

Gender and REDD+: Opportunities and Obstacles in Cambodia

Good Practices and Potential Entry Points of Women's Inclusion in REDD+, Forest and Natural Resources Management Sectors

1) *Ensuring women's representation and participation in natural resource management sectors*

RGC has stipulated several policies to encourage women's representation and participation in the forest and land use sector. However, there is no quota mandated for women. The FA, local governments, NGOs and other stakeholders that implement REDD+ or community forestry projects have set up a quota for women in meetings or capacity building activities. Several instances include:

- PACT and WCS reserve a quota of 30 to 50 percent for women to participate in meetings and capacity building activities.
- In agriculture projects supported by CEDAC, a quota is set for at least 20-30 percent of elected women representatives in farmer associations/saving group management committees.
- When inviting CF leaders to a workshop in OM REDD+ project, FA and PACT required a gender balance. If the leader was a man, he was requested to bring a woman and vice versa.
- Community forestry project in Kampot Province required at least one woman representative in the CF sub-committee. Women were also encouraged to stand for election in the Community Forestry Management Committee (CFMC) and they were given a priority.
- NTFP-EP implemented gender mainstreaming throughout CF projects, considering gender balance when inviting the villagers to meetings/workshops/training and consultations, selecting men and women focal persons to allow gender sensitive information dissemination and capacity building and training.

2) *Supportive facilitation for women's participation*

Additional support is needed to provide enabling conditions for women to be able to fully participate in the activities and decision making processes. Some good practices in Cambodia include:

- *Female extension workers.* Agriculture Administration/community development projects hire female extension workers;
- *Appointing a male and a female gender focal point.* RECOFTC and CIVES Mundi's Prakash Project appoint a woman and a man focal point in each CFMC to increase community awareness.
- *Ensuring gender sensitive facilitation during the meetings/ workshop.* Even with a quota set for women to participate in meetings, women often passively participate because of their limited confidence to speak in public. A gender sensitive facilitator ensures that women can comfortably voice their concerns during meetings. Some stakeholders (FA, PACT, WCS and other NGOs) organize separate discussions between men and women that enable the inclusion of women's perspectives.

- *Support from local authorities and men.* Men change their attitudes as a result of gender awareness raising activities. CEDAC's saving groups initiative encourages collaboration between men and women. Due to lower levels of literacy and education, women are sometimes not confident enough to set up a women-only saving group. CEDAC encourages women to engage their male counterparts to assist them with the book/record keeping and also gradually learn about it so that women can later take on the role independently.
- *Gender sensitive information dissemination strategies.* Access to information is often differentiated by gender. In the agriculture sector, some NGOs such as CEDAC, PADEK, Heifer International PACT, and Sre Khmer, among others, have developed communication strategies that specifically target women. Despite their low literacy and education levels, women tend to more actively disseminate information and knowledge to other villagers than is done by their male counterparts.
- *Mentorship:* Mentorship from women leaders to train other women has been practiced in the Mondulkiri PF, implemented by WWF and CEDAC.

3) *Skills Building*

Women's meaningful participation cannot happen overnight. Some good practices for capacity building activities include:

- *Gender awareness raising and leadership training for men and women.* A wide range of gender awareness raising activities have been implemented by various partners (i.e. Agriculture Administration, FA, MoWA), NGOs (i.e. CEDAC, Cives Mundi, NTFPs, RECOFTC, etc). Examples include: organizing a movie screening followed by discussion to increase gender awareness in the communities and holding gender awareness training for men and women in the communities. The FA in Kampot provided training to women CFMC members on leadership and global gender issues; RECOFTC-AECID Prakas II project provided training on gender and natural resource management to CF members and local authorities in 4 provinces.
- *Improving literacy:* Some institutions, such as (MAFF, CRDT, CEDAC, RECOFTC, HEIFER, NTFPs among others) have organized trainings on literacy to enable women to read and write and understand basic math. HEIFER Cambodia and local NGO partners have implemented the Community's Empowerment and Environmental Protection Surrounding Tonle Sap project. The project included a Value Based Literacy Program (VBLP) to teach women to read, write and make basic math calculations.
- *Organizational management trainings:* some organizations (CEDAC, CRDT, RECOFTC) hold trainings to improve women's managerial and other skills such as bookkeeping, accounting, income generation, small project proposal writings, and so forth.
- *Technical trainings:* Some NGOs involve women to participate in various technical training activities such as forest monitoring and inventory, agriculture techniques, forest patrolling/fire prevention (PACT, WCS, RECOFTC, NTFPs, CEDAC).

4) *Gender-disaggregated Analysis and Planning to Meet Women's Livelihood Needs*

Gender disaggregated record-keeping enables the monitoring of policies and projects to ensure women's inclusion in forest and other natural resources management sectors. Some good practices include:

- With support from FAO and SIDA, MAFF and MoWA have jointly developed a national gender profile in agriculture in Cambodia in 2010 based on the comprehensive socio-economic survey conducted in the country;
- Several NGOs keep records on gender disaggregated attendance at meetings, trainings or workshops;
- In collaboration with WOCAN, PACT conducted a gender assessment of the Oddar Meanchey REDD+ project, which resulted in an action plan to integrate gender perspective in the project;
- At the community level, some community forestry groups also maintain gender-disaggregated records on attendance of meetings.

5) *Labor-saving & time-reducing technologies*

One of the main reasons for women's lack of participation is their high workloads. Providing technologies that could reduce such workloads is often considered as a quick fix to improve women's participation.

