



WIN-WIN RESULTS

GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN
CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAMMING

GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN VIETNAM

Climate change poses major global challenges, but its implications for lives and livelihoods in Vietnam are very local.

Climate change acts as a risk multiplier, exacerbating existing hazards and vulnerabilities and creating new ones.

The impacts of climate change are, to a significant degree, determined by the fulfilment of rights and the distribution of resources and power among people, at home and in the community. Gender is a critical factor in this and women and men, girls and boys in Vietnam have different life chances, opportunities, resources and rewards that shape the way they can respond to a changing climate.

Gender is increasingly recognised as a decisive factor in climate change adaptation, mitigation planning and implementation, but limitations remain.

Women as a group are often viewed as being more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than men, without recognition of the diversity among different groups of women. Climate change activities often target women without addressing the nuanced underlying power dynamics that often limit their access to the benefits of climate change interventions.

In Vietnam, CARE works with women and men to both promote gender equality and increase communities' resilience to climate change. Through this work, CARE has learned valuable lessons on addressing the intersecting challenges of gender inequality and climate change. This Learning Series draws together key issues that have emerged from this work, and gives examples and recommendations on how they can be addressed.

KEY POINTS

- **Understand resilience:** common approaches and activities on gender in climate change tend to overlook both the differences between women, and the factors apart from gender that influence women and men's different abilities to make critical resilience decisions.

Comprehending the specific context and lives of the women and men is critical to support women's leadership and voice and effectively transform negative gendered roles.

- **Address gender-based barriers:** factors such as women's heavy workloads, limited decision-making power, and unequal access to and control over resources can prevent women and men from adopting resilience strategies.

Agricultural and non-agricultural climate resilient livelihood strategies will be less effective and can inadvertently reinforce negative gender norms if they do not tackle these barriers.

- **Adopt an integrated approach:** both gender and climate change must be addressed simultaneously if both increased resilience and gender equality are to be achieved.

Integrated activities that promote improved livelihood security, community-based natural resource management and women-led economic development offer a useful approach.

UNDERSTANDING RESILIENCE

To develop appropriate adaptation actions we need to better understand how gender and other factors shape people's climate resilience.

A dynamic interplay of factors including gender, ethnicity, poverty, age and disability shape a person's life experience. Gender inequality characterises the communities where CARE works, but this doesn't mean that all women are disempowered, or that all men are more powerful than all women. For many women, such as ethnic minority women or women with a disability, gender is not the only factor (or even the most important) that constrains their opportunities. Without understanding the diverse needs and strengths of various groups of women, resilience activities may be ineffective, inaccessible or even harmful.



UNDERSTANDING RESILIENCE: CARE IN ACTION

CARE seeks to better understand how gender and other factors intersect to influence people's vulnerability and capacity to respond to climate change, through approaches including:

- gender and power analyses;
- gender sensitive climate risk, vulnerability and capacity analyses;
- inclusive planning;
- and monitoring change from a gender perspective.

For example, the [Integrated Community Based Adaptation in the Mekong \(ICAM\)](#) project, funded by the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, used inclusive [Community Based Adaptation \(CBA\) Planning](#). This enabled women to express their experiences of climate change, develop appropriate adaptation strategies, and ensure that government level planning considered the impacts of diverse factors, including gender.

The project also developed a [Gender Action Plan](#) to understand the gender issues on each of the projects outputs and outcomes, and promote a focus on gender issues during implementation across all activities. A 'traffic light' based [Progress Tracker](#) was introduced to monitor progress on gender integration in activities, including those supporting women's empowerment.

At the community level, in both women-only and mixed planning groups, women were given the space and support to make decisions on various adaptation strategies. After two years of CBA planning in 33 villages and 5 communes, it was noted that [women's participation in village affairs increased](#).

The multi-stakeholder, multi-level methodology also aligned with the Government's Social-Economic Development Planning processes, which promoted government ownership, sustainability, and prioritisation of community based adaptation activities. [Led by the Vietnam Women's Union](#), the planning process involved relevant departments and stakeholders and achieved successful [integration of gender sensitive CBA actions](#) into higher-level Socio-Economic Development Plans. This approach showcased the opportunity to involve mass organizations such as the Women's Union, building on their network to expand the reach of CBA planning. Local authorities also expressed that they felt better connected and informed about how women and men are impacted by and responding to climate change.

