded groups do not automatically become part of a stakeholder development process, due to complex institutional barriers that restrict their participation in decision-making and prevent them from subsequently benefitting from development. Therefore, SNV advisors seek to understand who exercises power in the form of knowledge, information, decision-making, mobilisation, legitimacy, income, social status, gender and identity, and develop plans to ensure vulnerable people can become part of SNV’s interventions. Our experiences show that facilitation of women and excluded groups to become part of multi-stakeholder development process has resulted in collaborative learning opportunities: women and excluded groups have benefitted from working with private companies, local governments, NGOs, networks of interest and member organisations, which in turn benefit politically, socially and economically from strategic partnerships making gender and social inclusion an integrated part of their business.

The following case evidences the importance of identifying appropriate networks and structures that have common interest and benefit to enhance the economic empowerment of women in highly marginalised groups.
Women’s Empowerment in Public Land Agro Forestry: Evidence from Central Terai, Nepal – by Anil Shrestha

Power relations analysis revealed that ownership of land and other productive assets by Dalits and women in the Madhesi community in the central Terai region of Nepal was extremely rare as was access to formal employment and income-generating opportunities. In this community, women are obliged to practice purdah (literally a veil, but referring to the requisite that women stay apart from men), which severely restricts their mobility and access to work. They are also expected to remain silent within family and community settings. Realising the importance of economic empowerment for such women, SNV Nepal worked with the Association of Terai Public Land Forestry Users Network (APLFUN) to establish more than 400 public land forestry user groups in six districts of central Terai. The overall objective was to facilitate access to public lands (on lease) for both Dalits and female members of the Madhesi community and actively support them to take up leadership positions in these groups.

SNV’s strategy of using the national umbrella organisation, APLFUN, combined with an inclusive and culturally sensitive approach helped to achieve impact at scale. Both female and male members have become more aware of their roles and responsibilities. This has led to a gradual shift in women’s social status, with men taking on a greater share of household responsibilities. Women are now able to sell their produce at local markets, whereas in the past selling was predominantly done by men. More than 4,000 household members of the public land forestry groups are collectively generating an additional annual average income of 12,000,000 Nepali Rupees from the sale of agro-forestry products alone, which amounts to about 400 US$ per group from their public lands. Moreover, there are many outstanding examples of leadership positions held by women in the public land forestry groups across all levels, from the smallest village groups to district level networks and the umbrella association.

In Vietnam, strategic partnership with the Women’s Union has been an important factor in leading change towards gender equality and empowering women to shift the household priorities towards sanitation and the reduction in open defecation.

Moreover, experience shows that in order to increase the gender and social inclusion impacts of our interventions, it is necessary to work with and support existing institutional mechanisms at macro, meso and micro levels. SNV focuses on building capacity and ownership to bridge the macro–meso–micro gap.

Mainstreaming Gender and Social Inclusion in Chiuri (butter tree nuts) Value Chain in Nepal – experience shared by Padam Lal Bhandari, Sushila Thapa Magar and Manju Thapa Tuladhar

At the macro level - in order to improve policy facilitation and create an enabling environment, SNV collaborated with key government agencies such as the District Agriculture Development Office, District Forest Office, and the Division Cooperative Office. At the micro level - SNV procured the services of an NGO, Beautiful Nepal Association (BNA) for capacity-building and empowerment of the producers’ groups and cooperatives and Alternative Herbal Products Private Limited functioned as agribusiness promoter and embedded service provider with the producers. At the meso level - SNV, DFO (the regional forest directorate) and BNA-board members facilitated supply chain strengthening and a buy-back agreement process. SNV also collaborated with World Vision, Education for Income Generation, Micro Enterprise Development Programme and the Italian Foundation, linking them with local institutions and government agencies to ensure inclusion and sustainable impact. The combined and coordinated efforts of all these groups working together resulted in the impact described on the title page of this document.

Mobilising women/women’s groups or organising women in groups

Working with women’s groups has proven to be a successful strategy to enhance women’s effective participation in project activities and to encourage women to take the lead. It offers various advantages such as: women learn from and support each other; they can more easily express themselves; it can increase their level of confidence; it introduces them to the public sphere in a non-threatening environment; it can facilitate their access to services and markets; it can increase demand for improved services; and it can change community attitudes towards them.
In Nepal, women were mobilised to lead the sanitation movement. In Vietnam, SNV worked with the Women’s Union (a mass organisation) in the Province of Dien Bien to mobilise women from provincial to village level for sanitation and hygiene promotion. The mobilisation of women in Nepal and Vietnam as part of the regional Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All (SSH4A) programme led to increased recognition of women’s role in sanitation improvement and institutionalisation of their participation beyond village level.

