



# Policy Brief:

## GENDER EQUALITY IN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RESILIENCE IN VIET NAM

August 2017

### Main Messages

1. Women in Viet Nam are playing key roles in responding to climate change impacts, especially climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Their particular capacities, needs and vulnerabilities need to be taken into account – and their voice and agency need to be ensured in CCA/DRR policies and actions in order to enhance their resilience.
2. Stronger reflection of gender equality and women's empowerment is required in policies and actions in CCA and DRR across all sectors. Specific gender-responsive priority actions should be planned, budgeted and monitored at national and local levels.
3. Greater investments need to be placed in capacity building through trainings and tools for data collection, gender analysis and gender mainstreaming in CCA and DRR for various sectors as well as the Committee on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control.
4. Women's livelihoods are particularly affected by climate change and disasters and therefore should be protected. Women's access to information, training, technology, financing, resources and social protection should be ensured. Focus should be placed on investing in innovative and women-led initiatives for resilience.
5. Coordination, collaboration and dialogue on gender-responsive CCA and DRR between all actors, including women's groups at all levels, need to be strengthened for effective results.
6. Secure increased and meaningful participation, representation and leadership of women, especially ethnic minority women, in CCA/DRR policy dialogue and implementation.



## I. Introduction

Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) are vital to Viet Nam's sustainable development and long-term resilience. The country's low-lying deltas, long coastline and highlands make it extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Climate change further exacerbates natural hazards resulting in more frequent, less-predictable and intense disasters, such as the 2015/2016 drought and saltwater intrusion caused by El Nino. At its peak, the drought affected 2.3 million people with water, food and livelihood insecurity resulting in negative impacts on health and nutrition. The poor and vulnerable, particularly women, children and elderly, experience disproportionate impacts of climate change.

The Government of Viet Nam has shown its commitment to gender equality in climate change and disaster risk reduction through the development of various policies, plans and in their efforts to implement them. However, awareness, understanding and application vary among stakeholders at various levels highlighting that gender mainstreaming in climate change and disaster risk reduction still needs further strengthening.

The relationship between gender and climate change and disasters in Viet Nam is an area which requires further exploration. Collection and analysis of sex, age and ethnic group disaggregated data, and application of gender analysis is paramount when developing policies and plans necessary for effective CCA and DRR.

Although women are disproportionately affected by climate change and disasters, they are major players in DRR and CCA making it essential to ensure their meaningful participation and leadership in decision-making processes on CCA and DRR.

This policy brief highlights key issues of gender inequality in CCA and DRR with the intention of strengthening gender equality in policies and plans and their implementation. It draws on the lessons learnt through studies and practical experience of various organizations in Viet Nam, particularly the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) and Disaster Management Working Group (DMWG), Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU), UN agencies and others. Recommendations are forward-looking on how to enhance the participation and leadership of women and strengthen gender mainstreaming/responsiveness in CCA and DRR in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

## II. Objective

This policy brief is developed with the aim to raise awareness and highlight the importance of gender equality in climate and disaster resilience in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. This is on the premise that addressing gender inequality is a pre-requisite for sustainable development. As the Government of Viet Nam is implementing the Sendai Framework (2015-2030), Paris Agreement (2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals, this brief is to highlight the key areas for further development and investment going forward.

This policy brief targets policy makers, legislative authorities, mass organizations, UN and donors, nongovernment organizations and the private sector at national, subnational and local levels.

This policy brief is a joint initiative of UN Women, UNDP, CARE, Oxfam and SNV in Viet Nam. It updates the original Policy Brief on Gender Equality in Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction in Viet Nam (2012) and reflects the outcomes of various researches, discussions and experiences.

### Box I: Important definitions<sup>1</sup>

**Gender:** Refers to socially ascribed roles, responsibilities, rights and opportunities associated with men and women. Gender relations are dynamic, change over time, and are context-specific – just as societies can change over time, so too can the different gender-defined roles of women and men in households, communities, the work place, and other formal and informal decision-making institutions and structures.

**Gender differentiation:** Men and women can have different socially-defined roles, responsibilities, functions, levels of participation, access to and control over resources and assets, levels of education, actual rights and opportunities. In many societies, women and girls in particular can face traditional patterns of marginalization and discrimination because of these gender defined roles, rights and opportunities.

**Gender equality:** Similar rights, potentials, assets and chances for women and men (in all their diversity). Often women face specific obstacles to attain their full development potential, such as lack of decision-making power, poverty, limited access to and control over resources (natural, financial, credit, education and training). Despite the disadvantages they often face, women are also crucial actors, particularly at the community level with knowledge, experience, expertise, skills and vision.

**Gender mainstreaming:** “...is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, [financing,] implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and program (in all political, economic and societal spheres), so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality”.

**Gender analysis:** Gives us an understanding of how the social-defined roles of women and men determine different vulnerabilities and capacities to deal with climate change. Gender analysis is essential to better informed, and more equitable, efficient and sustainable climate change and DRR responses.

**Vulnerability:** The characteristics and circumstances of [an individual], community, system or asset that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard.

**Resilience:** The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.

**Capacity:** The combination of all the strengths, attributes and resources available within a community, society or organization that can be used to achieve agreed goals.