- National Biogas Plant program (NBP) has promoted biogas installation in several provinces including Kampot to reduce cooking time and firewood collection time.
- Improved cooking stoves with affordable prices are widely promoted by NGOs, government agencies, and private sectors across the country;
- Rice mills (private) and water wells/pond (community-CRDT and commune budget) were built in the indigenous villages of Keo Seima's REDD+ site;
- Village basins were built in the indigenous communities located in the forest areas of Ratanakiri to keep water for women's use.

6) *Diverse types of women-only groups*

Some examples include:

- Women only groups supported by CEDAC. The groups have been formed to provide a platform for women to comfortably exchange and share information/ideas/opinions, and enhance their capacities, particularly in group management, public speaking, networking, facilitation and leadership skills;
- HEIFER supports the formation of women self-help groups (SHGs). As a result hundreds of women SHGs were formed across Cambodia.

7) *Women in networks and federations*

Some examples of this include:

- RECOFTC and FA, among other development agencies, assist women in community forestry projects and link them to CF networks at the commune, provincial and national level to exchange experiences and build a strong voice in the forest sector;
- CEDAC: women-only groups were organized across the country, and were united as a network from local to national levels to exchange experiences and build a strong voice in the agriculture sector in particular;

- NGO forum has developed a network of grass-root organizations that are incorporating gender issues to engage in natural resource management (including REDD+) policy planning and implementation processes.

8) *Presence of women leaders and male and female gender champions*

- Ms. Pheng Sophada works for the Department of Planning and Statistics, MAFF. She is the member of a gender working group at MAFF;
- Ms. Vong Sophanha is a deputy director of Administration and Planning Department. She is the chief of a gender working group at the FA;
- Dr. U Sirita is a Deputy Director General in the FA. Dr Sirita has become a role model and could mentor other women to rise to top management;
- Mr. Put Sopheak is a senior Training and Internship Program Officer at GADC, who has provided gender training and capacity building to a number of NGOs and government staff in Cambodia;
- Ms. Uy Nanisa is Deputy Head of CF in Morom commune of Kampot province and the Chairwomen of the CF network in Kampot province;
- Ms. Chey Siyat is the Head of the Agriculture Cooperative and a newly elected Commune Councilor in the Kampong Trach district of Kampot. She is leading not only the women's group and saving's group in her village but has also formed many women groups and saving groups in her district.
- Ms. Khoun Sey is the Deputy Head of FNN, the Head of a Women Group Network at the district level, a CFMC executive member and a newly elected Commune Councilor in the Veal Veng district of Purat. She is also the head of the farmers' association in her village.
- Mr. Long Ny is the Head of Phnom Sen Han CF in Kampot and is a very popular leader in the community. He understands very well about the equal rights of women in participation and decision-making, and strongly encourages women to take part in the CF as well as other community development activities.

9) *Equitable benefit sharing mechanisms*

- Despite no specific benefit sharing set in the case study of CF in Kampot, men and women members have equal rights and are provided the same opportunity to collect NTFPs in the community forests.

10) *Enterprise development and credit provision*

Access to credit and resources for enterprise development is pivotal.

- Self-help groups (savings and credits groups) have formed in REDD+ and CF sites where more than half of their members are female, but still a small number of CF members have joined these groups.
- In CF site in Kampot Province, a rice bank has been established in Takor village, which was initiated by the CF head. Women play a significant role in management and decision making process of the rice bank, for example collecting and releasing paddy from/to members or sale of paddy stock, and the decision has to be based on consensus.
- In REDD+ Keo Seima, CRDT have trained women to improve their traditional weaving and bamboo stick making for incense;
- In CF Kampot: WWF has sent women from CF villages to learn to make bamboo products in Kampong Chhnang's Women Handicraft Center;

- In Ratanakiri: NTFPs supported women weaving groups (indigenous people) in the forest project area through skills training and materials/equipment provisions.

6. Moving Forward

A National Forest Dialogue Exclusion/Inclusion of Women in REDD+, Forest and Other Natural Resource Management Sectors identified the most important barriers at the **institutional/policy level** as: 1) Cultural norms; 2) Lack of recognition of women as stakeholders; 3) Lack of women's representation; 4) Lack of financial commitments; 5) Lack of gender disaggregated data. To address the barriers, the participants selected the three following good practices in the order as follows:

1. *Financial commitments*: It is important to ensure financial commitments to support efforts for integrating gender in REDD+ policies and practices. It is also important to ensure REDD+ policy makers understand gender responsive budgeting and commit to allocate budgets to support the initiative.
2. *Women's leadership and gender champions*: Gender champions could serve as role models for other women.
3. *Women's networks and federations*: They can advocate for gender mainstreaming, building women's capacity and providing a platform for learning, connect women to policy making processes and other relevant opportunities.

The most important identified barriers at the **community level** were: 1) Too few women leaders; 2) Lack of income generating opportunities; 3) Lack of women's representation; and 4) Cultural norms. To address the barriers, four good practices were identified:

1. *Provide support for skills building for women*. At the national level, training about technical REDD+ knowledge can be organized for women's groups and institutions supporting gender equality (including MoWA). At the local level, training can be held to improve women's meaningful participation in REDD+. Literacy training can also be an entry point for illiterate women to build their confidence;
2. *Women's networks*: Various forms of women groups and networks could be channeled to readiness activities;
3. *Women's leadership and gender champions*: Female and male gender champions have been identified at the community level. Their expertise could be adopted for readiness activities.
4. *Ensuring women's participation*: Numerous good practices can be adopted such as mandating quota for women's participation (at least 30 percent) in readiness activities; ensuring enabling conditions for women to meaningfully participate, e.g. gender sensitive facilitation, hiring female extension workers, etc.