The experiences of SNV in Nepal (including the Chiuri value chain) and Lao PDR (in the rice value chain) in the agriculture sector shows us how the inclusion of women farmers in groups (mixed or women-only groups) can contribute to their effective integration into value chains. Successfully bringing female small-holder farmers into value chains is becoming increasingly important, as men continue to leave rural areas in search of alternative employment, leaving women behind to take care of the family farms.

Increasing women’s participation in the decision-making process

SNV-Asia has gone beyond just promoting women’s inclusion as beneficiaries of project activities or ‘recipients’ of development. As shown above, SNV aims to actively engage women to become development actors. The dedicated efforts made to ensure women participate in the decision-making process represent a step further. It is about providing women with avenues and opportunities to have control over and influence decisions that are made in their sectors and affect their lives.

**Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture: Creating Impact in the Lao Rice Sector – experience shared by Sengthong Phothisane and Daovanh Sotouky**

As part of its interventions in the rice value chain development and its efforts to enhance women’s integration, SNV in Lao PDR facilitated the strengthening of farmers’ groups with special attention to the promotion of women’s representation in the steering committees. Three progressive rice miller groups have been established, two of which are led by female millers. These women-led rice miller groups have organised 17 public-private dialogues with sector provincial and district departments, which led to a review of relevant national agricultural policy, and improved rice production and trading both locally and regionally. However, having women in leadership positions is not sufficient; the need to also enhance their leadership skills was recognised as critical for replication and up-scaling of the SNV Lao PDR approach in the rice value chain development.

One of the components of the regional Sustainable Sanitation, Hygiene for All (SSH4A) programme focuses on strengthening local capacities to improve WASH governance and multi-stakeholder sector development. In terms of gender, the objective is to enhance the degree of influence of women in sanitation dialogue at community, district and province levels.

SNV has been doing well in promoting women’s participation in the decision-making process in the public sphere. One lesson learnt from our experience is the need to consider and better address the challenges related to the decision-making process at household level.

**Improving women’s access to technical and entrepreneurship skills development**
Training in technical and entrepreneurial skills is a key step in taking advantage of economic opportunities. Women face many barriers to accessing such training opportunities. SNV-Asia has encouraged women alongside men to play active roles in the supply chain of rural sanitation and RE services, including in non-traditional roles such as masonry and carpentry.

**Integrating Gender and Social Inclusion within a Regional Sanitation and Hygiene Programme at Scale, SNV Asia (Bhutan, Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) and IRC** – experience shared by Gabrielle Halcrow, Petra Rautavuoma, Govinda Rokay, Un Bunphoeun, Tashi Dorj, Tshering Choden and Tran Viet Hung

For the first time in Dien Bien Province (northern Vietnam), 12 female, unskilled labourers and assistant masons were trained in 2011 on sanitary latrine construction techniques and sanitation marketing skills alongside male masons. Gender strategies were used, specifically sensitising the government partners and identified candidates and providing mentoring and support in follow-up to the training. These 12 female masons are now providing professional toilet construction services and advise to the households on sanitary latrine options. "It is a remarkable point with our members because there was no woman <who could> do it before. Now, we have <a> women’s mason group specialised in advising and constructing sanitary latrines”, explains Mrs. Nong Thi Thinh, from Dien Bien Women’s Union (WU). Furthermore, the income of the female masons has increased – “through knowledge received from these training courses and the introduction of WU, our group has more contracts and thus higher income” says the leader of the Woman’s Mason Group, Muong Ang.

Each of SNV’s programmes in Asia has sought to promote the potential role of women in supply chain activities, but to varying degrees of success. Reflections from the WASH team point out the need for provision of sensitisation and support when promoting initiatives that may challenge assumptions about gender roles held by some members of communities.