### III. Key facts on gender equality in Viet Nam

Viet Nam has a Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) value of 0.7, ranking it 65 out of 144 countries in the 2016 index<sup>1</sup>. As of today, headline indicators appear positive for women in many dimensions. Gender gaps at all educational levels have been closed. In the 2012-2013 school year, the ratio of girls to boys had increased to 91 percent at the primary, 94 percent at the secondary, and 114 percent at the upper secondary level. Women occupy 26.8 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly in the current term (2016-2021), one of the highest female political participation rates in the region. The percentage of women's representation at the provincial level is high too and increased from 25 percent in the term 1999-2004 to 26.4 percent for the current term. However, there is poor representation of women in decision-making positions, particularly at local levels with only 18.1 percent women in the People's Council in the term 2011-2016<sup>2</sup>.

Gender gaps and biases also exist in other areas: The strong boy preference in Viet Nam is reflected in imbalanced sex ratios at birth (SRB), from 106 male births for every 100 female births in 1999 to 112.8 in 2015<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, women work longer hours than men and for less pay. A UN Women's study analysing the Viet Nam Labour Force Survey data from 2014 has shown that the gender earning gap has widened over the last 10 years from 13 per cent to 20 per cent<sup>4</sup>. Gender inequality persists in women's limited access to and control over resources, such as land, property, formal credit and job training.

Labour force participation rates are relatively high for both men and women in Viet Nam: in 2015 the national rate was 77.7 per cent (83 per cent for men and 72.9 per cent for women). The official unemployment rate was 2.09 per cent for males and 2.10 per cent for females - but the youth unemployment rates were much higher, particularly so for young women (5.51 per cent for males and 7.15 per cent for females). In 2015, about 45.5 percent of women worked in agriculture, 19.3 in manufacturing and 35.2 in services. The major challenge is in rural areas when nearly 90 per cent of female labourers were untrained in 2015. This rate is particularly low for women working in agriculture, fisheries and forestry (3.1 percent); and in business services and production individuals and households (5.3 per cent)<sup>5</sup>. This gap challenges rural women's resilience to disasters and climate change due to their limited skills and capacity.



The Global Gender Gap Index ranked Vietnam at **65** out of **144** countries, well above most other Asian countries at similar levels of economic development.

In response to addressing gender inequality, the Government of Viet Nam has taken some steps to address these issues. Viet Nam has a complex institutional framework where multiple agencies and structures are responsible for ensuring gender equality. The Department for Gender Equality (Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs - MOLISA) is the State agency responsible for gender equality and the implementation of the Gender Equality Law. It is also the agency responsible for the inter-sectoral National Committee for the Advancement of Women which has branches in line ministries, agencies and provinces. Line ministries, in coordination with MOLISA, perform the function of state management on gender equality within their respective ministries and sectors. This structure mandates line ministries like the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) responsibility to ensure mainstreaming of gender equality into their sectors, including disaster management and climate change adaptation.

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum, further detail can be found <https://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/>

<sup>2</sup> MOLISA, *Fact and Figures on Women and Men in Viet Nam*, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> GSO, *Population change and family planning survey 2015*.

<sup>4</sup> UN Women, *Toward gender equality in Viet Nam: Making inclusive growth work for women*, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> MOLISA, *Fact and Figures on Women and Men in Viet Nam*, 2016.

Another institution promoting gender equality is the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) - a mass organization of the Communist Party formed in 1930 to mobilize women for an independent Viet Nam. The Law on Gender Equality stipulates that the VWU shall participate in reviewing and formulating policies, laws and participate in state management on gender equality; involve in monitoring the implementation of gender equality legislation; and carry out organizational activities contributing to supporting women to achieve gender equality. Furthermore, VWU is also mandated to participate in reviewing policies and legislation on gender equality and perform the function of representing and protecting the legitimate rights and interests of women and girls prescribed by law. With a membership of over 15 million and a representation in over ten thousand local women's unions in communes and towns through the country, VWU has a strong network to mobilize women and take part in community activities such as disaster prevention and control.

## **Box II: 10 Lessons Learned in Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in Viet Nam**

In 2016, a Women's Union briefing note developed with UNDP and Australian Aid support highlighted ten key lessons learned:

1. Understanding the diversity of vulnerability and risk improves efficiency (including disaggregating data)
2. Capacity building of staff and awareness raising on gender and gender mainstreaming is essential
3. When offered full knowledge, women can be effective and change-makers in preventing and responding to disasters in their families and communities
4. Equal participation of women and men (50 per cent - 50 per cent) in prevention and disaster management, especially in needs assessment is an effective way to increase ownership and accuracy of relief operations
5. Gender sensitive DRR knowledge can be the foundation for wider climate change awareness raising, and effective action, particularly for climate-smart risk management
6. Gender sensitive DPC plans are a useful tool for effective investment planning and mainstreaming
7. When women participate in decision-making processes and the management of institutions, system become more transparent and more efficient
8. Women's Union's network has valuable experience and wide networks that can practically be used to enhance preparedness and timely response to disasters.
9. Using credit is a good tool to help women and vulnerable groups better cope with natural disasters.
10. Elderly women are not just a vulnerable group but instead can be a key resource for information and guidance in managing disasters.