UNDERSTANDING RESILIENCE: MA RIM'S INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY-BASED CLIMATE ADAPTATION ENABLED HER TO HAVE A STRONGER VOICE

Ma Rim (on the right) is a Cham woman from An Giang province, in the Mekong Delta. Many Cham people in An Giang live and work on the river or close to the water. Increasingly erratic rainfall, floods and storms as a result of climate change have further increased the challenges faced by the Cham people and others who depend on the water.

“We used our boat to go from work to work, from place to place, wherever there was something to do. Travelling so much and living together on one cramped space was not easy for my children, and I couldn't afford to send them to school. I also never felt safe; every year we have rains and floods so I was always terrified something could happen. When we had strong winds, we had to jump into the water to hold our boat, protect our children and save our belongings.”

The risks that Ma Rim faced as a result of climate change were exacerbated by her position as a Cham woman. Cham people have less access to land and services, and Cham women especially so; they are traditionally expected to remain at home, have limited opportunities for education, and do not have a strong voice in household and community decision-making.

“As a Cham ethnic minority woman, I have not previously been able to join community meetings, and I missed out on a lot of information. Traditionally in the past, Cham women always stayed at home and did not go to school. We were told what to do by our husbands.”

Alongside numerous Cham women, in September 2013, Ma Rim joined one of the many village climate change adaptation meetings, organised by CARE together with the local Women's Union as part of the [ICAM project](#). During these meetings, the women enthusiastically discussed past, current and future weather and climate trends, how it impacted their daily lives and community in different ways and what people could do about it. By enabling Ma Rim and other Cham women to participate in the conversation about climate change, they can become more resilient and also be able to better support their families and communities.

“Participating in these exercises was fun but has also taught me a lot about how and why the weather changes so much lately and how my village will be affected. I now know better what to do and I listen more frequently to weather forecasts. It's been very helpful for all of us Cham women; Cham men and women are now more equal and I am more involved. I value the importance of knowledge and education much more, and I will pass this on to my children.”



GENDER-BASED BARRIERS TO RESILIENCE: DIVISION OF LABOUR

In Vietnam, highly gendered roles and responsibilities mean higher workloads and lower recognition of women for their work.

Men and women have distinct gendered roles in agricultural production, income generation, management of natural resources and household activities. Men tend to have more authority and control of power and resources within the household and community. Commonly, women's workloads are greater than men's – women have primary responsibility for unpaid domestic and care work, and are also expected to contribute to the household income.

Because of their typical roles in the home and family, women are often targeted as 'agents of change' in actions on natural resources management and resilient livelihoods. While these actions aim to increase women's knowledge about climate risks and impacts, their resilience capacity, and their role in leadership positions, they can also add an additional burden to women's already heavy workloads.

Interventions must recognise and transform women and men's gendered roles – whether agricultural or non-agricultural, in a rural or urban context – to avoid doing harm.



ADDRESSING DIVISION OF LABOUR: CARE IN ACTION

For lasting transformations in lives and livelihoods, the unequal opportunities and power dynamics that shape women and men's resilience need to be addressed. CARE works with men and boys as well as with women and girls to support them to make changes to increase women's ability to make decisions about and apply new resilience strategies.

The Ethnic Minority Women's Empowerment (EMWE) project in Northern Vietnam, funded by the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, takes a holistic approach to increasing climate resilience and promoting gender equality in ethnic minority communities. EMWE supports women to establish women-only groups, which provide a safe space within which women can support each other and gain confidence through learning about climate change and new techniques for climate resilient livelihood options.

Recognising that women's empowerment is often limited by a failure to engage men, EMWE actively involves men in activities to promote gender equality. After conducting an action research on resilient livelihoods options, the results are first presented to the women-only groups. In this forum women independently select and prioritize livelihood options for implementation. After this, a separate group brings together the women's husbands to further discuss the livelihood options selected by their wives, raise potential challenges in adopting these livelihoods and identify how men can support their wives during the implementation of the resilient livelihoods.