**Impacts of Biogas on Women: Experiences from SNV Supported Biogas Programmes in Asia and Africa** – by Prakash C. Ghimire

Although construction is generally perceived to be a man’s job, women were encouraged and given priority to take part in biogas construction trainings. Interestingly, the majority of users prefer to get their plants constructed by female masons because they find them sincere, obedient and committed to their work. SNV has also endeavoured to train qualified women to carry out the task of quality control, i.e. to monitor the quality of construction of biogas plants and provide necessary feedback to masons.

In the agriculture sector, ensuring that female farmers as well as male farmers receive technical training can be key to improving productivity, because women typically do a substantial proportion, if not the majority, of the agricultural work on the farms in Asia. Taking this reality into account, SNV-Asia encourages more women to attend technical trainings in improved agricultural techniques, post-harvest handling, drying, processing and marketing. There are several ways of ensuring they attend including: setting quotas for women’s participation in trainings; making sure the trainings are appropriate for women (e.g., use of visual aids and practical sessions); and having a mix of female and male trainers. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of SNV-Vietnam with local officials, as part of the climate change adaptation project, key changes can already be observed in the way meetings and trainings are organised: they avoid market days, choose friendly, nearby venues, and encourage women to bring their children. The project also included a specific gender awareness session in the technical trainings, so that everyone has a shared understanding of the importance and value of including women.
Providing women with fair opportunities to participate in productive activities

Women small-holder farmers are typically located in the invisible part of the agricultural value chains. Low literacy skills, inadequate access to training, agricultural extension services, market information, and credit are some of the constraints that prevent women from fully tapping into available economic opportunities. SNV Asia has applied a range of strategies that address these constraints and empower women to take better advantage of agricultural value chains. For more information on SNV Asia’s experiences in the agriculture sector, readers are invited to refer to the SNV Practice Brief on Gender and Agriculture.

Working with men

Most of the above mentioned approaches are geared towards empowering women. SNV does not see women’s empowerment as disempowering men. On the contrary, the main objective of women’s empowerment is to create better relationships between women and men, which in turn will lead to greater productivity. It has been demonstrated that changes resulting from our gender targeted interventions are appreciated by both women and men. Women and men have become more aware of the gains that can be made with cooperation.

Moreover, women’s empowerment does not mean that we should exclude men. We must engage with men as well to achieve gender equality and poverty reduction. As illustrated by the experience of SNV in Cambodia in the WASH sector.

Men’s Role in Behaviour Change Communication in Cambodia – experience shared by Un Bunphoeun

Due to the traditional gender division of labour within the family, women are usually seen as responsible for sanitation and hygiene issues. They also suffer the most from the lack of improved sanitation and hygiene practices. The perception of women’s role in sanitation is reflected in a larger participation of women in sanitation awareness meetings and the more important role that girls and female teachers play in school sanitation. As a consequence, there is no well-balanced information sharing for decisions related to toilet construction, nor is there balanced awareness of the need for hygienic practices. In an attempt to tackle this issue, SNV-Cambodia has made an effort to support the local authorities and local sanitation committees to explicitly involve men and boys in the sessions geared towards creating demand for improved sanitation. At school level, boys and male teachers have been explicitly targeted for better sanitary practices. Channels of communication and messages were adapted for this purpose and were directed at men as well as women. The capacities of men as well as women were upgraded to act as village facilitators and advocate for the construction of toilets and their proper use. The total environment of local government, NGOs and private sanitation suppliers were set by these local facilitators to address men and women equally, so that the burden of improving sanitary conditions can be shared. As a result, the role of men in sanitation, and their commitment to construct toilets has increased. It is too early to show definitively but it will be important to monitor whether men’s participation in the process leads to male behaviour change.

III. Addressing gender for achieving better results

The benefits resulting from effectively mainstreaming gender into development programmes (be it in the agriculture, WASH or RE) have been well established, including more effective and sustainable outcomes in the concerned sectors and advancements in achieving gender equality. As stated in the 2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development, “Gender equality is smart economics”.

Practice Brief, Issue 5, December 2012
Given that the SNV-Asia projects and programmes mentioned in this Practice Brief are at different stages of implementation, for some of them it is too early to assess results, while others provide concrete examples of benefits resulting from effective gender mainstreaming. Such benefits include increase in productivity and income; better sanitation and hygiene outcomes; economic empowerment of women; enhancement of women’s voice and status at household and community levels. SNV interventions have been a catalyst for wider societal changes. For example, in many countries they have contributed to a re-definition of women’s role from the traditional role of household worker to successful entrepreneur as women entering professions that traditionally were the preserve of men, such as masonry.