The full report is available at

[http://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/environment\\_climate/10-lessons-learned-in-gender-mainstreaming-in-drr-and-cca-in-viet-nam.html](http://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/environment_climate/10-lessons-learned-in-gender-mainstreaming-in-drr-and-cca-in-viet-nam.html)

## IV. Global commitments for gender equality, climate change and disaster risk reduction in the post-2015 development context

With a strong gender focus, the **Sustainable Development Goals** includes an ambitious stand-alone goal for gender equality (SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), with nine specific targets focusing on ending discrimination, violence against women and girls, elimination of harmful practices, unpaid care and domestic work, women's leadership and decision-making, sexual/reproductive health and reproductive rights, rights to economic resources, ownership and control over land and property, enabling technologies, and policies and legislation. As well, the SDGs set gender-sensitive targets for most other goals, recognizing that even those with no explicit gender-specific targets have important gender-equality implications and require a gender-mainstreamed approach to meet the 2030 targets.

In terms of gender equality in climate change, a two-year **Lima Work Programme on Gender** was adopted during the Conference of Parties 20 (COP 20) in Lima in 2014 with an aim to promote gender balance and achieve gender-responsive climate policy by encouraging parties and other bodies to support training and awareness raising for all delegates and also to build skills of female negotiators. The **Paris Agreement** was agreed by 195 parties at the COP 21 in Paris in 2015, and entered into force in November 2016. Discussions during COP 21 around gender equality focused on women's role as leaders, innovators and change agents in addressing climate change and a number of good practices on gender just climate solutions for sustainable local economies were promoted globally. A Gender Composition Report was shared at COP 21 to track progress made towards meeting the goal of gender balance in advancing gender-sensitive climate policy. Following discussions of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 45) during COP 22 in Marrakech in 2016, parties decided to extend and strengthen the work under the Lima Work Programme calling for a Gender Action Plan under the UNFCCC (FCCC/SBI/2016/L.37, Subsidiary Body for Implementation, Forty-fifth session, Marrakech, 7–14 November 2016, Agenda item 16 Gender and climate change).

While discussions at COP 21 focused on pushing for more political will to support the gender agenda, COP 22 in Marrakech pushed for increased financing and capacity building for female negotiators, enhancing gender knowledge for negotiators and strengthening approaches to achieve gender equality.

For disaster risk reduction, the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015 calls for stronger gender, age, disability and cultural perspectives in policies and practices; promotion of women's leadership; women's participation in disaster risk management; resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction; and adequate capacity building measures for women's empowerment and livelihoods. At the Regional Asia-Pacific Conference on Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction held in May 2016, the Hanoi Recommendations were adopted which gave concrete recommendations for the implementation of the gender-responsive Sendai Framework. These recommendations were later incorporated into the two-year **Regional Plan** adopted at the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi in November 2016, strongly calling for women's participation and leadership in its declaration. It further calls that by 2018 50 percent of countries have prepared a design to establish a national mechanism to collect, analyze and disseminate information on disaster losses and risk aiming to achieve an appropriate level of disaggregation for gender, age and disability. As Governments prepare for the implementation of the Sendai Framework, it is critical that clear gender targets are included in all priorities for action in order to strengthen gender integration and gender mainstreaming into disaster risk reduction actions at local levels.

### **Box III: Good example of capacity building and awareness raising for women on CC/DRR**

Under the project on 'Strengthening women's capacity in disaster risk reduction to cope with climate change in Viet Nam', funded by the Government of Luxembourg, UN Women partnered with the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) to build capacity of the VWU on disaster risk reduction from the central down to local level. At national level and in five targeted provinces (Quang Binh, Thue Thien Hue, Binh Dinh, Dong Thap and Ca Mau), a pool of government staff was trained to become trainers on gender and DRR/DRM for echo trainings at different levels. A total of 150 representatives (70 per cent women) from the VWU and different members of the Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control such as the People's Committee, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), the Department of Social, Invalid and Social Affairs, the Department of Natural Resource and Environment (DONRE) and the Red Cross at provincial and district levels enhanced their knowledge and skills in gender mainstreaming in DRR and CBDRM.

Many of them led gender-sensitive community based disaster risk assessments (CBDRA) and gender-responsive disaster reduction planning in their communes. With gender knowledge and tools that were provided, the trained officers were able to: (i) ensure a 50 per cent representation and participation of local women in consultation during conducting disaster risk assessment (this figure was higher than the percentage in the government CBDRM programme which is set at 35%); (ii) conduct separate meetings with women and men with the involvement of vulnerable groups such as persons living with disability, children, elderly and ethnic minority; (iii) identify different vulnerabilities and capacities of women and men in disasters; (iv) develop a hazard map of the commune with participation from both women and men.