EMWE has established these community networks of 'male champions' who support changes in gender roles, with a focus on increasing men's contribution to household domestic work and supporting women's decision-making. These simultaneous approaches – targeting women for capacity building and targeting men to make positive changes in gender roles – increase EMWE's ability to promote community resilience to climate change.

GENDER-BASED BARRIERS TO RESILIENCE: UNEQUAL POWER IN DECISION-MAKING



An unequal balance of power in the home, community and the authorities limits women's ability to make decisions to increase resilience.

Women in Vietnam have less decision-making power within the home and the community compared with men, whilst government departments that make key decisions over resilience are generally also male dominated. This can prevent them from adopting new resilient actions.

For women from ethnic minority groups in particular, their ability to take up new resilient livelihoods and put it into practice is impacted by a lack of decision-making and financial control in the household. Gender norms also constrain women's ability to travel and access information. As a result, ethnic minority women are less likely to have access to knowledge about climate change impacts and resilient livelihood options.

CARE recognises that promoting women's leadership and equal decision-making requires changes in multiple areas:

- women's own sense of entitlement and confidence;
- expectations about women's and men's roles and relationships;
- and the social and political structures that surround her.

SHIFTING POWER IN DECISION-MAKING: CARE IN ACTION

In climate-change programming, CARE uses proactive approaches to build women's confidence, ensures that both women and men can meaningfully contribute to public decision-making forums (such as community-based adaptation planning) and promotes women's leadership (for example, in search and rescue teams).

Under CARE's [Civil Action for Socio-economic Inclusion \(CASI\)](#) project, funded by DANIDA, the local NGO Agriculture and Forestry Research and Development Center for the Mountainous Region (ADC) has supported [farmer interest groups](#), most of them women-led, to identify and implement indigenous knowledge-based resilient livelihoods. In addition, ADC offered [grants to women-led groups](#) to train their members on group management, representation and facilitation skills, and provided networking opportunities to link up the groups and promote exchange and learning.

As a result, women feel more confident to take resilience actions, and are better able to voice their opinions and influence local planning. In CASI, women-led groups successfully had their selected [resilient livelihoods integrated into the local government's Socio-Economic Development Plan](#) while less resilient trees or crops were taken out of it. The women were also asked by the local authorities to join community monitoring teams and keep contributing valuable and new ideas. CARE learned that economic empowerment must go hand in hand with support to women's voice and leadership.

The [Integrated Community-based Adaptation in the Mekong \(ICAM\)](#) project has worked closely with the [Women's Union](#) to strengthen women's role in local governance structures. ICAM actively promoted Women's Union members' leadership and involvement in multiple aspects of resilience programming, broadening their skills and expertise in: livelihood implementation, disaster preparedness and response, climate risk analysis and planning, project implementation and monitoring and evaluation. As a result, the Women's Union gained capacity and grew with the challenge.

CARE learned that although there were multiple challenges and setbacks, long term investment in [building the capacity of the Women's Union](#) beyond their mandate pays off. At the project closing workshop the Provincial People's Committee recognized the Women's Union for their role in CBA planning and mainstreaming, project management and coordination, and invited the Women's Union to be involved in the implementation of the Government's New Rural Development Program.

POWER IN DECISION-MAKING: THI DA IS A LEADER IN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Lan Thi Thi Da (second from left) is a Khmer woman from Soc Trang province in the Mekong Delta. She is the chairperson of the Women's Union in her village and a member of a commune-level search and rescue team which spans 11 villages and now has 22 women members.

The area in which Thi Da lives is prone to tropical storms and drought, which are becoming more intense and unpredictable as a result of climate change. As part of disaster preparedness, a search and rescue team existed to warn offshore fishermen and local residents about weather risks. The team is usually made up mostly of male volunteers, however in recent years, many men are migrating away from the region to find work, and the team became dormant. Women were not involved as there are assumptions that women are unable to do this difficult job; by not recognising their abilities, the risk from extreme weather events for the whole community was increased.