**Increasing access to sanitation and hygiene through mobilisation of women’s groups in Karnali zone of Nepal – experience shared by Govinda Raj Rokaya and Manju Thapa Tuladhar**

Due to the effective mobilisation of women’s groups for the promotion of sanitation and hygiene, 28% of the Village Development Committees (VDCs) in the districts of Karnali in Nepal had been declared as Open Defecation Free by the end of November 2012 – almost three times the national average of 10%. In the ODF settlements and VDCs, it has been observed that there has been a significant reduction in the incidence of diseases caused by poor sanitation and hygiene.

Until recently, women in the Karnali region were reluctant to be seen and represented in social and cultural activities. The strategy of mobilising women’s groups has helped to ensure the shift in the role of women. Now women are open and capable of voicing their concerns and claiming their rights in public and social occasions. Women’s groups and NGOs dealing with women are represented in coordination committees at the district and village levels. At present, the role of women in sanitation is given high priority. The District Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Coordination Committee decided to set a target of at least 40% of women’s participation in any trainings and orientation events, and the District Sanitation Strategy Plan clearly spelled out the role of women’s groups. “Women’s roles for the promotion of sanitation has taught us to lay due consideration of women’s participation at each and every aspects in the society. In the past the women were put aside and their voices were not listened to. However at present, women have become the change agent to ensure construction and use of toilets in our VDC areas. The males used to be ashamed of women coming out of the houses in the past. Now the males have been supporting the movement led by women.” Mr. Resham Bahadur, VDC secretary from Karkibada VDC from Mugu District.

**Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture: Creating Impact in the Lao Rice Sector – by Sengthong Phothisane and Daovanh Sotouky**

So far, the intervention has contributed to improved rice production and income of 20,000 female and male-headed farmer households. Paddy rice production yield has increased by 30-50%, contributing to as much as a 60% rise in household income. This is not only due to better yields, but the higher prices achieved as a result of improved quality. In parallel, the intervention has also enabled 20 rice millers, half of whom are women, to increase rice production from 12,400 in 2009 to 36,523 tonnes in 2011 by supporting them to expand their milling capacity and gain access to reliable paddy supplies.

“Now my husband and I always discuss how our family should invest in rice farming. With support of SNV intervention, Pha Heng Xai Nam Xe Cha Leun Sab mill provided an opportunity for me to participate in rice extension training. I have learned and applied it to my family rice farming practice. As a result, our rice production has increased from 100 bags (4 tonnes) to 150 bags (6 tonnes) in the last dry farming season (2011). The training made me competent in rice farming. Therefore, my husband always asks for my opinion prior we make joint decision.” Shared by a female farmer in Lao PDR.
Conclusion

‘Inclusive development’ is at the heart of SNV’s capacity-building support in its three core sectors: agriculture, WASH and RE. Particular emphasis is given to gender to ensure that both women and men living in poverty contribute to and benefit from growth while having access to quality basic services.

Experiences from the field show that SNV-Asia (Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Vietnam) has promoted a variety of approaches for mainstreaming gender in the sectors. The first and essential step adopted towards designing new projects and programmes is aimed at gaining a better understanding of the gender situation in the concerned sector (be it agriculture, WASH or RE) in a particular context. Gender analysis is the starting point for effectively mainstreaming gender into projects and programmes; it does not necessarily require a separate exercise and it can be done using simple participatory tools. The ‘Social Inclusion and Accountability Proofing Tool’, developed by SNV Asia governance advisors, can help in setting the stage for gender; it includes three key guiding questions related to social inclusion for consideration at context analysis stage of a project or programme.

SNV advisors in Asia have used the findings of analysis of the gender situation in their sector as evidence for lobbying and advocating for change, as well as creating gender awareness among key stakeholders, especially at local levels. Impact has also been achieved by facilitating the inclusion of women and excluded groups in the multi-stakeholder sector development process (where it does not happen naturally), choosing strategic partnerships, and working at and facilitating linkages between different levels of the intervention (macro, meso and micro).