8 commune-level DRR plans for 2016 were developed with the participation of more than 600 community people (50% women) and have taken into consideration gender issues. These communes are: Khanh Binh Tay and Nguyen Viet Khai (Ca Mau), An Nhon and Tan Nhuan Dong (Dong Thap), Duc Trach and My Thuy (Quang Binh), Loc Vinh and Phu My (Thua Thien Hue). Different gender-responsive actions and measures were identified by local women and men to address women and men's different vulnerabilities and tap into women and men's capacities. Some of gender-responsive actions were: (i) organize disaster trainings and meetings in time that women can attend; (ii) conduct swimming lessons for women and girls as girls often don't know how to swim; (iii) increase female members of the commune CNDPC; (iv) train and involve women in rescue teams; (v) increase women's participation in vocational training/new technology (at least 50 per cent women), including organizing separate trainings for women in suitable time and venue; (vi) mobilize resource to build concrete houses for poor households, including poor female-headed households. The DRR plans were approved by the Chairman of Commune People's Committee in eight communes. This was the first time that the commune DRR plans in these 8 communes were developed through a consultation process involving both women and men at the community level.


Experience from local level implementation were documented and contributed to the development of a Guideline on Gender mainstreaming in CBDRM programme that UN Women supported the Disaster Management Center (DMC) (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development). In 2016, DMC actively led the process of developing the Gender Guideline to ensure CBDRM programme are gender sensitive. In 2016, with efforts to institutionalize engagement in DRR/DRM in the past few years, VWU developed its National Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (2017-2021). The Action Plan is expected to systematize VWU approach to DRR/CCA among national stakeholders and strengthened its position in this area.



## V. National legislative frameworks on gender equality, climate change and disaster risk reduction

Viet Nam has a solid legislative basis with regard to gender equality. The **Law on Gender Equality (2007)** and the **National Strategy on Gender Equality (2011-2020)** obligate all sectors and ministries to mainstream gender in their work. According to the National Strategy on Gender Equality, ministries and provinces are responsible for building and issuing action plans on gender equality to implement the strategy. The strategy set a target that 100 per cent of draft legal documents submitted to the National Assembly will be reviewed for their relevance to gender equality and that legal drafters will be trained in gender knowledge and analysis skills. A government progress report published in March 2016 informed that forty-nine provinces and seventeen ministries have adopted and are reporting on their action plans, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment<sup>6</sup>. However, both plans limited their focus on six common targets as set in the strategy, including labour and employment; education and training; management and leadership; health; gender equality in family settings and gender based violence; institutional capacity on gender equality. They do not adequately address sectorial gender inequality issues such as women in disaster management or climate change adaptation.



 Flood-prone area in Nghệ An province in Vietnam  
(Photo credit: SNV Viet Nam)

In the area of climate change, the **National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change (2008)** underlines the importance of gender equality as a guiding principle, along with sustainable development. The National Target Programme also stresses the need to conduct vulnerability assessments at sectoral, regional and community levels. It underlines that potential climate change impacts on women can undo the achievement of the MDGs. However, the action plans developed by line ministries and provinces are not yet specifically mandated to address gender equality in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. The National Target Programme ended in 2015 and the summary report has been developed to assess its achievements. The follow up to the National Target Programme, the **National Strategy on Climate Change (2011)**, mentions gender equality as one of its specific objectives.

The **National Target Programme on Sustainable Poverty Reduction** and **National Target Programme on New Rural Development** were recently approved to cover the period from 2016 to 2020. Gender equality is required as an approach to be mainstreamed into the annual and five-year implementation plan of the target programs. Climate change and disaster risk reduction must be mainstreamed into the regular planning process of the target programs. The target programs also articulate a number of areas where climate change and disaster risk reduction should be an integral requirement of objectives, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. The government also recently approved the **Target Programme on Climate Change and Green Growth** in August 2016. One of the objectives of the target program is to create sustainable livelihood options for people, which makes it a good platform to promote gender equality through resilience building.

<sup>6</sup> MOLISA, *Fact and Figures on Women and Men in Viet Nam, 2016*.

In 2013, the **Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control** was approved and gender equality was put as part of the overall principle of the law. The Law also requires gender to be mainstreamed into the disaster risk management processes. The Law directs mass organizations, including the Women's Union, to play a stronger role in awareness raising on disaster risk reduction as well as mobilization of support at the local level.

The **National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020** identifies that: "Natural disasters cause negative impacts on vulnerable groups such as the old, disabled people, women and children". It outlines the following approaches: promotion of community awareness raising and information dissemination; building resilience to disasters and promotion of the tradition of mutual support in disaster situations; organization of self-response forces in communities for active emergency search and rescue; and promoting the role of social organizations and associations in disaster response and recovery.

Viet Nam submitted its **Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to UNFCCC** in September 2015 and subsequently ratified the Paris Agreement on 31 October 2016 following the Prime Minister's approval of the **National Action Plan to implement the Paris Agreement** on 28 October 2016. Under the Action Plan Viet Nam commits that gender equality and women's empowerment is promoted or taken into consideration during the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The plan aims to bring positive social impacts through improving social justice and prioritised investment for the most vulnerable areas and social groups, including women, poor, children elderly and minorities. Specifically, mainstreaming gender and promoting gender equality is a principle for the adaptation component of Vietnam's NDC. More work needs to be done to ensure systematic gender analysis and the incorporation of appropriate measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all climate related investments of line ministries and provinces.