CARE's *Integrated Community-based Adaptation in the Mekong (ICAM)* project sought to improve community resilience; it worked to reinvigorate the search and rescue team by recruiting and training new members, and tapping into the potential of women. Thi Da had attended the Women's Union and CARE's courses on climate change impacts and adaptation, and brought what she had learned to the wider community, especially other women. Her improved understanding led her to volunteer for the search and rescue team, and she is now trained in first aid, house-strengthening, and search and rescue.

Thi Da is proud that she has shown that she can do what male members of the team can do, and she now occupies an important position within the community in times of emergency. Her contribution is also recognised by her husband, who respects her new role and encourages her to take part in the training courses.

“I encourage people, particularly women, to take action to protect the environment, to adapt to changing conditions and to be ready to respond in emergency events. Thanks to these training courses, I also know how to give first aid to others. For example, I learnt that bandaging the wound properly is very important, because if it is not treated properly from the beginning, the injury is less likely to heal properly. I think other women in the community should know more about these skills to protect themselves and to rescue others in emergencies.”

Enabling women like Thi Da to become leading figures within climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction increases resilience for the whole community; more women have both the confidence and skills to contribute to disaster preparedness and response, and reducing the risk for men, women and children from the impacts of extreme weather.



GENDER-BASED BARRIERS TO RESILIENCE: UNEQUAL ACCESS TO ASSETS AND RESOURCES

Unequal access to assets and resources challenges women's adoption of resilient livelihood strategies.

Traditional gender norms in Vietnam give women and men different access to and control over resources and assets. In households depending on agricultural-based livelihoods men typically have responsibility for 'big' household assets such as buffalos, boats and land, and women have responsibility for 'small' assets like chickens or kitchen gardens. This unequal distribution of assets impacts on women's access to resources needed to adapt to climate change.

As a result of women's lack of control over capital and 'big' household assets, it is often challenging for women to access resources such as credit and other inputs that could increase their incomes, resilience capacity, and ability to make longer-term investments (e.g. paying school fees, improving housing). Transforming the gender dimensions of power over resources is needed to address the resilience of individuals and the community.



IMPROVING ACCESS TO ASSETS AND RESOURCES: CARE IN ACTION

CARE facilitates women's increased engagement in climate-resilient livelihood activities by improving their access to credit. Women's participation in community-based groups such as [savings and loans associations](#) (pictured right), [micro-credit groups](#) or [farmer interest groups](#) enables women to improve their livelihood resilience through greater access to credit, information and training, and increased confidence through occupying new roles within the groups.

To promote livelihood diversification, resilience and access to credit for ethnic minority women, the [Integrated Community-based Adaptation in the Mekong \(ICAM\)](#) project included a women's led [microfinance-for-livelihoods component](#). Women-only groups were established to facilitate access to credit at the community level. ICAM's target communities included the Cham Muslim minority. For religious reasons, Cham cannot pay interest on loans and were therefore prevented from taking loans under existing microfinance systems. The project worked with the Women's Union to customize their system so that all women could access the loans.

CARE in Vietnam has developed [Legal Awareness and Rights Clubs \(LARC\)](#) – a model of women-only groups that promotes women's solidarity, voice and confidence. Through participation in LARCs, ethnic minority women have gained increased confidence to participate in local planning, in terms of quantity (with more women attending meetings which were previously almost exclusively attended by men) as well as quality.

Through [training and discussions](#) on topics such as climate resilient production techniques, land law and gender equality, members of these groups are no longer shy of speaking their mind and voicing their needs. One LARC participant explained; "Women now actively speak their opinions, sometimes even more actively than men".

CARE learned that implementation through groups is preferable to individual-based approaches and that this advantage can be further amplified if the [groups are not just targets, but also become vehicles](#) through which climate-resilient practices can be promoted throughout the community.

While women-only groups provide valuable forums for women to increase their confidence, CARE has learned that increased confidence within women-only spaces does not automatically lead to increased confidence in the broader community. CARE in Vietnam recognises that more learning is needed in [supporting women to exercise voice outside of women's groups to bring about meaningful changes](#).