A majority of the strategies promoted by SNV for achieving gender equality and poverty reduction seek to empower women: mobilising women or organising them in groups, increasing women’s participation in the decision-making process (mainly in the public sphere so far), improving women’s access to technical and entrepreneurship skills development, and providing women with fair opportunities to participate in productive activities. However, experiences show that women’s empowerment does not mean disempowering men but rather as a way to create better relationships between women and men. For SNV, working with men is equally important for achieving gender equality.

SNV’s mainstreaming of gender into projects and programmes in its three core sectors has directly increased productivity and income; created better sanitation and hygiene outcomes; the economic empowerment of women; and the enhancement of women’s voice and status at household and community levels. SNV interventions have been a catalyst for wider societal changes. We hope that the experiences and testimonials shared in this Practice Brief will be inspiring for development practitioners who are committed to mainstreaming gender in agriculture, WASH and RE.

Enhancing Gender Relations in the Vegetable Value Chain Project in Svay Rieng, Cambodia
–by Ly Sereyrith (and the SNV agriculture team in Cambodia)

As of the end of 2011, the intervention had led to improved incomes for 175 households of between US$ 4 and US$ 15 per household per day from vegetable sales. In addition, female farmers that had received training reported that they were now able to make informed decisions regarding when and how to harvest their vegetables, how to sell their produce and who to sell to. On the other hand, the capacity of male farmers had improved on how to technically prepare their land, sow and transplant vegetable seedlings, control pests and diseases, water and use new technologies for their vegetable production. As a result of the intervention, men and women were able to make joint plans on how to invest the income generated to benefit the household as a whole. “I think that this support from SNV not only helped generate income for farmer households through producing safe vegetable with good yield, but also helped husbands and wives of households stay united and jointly farm together and live a happy life.”, Mr. Kong Savoeun, 55 years old, President of Bassac Commune Farmer Association, Svay Rieng Province.
List of references

Published documents

Case 1: Women’s Empowerment in Public Land Agro Forestry: Evidence from Central Terai, Nepal by Anil Shrestha

Case 2: Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture: Creating Impact in the Lao Rice Sector by Sengthong Phothisane and Daovanh Sotouky

Case 3: Enhancing Gender Relations in the Vegetable Value Chain Project in Svay Rieng, Cambodia by Ly Sereyrith (and Agriculture Team in Cambodia)

Impacts of Biogas on Women: Experiences from SNV Supported Biogas Programmes in Asia and Africa by Prakash C. Ghimire

Gender and Agriculture, SNV Practice Brief, Issue 4, October 2012 by SNV

Experiences shared (some of these documents will become published case studies that will be made available for download on the SNV website)

Agriculture

The impact of auctioning on gender benefit-sharing. A case of NTFPs from Bhutan by Rik Van Keulen and Tshering Choden

Gender Mainstreaming in a Climate Change Adaptation Project of SNV Vietnam by Tran Tu Anh

Mainstreaming Gender and Social Inclusion in Chiuri (butter tree nuts) Value Chain in Nepal by Padam Lal Bhandari, Sushila Thapa Magar and Manju Thapa Tuladhar

Pilot project on climate change adaptation in the agriculture sector - Experience shared by Thoin Sean Lay based on her field trip in October 2012, SNV Cambodia

WASH

Integrating Gender and Social Inclusion within a Regional Sanitation and Hygiene Programme at Scale, SNV Asia (Bhutan, Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) and IRC by Gabrielle Halcrow, Petra Rautavuoma, Govinda Rokaya, Un Bunphoeun, Tashi Dorji, Tshering Choden and Tran Viet Hung

Increasing access to sanitation and hygiene through mobilization of women groups in Karnali zone of Nepal by Govinda Raj Rokaya and Manju Thapa Tuladhar

Men’s Role in Behaviour Change Communication in Cambodia by Un Bunphoeun

RE

Gender Mainstreaming in the Design of the National Renewable Rural Energy Programme (2012-17) in Nepal by Anuj Dhoj Joshi and Manju Thapa Tuladhar

SNV is an international not-for-profit development organisation that works in 36 developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and The Balkans. Asia covers Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Vietnam. We help empower local communities, businesses and organisations to break the cycle of poverty by providing them with the tools, knowledge and connections they need to increase their incomes and gain access to basic services. We do this by providing advisory services, knowledge networking and supporting advocacy in the agriculture, water, sanitation and hygiene, and renewable energy sectors.

To learn more about SNV, please visit our website at www.snvworld.org