The implementation guidelines of the **National Programme on Community Based Disaster Risk Management** mentions that: "Gender equality, gender mainstreaming and promoting women's participation / women's empowerment in the activities of disaster risk management and adaptation to climate change will bring greater efficiency to the community." The program proposes the following actions to promote women's participation and empowerment: gender issues should be integrated in training materials on community based disaster risk management; training methods should be participatory and encourage women's participation; and the percentage of women's participation in training courses should be at least thirty per cent.

## VI. Major challenges in integration of gender equality into climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in Viet Nam

Existing gender inequalities and social constructs contribute to the vulnerabilities and capacities of people in dealing with the impacts of climate change and disasters. These gender differences can be seen at the policy level; in persistent social stereotypes and women's and men's productive and reproductive roles; in access to information, early warning, services (training, agriculture extension) and resources (land, water, technology, credit); in participation in decision-making in households and community; and in leadership roles.

Although there is an increasing interest in the issue of gender mainstreaming in climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR), major challenges remain:

### *Gender mainstreaming has begun, but data and integration into policy and practice is incomplete*

- Although many new laws and policies mention the need to integrate gender into planning, in practice implementation has been slow and many plans and policies, such as the Provincial Disaster

Prevention and Control Plans and the Climate Change Action Plan, have little or no reference or specific actions to support gender equity.

- To date, research, analysis and evaluation of gender equality and mainstreaming in CCA/DRR is limited, which hampers the formulation of appropriate solutions.
- Collection and collation of sex-disaggregated data relevant for CCA/DRR is still a shortcoming, although in some instances sex-disaggregated data exists at the local level, this is not available at higher provincial and national levels.
- Lack of practical solutions and specific criteria to integrate gender mainstreaming into policies, strategies and plans.
- Understanding of gender roles in the context of CCA and DRR is still limited. Awareness-raising and capacity building on data collection and data analysis for policy making by MARD and MONRE at different levels is still required.

### **Gender stereotypes persist and negatively impact women's advancement within DRR/ resilience building**

- Stereotypes regarding women's and men's roles in CCA/DRR still prevail, meaning that women are often only seen as 'victims' and not as crucial actors in recovery and adaptation efforts. Assessment methodologies and approaches for rural disaster risk management still tend to primarily address male members of households, despite the increased feminization of agriculture in Viet Nam<sup>7</sup>.
- In general, the CCA/DRR sectors have a male dominated culture, which female participants may find intimidating, especially as they are represented in fewer numbers and generally have less access to relevant decision-making information.
- Roles in decision-making in CCA/DRR are gendered, with women participating less in decision-making and leadership. There is some local variation but women are clearly under-represented in local and sub-regional formal decision-making structures, such as in the Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control or in Search and Rescue Committees at different administrative levels<sup>8</sup>.



Women in Binh Dinh Province participating in a disaster risk mapping exercise for their community, 2013  
(Photo credit: Eliska Gerthnerova/ UN Women)

### **Recent trends show that more men are killed in disasters than women, however women are more negatively affected by the impact in the aftermath of disasters than men.**

#### **i. Climate change impacts on livelihoods and income**

- In rural areas, more women (63 per cent of working women) are engaged in agricultural production than men (57 per cent of working men), however women are mainly employed in informal jobs or

<sup>7</sup> UN Women and CARE study on gender and disaster risk reduction, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> According to UN Women's review on ratio of women to total members in the Committee on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control at commune level in 4 provinces (Ca Mau, Dong Thap, Quang Binh, Thua Thien Hue), only 15 per cent of the total members were women in 2015.

subsistence agriculture<sup>9</sup> putting them at greater risk from climate and disaster impacts affecting agriculture.

- Women face the double-burden of caring for children, elderly and sick/disabled family members while still being responsible for household and agricultural work which is exacerbated in climate-related disasters.
- A limited sex disaggregated data analysis on death and missing rate in disasters during 2012-2014 indicates a very low statistic for female deaths. Among 911 people killed as a result of disasters in this 3-year period, only 11.9 per cent were female while 43.5 per cent were male. A significant percentage (44.5 per cent) was reported as general numbers which did not enable any disaggregation<sup>10</sup>. In 2016, among 264 people killed and gone missing in disasters, 41 were children, 52 were women and 166 people were reported without sex disaggregation<sup>11</sup>.

## ii. Coping strategies in climate change-related disaster scenarios

- Women are particularly disproportionately affected in climate-related disasters when resources are scarce, due to the disaster, because they spend additional time collecting water, food and fuel which is primarily a women's responsibility.
- In extreme weather conditions where there is a loss in income, families will sell off jewellery and poultry which are assets under the care of women in the household.
- Local communities and particularly women in households have less access to nutrition due to loss of crops and cattle in extreme weather events and disasters, negatively affecting their health<sup>12</sup>.
- Impact on small scale farmers may cause migration of particularly men and young people to cities and industrial zones in search of jobs, leading to increased workload of women and old people to take care of the additional agricultural work<sup>13</sup>.