ACCESS TO RESOURCES: THUY HAS ACCESS TO LAND AND MANAGES IT SUSTAINABLY TO GENERATE PROFIT

Nguyen Thi Thuy is a Tay woman who lives in the remote village of Na Xoong, in Lang Son province, a mountainous region in the north of Vietnam. A widow since 2013, she lives with her adult son. Thuy and the other 76 inhabitants of her village rely on the forest to live, collecting firewood and harvesting food. However, until recently, they did not have any legal documents which confirmed their right to land.

“There are so many useful things to collect, for instance firewood, bamboo shoots to eat, and all kinds of healing herbs. The forest is a very important part of my life.”

CARE’s Civil Action for Socio-economic Inclusion (CASI) project, funded by DANIDA, worked with local organisation Culture Identity and Resource Use Management (CIRUM) to ensure that Thuy and other residents of Na Xoong received their ‘red book’ - the ownership certificate for the land on which they live. Now, Thuy can invest in her area of land in a way, she has never dared to do before; she knows that she has the law on her side and that her land is secure.

Besides registering their legal rights to the land, Nguyen Thi Thuy and her neighbours have also learned to take better care of the forest, and introduce sustainable and climate resilient practices which will in turn support their livelihoods.

“We have been trained to manage the forest and to protect it. We have learned how to pick off plant shoots so that the plants can grow stronger, and we have learned how to clear an area so the trees can grow freely and become bigger.”

Thuy is putting her legal rights and new-found knowledge to good use, by leading a livelihood group which produces tea. The group was founded in August 2013 by CIRUM through CARE and consists of 10 women from various villages, who meet once a month to collect tea leaves. The women sell 150 tea bags a month, which is a number carefully selected as a result of an assessment of the amount of leaves which can be collected whilst ensuring the sustainability of the forest.

One half of the tea is sold in the district while the other half – with support from CIRUM – is sold in Hanoi for a higher price. As a result, each member of the tea group is now making a profit from their work; by being able to access and manage their resources, they are becoming both more resilient and economically empowered.