***Women play a key role in protection of their community and family, income and assets, yet their role is not recognized and their leadership is not promoted in public decision-making in relation to CCA/DRR.***

## iii. Gendered roles and decision-making in households

- Male heads of families make the key decisions on purchase and sale of large assets, such as the variety of crops and cattle or forestry investments, while women make decisions for the 'smaller areas' of their domains.
- Women's roles in disaster preparedness are clearly identified as more aligned to the household and family in preparing food and care, as well as the psychological support of 'comforting', whereas men's roles are linked to areas that require physical strength such as repairing houses, dyke strengthening and working in rescue teams<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> *FAO and UN Women policy brief on rural women in Viet Nam, 2015.*

<sup>10</sup> *In 2015, UN Women and MARD commissioned a review of statistic of deaths from disasters during 2012-2014. The review analyzed reports from provincial Committees on Disaster Prevention and Control sent to the Central Committee on loss and damages after disasters.*

<sup>11</sup> *The Central Steering Committee on Disaster Prevention and Control, 2016 annual report, 2016.*

<sup>12</sup> *Joint Assessment Team (MARD, MOH, PACCOM, UN and INGOs), Viet Nam Drought and Saltwater Intrusion Rapid Assessment Report, March 2016.*

<sup>13</sup> *UN Women desk review on gender and disaster risk reduction, 2015. Original source: Pham Thanh Trung (2013), "Climate change and its gendered impacts on agriculture in Viet Nam", International Journal of Development and Sustainability, Vol., 2, No. 1, pp. 52-62*


<sup>14</sup> *UN Women desk review on gender and disaster risk reduction, 2015.*

- Following a disaster, women tend to do the clean-up work in the home and caring for the children and elderly, whereas men will clean public spaces and focus on work which requires more physical strength. Both women and men tend to share the agricultural work.

#### iv. Participation and leadership in decision-making in the community

- Local level committees on natural disaster prevention and control do not have significant numbers of female members because of the low representation of women in managerial and leadership position overall. Female members are also usually not comfortable to raise women's concerns in meetings<sup>15</sup>.
- Cultural norms associate leadership characteristics with men's characteristics, such as strong and decisive, whereas women are expected to be 'good at home and excellent at work.' Women are less likely to be selected for leadership positions because of sympathy towards their 'burden' and the belief that women do not have sufficient time and capacity to fulfil all tasks<sup>16</sup>.
- Women are responsible for taking care of children and elderly, as well as the agricultural crops and land leaving little time for them to engage in community activities.
- Women themselves tend to prioritize family and housework over public roles, because of cultural norms and limited support from their family.
- Ethnic minority women have limited decision-making power in the community partly due to barriers in language and education levels as well as culture and social norms, which also restricts the information they receive on government programs which could assist their capacity and resilience<sup>17</sup>.



 Children learn self-protection skills in disaster-prone area in the Central of Vietnam  
(Photo credit: SNV Viet Nam)

### **Unequal access to and control over land and productive assets, training, information, technology, extension services and finance that limit women's opportunities and capacity for resilience.**

#### v. Access to training, land and productive assets

- Few rural women can access vocational training, extension services, finance, technology, markets and trader networks (29 per cent) compared to men (40 per cent), and training available to women is often short-term and concentrates on 'traditional' women's skills<sup>18</sup> such as less technical production and processing techniques.
- Despite having space for both the husband's and wife's names on land use certificates, in most cases only the husband's names are written limiting women's ownership and access to land, residence security and potentially financial resources<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> According to a review by Viet Nam Women's Union, in 2014, only 29 per cent of the total provinces, 44 per cent districts and 51 per cent communes have WU representation in the Committee for Disaster Prevention and Control.

<sup>16</sup> According to Oxfam study on women's perception on leadership

<sup>17</sup> CARE study on ethnic minorities in northern mountainous region

<sup>18</sup> FAO and UN Women policy brief on rural women in Viet Nam, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Hoang Cam et al, The women's access to land in Contemporary Viet Nam, 2013.

#### vi. Access to climate and disaster information and early warning

- Heads of households, who are generally male members, are invited to community meetings where disaster information is shared but information shared in meetings is usually not passed on to women and other family members.
- Women mainly receive early warning information from national television channels and least from mobile phones making them more reliant on national forecasts and less on localized early warning messages<sup>20</sup>.
- Messages and channels of communication are not adapted to local languages limiting access of information to ethnic minorities, particularly women.

#### vii. Social protection and post-disaster assistance

- Post-disaster assistance is geared towards partially compensating damage to agricultural land and number of livestock lost, which does not consider household assets mainly controlled by women, such as cooking utensils.
- As the majority of women farmers (45 per cent) are self-employed they do not receive social security benefits and lack access to insurance, which leaves them vulnerable and insecure<sup>21</sup>.
- Post-disaster clean-up and recovery work is mainly done by women but it is mainly unpaid work.
- Relief and recovery compensation schemes do not target day labourers who do not own farm land or paddy rice areas but work as day labourers on other people's farms, which affects women specifically as they are mostly engaged in informal jobs<sup>22</sup>.



#### Box IV: Good examples on climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives to benefit women

Under the ongoing Dutch government funded “Enhancing Opportunities for Women’s Enterprises” (FLOW/EOWE) program, SNV supports women-led agribusinesses in rice and horticulture value chains while promoting climate smart agriculture production in around 20 agriculture cooperatives . The program supports female and male farmers and cooperatives to apply SRI (System of Rice Intensification) - an advanced farming technique that combines low inputs principles, the alternative wetting and drying irrigation technique and integrated pest management (IPM). It increases yield, reduces GHG emissions due to a reduction of CH<sub>4</sub> by limiting flooding time and water volumes in the field, increases the resilience of the rice plants to climate change, specifically whirlwind and drought, due to the creation of stronger branches and deeper roots, which minimizes losses and investments for inputs.

<sup>20</sup> According to the UN Women and CARE study on gender and disaster risk reduction, 2015. However, this finding does not necessarily apply to remote and mountainous areas where electricity is scarce and the village head is responsible for disseminating early warning information.

<sup>21</sup> FAO and UN Women policy brief on rural women in Viet Nam, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> CARE drought assessment, 2016.

The climate-smart agriculture approach is gender responsive by design and ensured throughout implementation and in monitoring and evaluation. Hundreds of farmer groups are formulated with 50-100 per cent female leaders. Women's intellectual and leadership role in cooperatives and agriculture agencies is strategically promoted. All female farmers are trained via farmer field schools to access advanced farming techniques and improve financial literacy and booking practices. Selected women-led rice businesses, as crops services, millers and retailers, get business capacity support. Simultaneously with agribusiness enhancement, the program is implementing social behavior change communication interventions at household and community level to address key gender norms that form a barrier for women's effective economic participation. For example, the program promotes sharing household chores between men and women to reduce women's time spend on reproductive work which enables them to focus more on effective business development.

Within another project, the Asian Development Bank-funded "Harnessing Climate Change Mitigation Initiatives to Benefit Women", SNV is working to increase women's business opportunities in renewable energy technologies, such as clean cook stoves and biogas digesters. Based on a recent gender assessment in the biogas sector, SNV is developing gender-sensitive training manuals for female biogas digester masons, as well as providing ongoing technical and business planning support to women masons, technicians and quality control agents. Similarly, SNV's "Viet Nam Business Challenge Fund", funded by the UK Department for International Development, provided technical assistance and business skills support to GreenGen, a woman-owned local SME that has developed an advanced clean cook stove for the low income market in Viet Nam. With SNV's financial and

#### **Box V: Good example of access to downscaled climate information**

In the "Agro-climate Information Services for Women and Ethnic Minority farmers in South-East Asia" (ACIS) project, CARE has applied a Participatory Scenario Planning approach to engage stakeholders from different backgrounds, including meteorology and agriculture, to participate in discussions with commune staff, village heads and representatives of Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA), which are self-managed, sustainable groups of women aimed at creating opportunities through financial cooperation. These discussions are to generate and share downscaled (detailed and local, rather than regional) seasonal forecasts sourced from both scientific and local knowledge. These forecasts will then be translated into agricultural advisories and actionable information, taking into consideration the local farming context, language and culture.

The translated information will then be shared with women members in the VSLA group in their monthly meetings. Female members will have the chance to provide feedback on how they apply the advisories and it is also the forum for them to raise their general needs, concerns, and issues to commune officials and government agricultural authorities. For example, before the annual Socio-Economic Development Plan process, the VSLAs engaged in discussions about their issues and raised them with village heads and the commune People's Council in consultation meetings. Women are also able to seek advice from Agricultural Extension Workers regarding farming practices such as seasonal calendar application, crop structure development and pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer management.

Men and boys are engaged in the discussions with women about sharing of workload, in productive and reproductive activities, as well as decision-making regarding agricultural inputs at the household level and other decisions at the community level. This project is co-implemented by CARE International in Viet Nam and World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) with funding from the Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security run by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

#### **Box VI: Good example of empowering vulnerable women in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation**

In the “Partnership for Equitable Resilience to the Impacts of Climate Change of the Coastal Communities in Deltas of Viet Nam” (PRC) project, Oxfam supported initiatives at the local level in five provinces and achieved increased climate resilience for more than 50,000 people in mostly coastal communities, half of whom were women. This was partly due to raising awareness, for which the Participatory Action Oriented Training (PAOT) was a key methodology. PAOT was developed as a practical method to support workplace initiatives and self-help voluntary actions by using many visual materials, photobooks, leaflets and checklists.

Members of the Viet Nam Women’s Union were trained and supported to deliver PAOT, which (in turn) led to the establishment of a network of 528 village facilitators/communicators in Mekong delta, including a balanced number of women. Many information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials were developed and used in the training sessions, and a PAOT manual was developed. PAOT helped to reach vulnerable people, including women headed households, the poor, people living with disability and members of ethnic minority groups. It encouraged local people to start with the smallest and least expensive improvement so that participants can take advantage of the resources available to them. It built the capacities and confidence of the Viet Nam Women’s Union members as well as local people. They could increase community skills and awareness, leading to household level actions as well as community plans and actions. Many approaches to training and awareness raising demonstrated that this could be very empowering, as local women became trainers and communicators and took up new roles in the community. This improved gender equality, reduced climatic risks, and had wider positive effects on communities.

## **VII. Recommendations**

### ***Government agencies and legal authorities***

#### **Ensuring gender equality is integrated into CCA and DRR legal and policy frameworks**

- a. Line ministries, and especially the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) should cooperate to ensure that their gender CCA/DRR actions have budget and that gender equality indicators and actions are integrated.