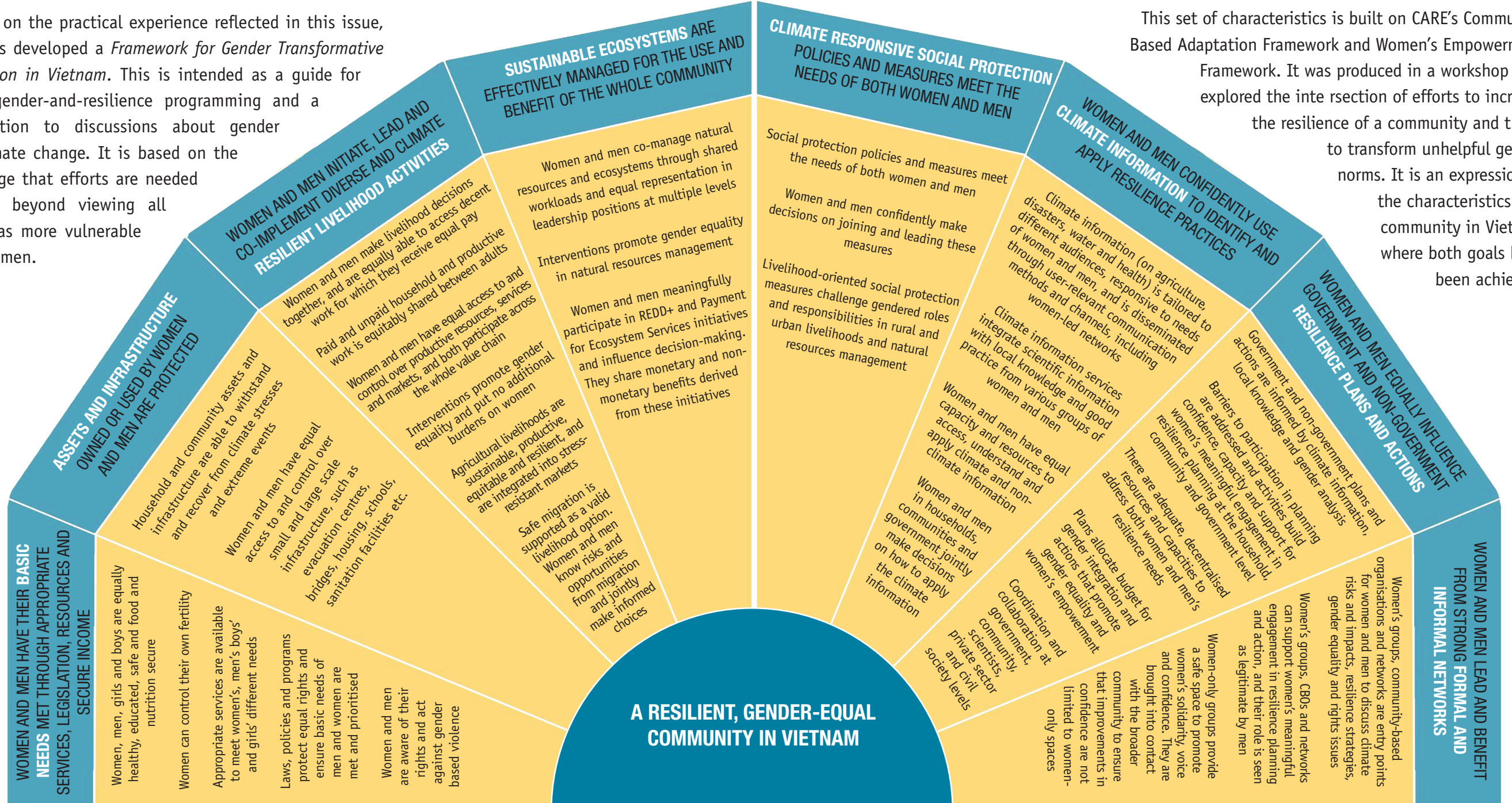
“I am happy because although I had enough food before the project, this is the first time I have ever had an actual profit!”



INTEGRATED APPROACH: FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE ADAPTATION IN VIETNAM

Drawing on the practical experience reflected in this issue, CARE has developed a *Framework for Gender Transformative Adaptation in Vietnam*. This is intended as a guide for future gender-and-resilience programming and a contribution to discussions about gender and climate change. It is based on the knowledge that efforts are needed that go beyond viewing all women as more vulnerable than all men.

This set of characteristics is built on CARE’s Community Based Adaptation Framework and Women’s Empowerment Framework. It was produced in a workshop that explored the intersection of efforts to increase the resilience of a community and those to transform unhelpful gender norms. It is an expression of the characteristics of a community in Vietnam where both goals have been achieved.



RECOMMENDATIONS: THE WAY FORWARD

Through its work, CARE in Vietnam has confirmed that efforts to address climate change must seek to transform gender inequality to achieve win-win results. To further this in practice some key recommendations can be made.

UNDERSTAND GENDER AND OTHER SOURCES OF INEQUALITY TO PLAN APPROPRIATE RESILIENCE ACTIONS

- Conduct a gender and power analysis at the beginning of a new program, project or activity to inform the development of a project or program Gender Action Plan.
- Draw on existing resources and tools – see Resources on page 22.

MONITOR CHANGES IN GENDER INEQUALITY THROUGHOUT CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ACT ON ISSUES THAT ARISE

- Set up systems to track progress towards gender equality, including the collection of sex-disaggregated data, use of indicators that specifically measure changes in gender norms, and the inclusion of women and men in project M&E and reflection activities.
- Consider how activities may impact on a range of gendered dimensions and ask questions to monitor change in communities, such as:
 - » Is the division of labour between women and men changing? Compare unpaid household tasks and work that earns cash income.
 - » Are there any changes in women's voices in public decision-making forums? Are there more examples of women's leadership? Consider project specific forums, governance consultations and traditional meetings.
 - » Which new tasks or responsibilities are coming to women? Are women gaining increased access to and control over resources crucial for adaptation?
 - » Are women aware of their rights? Do they have confidence to seek and take new opportunities?
- Allocate budget for gender integration, gender tracking and for specific actions that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