- b. The revision of the Law on Gender Equality should legally require gender and age disaggregation of data and ensure gender targeted mechanisms for specific groups of women and girls who are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, including disasters.
- c. The Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) should develop a legal decision, technical guidance and circulars to promote gender equity in the implementation of CCA/DRR interventions and investments.
- d. Gender reporting should be part of the annual report on implementation of related national programs on CCA/DRR and in public reports on disaster Prevention and Control and in disaster recovery efforts.
- e. As the mandate of MOLISA includes gender mainstreaming across ministries and sectors and regular consultations with the Viet Nam Women’s Union (VWU), it should develop a clear workplan to support this process within the government, and work with women’s organizations and institutions (e.g. local groups, academia, INGOs, UN) to support this process.
- f. Increase the number of female members in the Committees for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control at all levels to a minimum of 30 per cent and ensure their active decision-making in these committees.
- g. Promote opportunities and allocate budget to build capacity on gender in CCA/DRR at national and local systems, particularly for women.
- h. The Government is encouraged to ensure multi-stakeholder engagement in the National Platform on DRR and CCA and the Viet Nam Climate Change Panel should adopt the enhancement of gender equality as one of its objectives and reflect equal representation of women and men.



Ms. Nguyen Thi Dan - local women’s union in Ca Mau province provides first aid training to the community, 2016  
(Photo credit: Hoang Hiep/UN Women)

***Social and political mass organizations (Fatherland Front, Trade Union, Farmer’s Union, Youth Union, Women’s Union, Veteran Union, Viet Nam Red Cross Society and other mass organizations)***

- a. Strengthen the role of all political mass organisations in monitoring and social dialogues on gender, DRR and CCA.
- b. Specifically build capacity of female members of VWU and VNRC to engage actively in decision-making at all levels of the Committees on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control, in communications/early-warning messages and in the coordination mechanisms for the National Climate Change Strategy and the National Target Programme on Responding to Climate Change.
- c. Mass organizations should develop specific actions to increase investment in resilient livelihoods where women are empowered to become leaders in adapting to climate change impacts within their communities.
- d. The Red Cross should support female member volunteers to participate in search and rescue teams in order to promote equality in DRR/CCA.
- e. Ensure active role of VWU members as part of the joint assessment teams in community-based risk assessment and the aftermath of disasters to ensure gender-disaggregated data is collected and analyzed.
- f. The VWU and VNRC should be encouraged to implement the National Programme on Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) and climate change programs/projects at the local level, with a focus on ensuring and enhancing gender equality and women’s empowerment.

### **INGOs and Vietnamese NGOs**

- a. Continue to ensure that existing and future technical materials and tool-sets on CCA/DRR are harmonized and include gender equality aspects.
- b. Ensure that projects and programs on CCA/DRR involve advocacy around the need for gender equality and gender mainstreaming, addressing local, provincial and national stakeholders.
- c. All NGOs should utilize existing networks (CCWG, DMWG and the National Platform on DRR and CCA) to jointly advocate for a common approach to gender mainstreaming in CCA/DRR;
- d. Support vulnerable groups in 'making their voices heard' in DRR/CAA actions through national multi-stakeholder platforms, advocacy events and technical support at grassroots levels.
- e. Build national expertise on gender mainstreaming and gender equality through support to the VWU, national NGOs, educational and research institutes and others.

### **UN agencies and the donor community**

- a. Ensure more predictable and long-term program support on CCA and DRR in Viet Nam, with an emphasis on gender equality and the role of women in CCA and DRR.
- b. Continue to advocate for equally allocated funding for adaptation in the implementation of global climate agreements (50 per cent for adaptation and 50 per cent for mitigation) and ensure that gender is a key component.
- c. UN agencies and donors should publish updates on progress in promoting gender equality work and partnerships and ensure that gender equality is a part of the criteria for CCA/DRR funding.
- d. Encourage innovation in programs and promote women-led initiatives on environment friendly and climate resilient solutions.
- e. Advocate that ODA/loans/funding schemes should dedicate a minimum percentage of funding for actions to promote gender equity and mainstreaming, and gender indicators should be required in cost benefit analysis (CBA) calculations of projects.
- f. Ensure gender tracking of funding and budget allocation on CCA and DRR in all development support, such as in ODAs, private sector and trade development and technical assistance.
- g. Prioritise work to ensure gender equality in CCA/DRR legislation, policies, strategies and plans, and policy dialogue on CCA/DRR, including stepping-up work on gender-sensitive budget tracking and monitoring finance flows.
- h. UN agencies, Vietnamese NGOs and INGOs should engage with the media by bringing environmental and gender journalist networks together.

### **Private sector**

- a. The large private sector in Viet Nam should ensure that women's rights, including their labour rights and rights to equal payment, are respected, and that their access to assets and capabilities to deal with climate change is improved.
- b. Work with the Government and other stakeholders, such as the UN, NGOs, and the VWU, to ensure gender equality practices in value chains, especially relating to climate-sensitive sectors and DRR.
- c. Climate change mitigation, adaptation and DRR initiatives in which the private sector is involved should include a thorough gender analysis, ensure women's participation and benefit both women and men of all backgrounds.
- d. The private sector and financial institutions should support women's entrepreneurship in climate change mitigation, adaptation and DRR initiatives.



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