FOR LASTING CHANGE AND RESILIENCE, ADDRESS POWER AND RESOURCES IMBALANCES IN THE HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY AND TRANSFORM GENDERED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Integrated activities that promote improved livelihood security (through diversification as well as resilience), community-based natural resource management and women-led economic development offer a useful approach, for example:

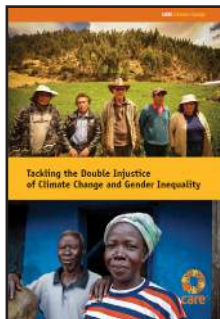
- Facilitate equal access to and control over productive resources, markets and services including land, water, inputs, agro-climate information and both financial and extension services.
- Work with men and boys to shift social expectations and relationships. Organise men-only activities as an entry point to talk with them about men and women's roles in resilient livelihoods and how men can support the women apply new techniques. Ensure that strategies to engage men and boys support women's empowerment and don't divert limited resources away from activities that benefit women.
- Promote sustainable ecosystems that are effectively managed for the use and benefit of both men and women. Ensure equal and meaningful participation in REDD+ and Payment for Ecosystem Services initiatives and decision-making.
- Support women with climate responsive safety nets and social protection. Specifically address the needs of and barriers faced by women in participating and benefiting from them.
- Take action to increase women's sense of entitlement and confidence. Women's groups, women-only trainings or consultation meetings can be a good first step to build women's confidence in a safe space. However, it is important that these groups are brought into contact with the broader community to ensure that improvements in confidence are not limited to women-only spaces.

RESOURCES



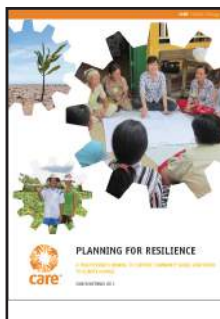
Making it Count: Integrating Gender into Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction. CARE in Vietnam, GIZ and UN Women. 2015.

This how-to guide is geared towards those implementing programs or projects with climate change or disaster risk reduction foci or considerations. The guide raises the questions to be asked when working to integrate gender and climate change programming, and offers practical tips, tools and resources to support this process.



Tackling the Double Injustice of Climate Change and Gender Inequality. Agnes Otzelberger, CARE Poverty, Environment and Climate Change Network. 2014.

This position paper presents the causes and consequences of gender inequality and climate change impacts, the rationale and CARE's vision for integration, and key recommendations from CARE's Climate Change Network for governments and practitioners.



Planning for Resilience: A Practitioner's Manual To Support Community-based Adaptation to Climate Change. CARE in Vietnam. 2015.

This step-by-step guide leads project teams through the community-based adaptation planning process, whilst highlighting the considerations towards gender that must be made throughout. It also includes all the participatory tools and exercises that teams will need to complete community-based adaptation planning.



Good Practice Framework on Gender Analysis. CARE. 2012.

This document discusses basic concepts of gender and introduces key areas for questions to take into consideration when undergoing a gender analysis. For each area, this brief provides examples of questions that a gender analysis may want to explore, taking into account the women's empowerment domains of agency, structures and relations.

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CARE INTERNATIONAL IN VIETNAM

LEARNING SERIES

CARE International in Vietnam's Learning Series outlines key issues which CARE is currently tackling, highlights CARE's approaches, and raises questions and recommendations for future action.

- **Issue 1. Win-Win Results: Gender equality within climate change programming**
- **Issue 2. Rethinking Resilience: Social protection in the context of climate change in Vietnam**

CARE International is a leading humanitarian organisation working for global poverty reduction and social justice by empowering women and girls. Since 1989, CARE in Vietnam has worked in almost all of Vietnam's 64 provinces, on over 200 projects. Today, CARE International in Vietnam primarily focuses on ensuring long-term positive change for marginalised groups, especially women, by tackling the underlying causes of poverty, vulnerability, and social injustice.

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