



Synopsis: National Seminar on Gender, Forestry, and REDD+ 27 July, 2012 – Phnom Penh

A national seminar on Gender, Forestry, and REDD+ was held on 27 July, 2012 at the Himawari Hotel in Phnom Penh. The seminar was initiated by Pact and organized in collaboration with WOCAN (Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources) and the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC). The purpose of the seminar was to draw attention to the issues of gender in the forestry sector, with a specific focus on community forestry and REDD+. The seminar was attended by delegates from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Forestry Administration, the Ministry of Environment, and the National REDD+ Taskforce, as well as representatives from local and international NGOs, academic institutions, and local communities (44 participants in total). A short summary of the presentations and discussions follows.

Welcome Remarks and Introduction

The seminar was opened by H.E. Brak Chan Noy, Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA). She emphasized the importance of gender mainstreaming as a requirement under the Government's policy and provided an introduction to some of the activities of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the forestry sector. These activities include training in gender for Forestry Administration staff and local community women. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is strongly committed to mainstream gender in Cambodia in collaboration with other ministries and stakeholders.

Introduction to Gender and REDD+: Results of an Assessment in Asia

Dr. Jeannette Gurung, Executive Director of WOCAN presented a USAID research study conducted by WOCAN in Nepal, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia related to women's role in forest management, potential role in REDD+, and constraints. The study found little evidence that REDD+ projects in the region have incorporated gender in significant ways, no recognition of women as a specific stakeholder group, and exclusion of women from forest governance systems - despite women's very important role in forest use and protection. She noted 'institutional gender blindness' and a failure to recognize and legitimate women's roles, knowledge, and contributions in forest management due to lack of awareness, socio-cultural norms, and unquestioned assumptions. She warned that if women's rights were ignored in REDD+ frameworks, it could result in further marginalization of women. Dr. Gurung closed her presentation with a series of recommendations: 1) all REDD+ stages of project design and implementation should identify and address gender issues, 2) mandate at least 30% women's membership in forest governance bodies, 3) strengthen women's groups to provide them with skills and knowledge to enable them to advocate, negotiate, and implement activities, 4) develop benefit distribution systems that recognize and reward women's contribution to forest management and include attention to securing formal access rights, 5) promote technologies that reduce women's workloads while promoting conservation, 6) strengthen leadership and technical capacities of men and women to become champions that can influence and train others, 7) generate men's support, 8) strengthen in-house gender expertise in forestry institutions and REDD implementing agencies, and 9) make space for women's voice and leadership. ([See presentation](#))

Gender Mainstreaming in the Forestry Administration

Ms. Vong Sopanha, the Gender Team Leader at the Forestry Administration, presented on the efforts of this team to mainstream gender in the forestry sector. She began by noting some of the challenges in the sector. For instance, there are currently only eight women in management positions at the Forestry Administration, and in the case of community forestry, women generally have limited roles. Where women do hold positions, these are usually secretarial. The FA's approach to mainstreaming is primarily through gender training, integrating tree nursery skills building. Three-day training courses have been organized with cantonments and communities in more than 10 provinces, and a total of 558 people have been trained including 60 CF members. Despite these efforts, the experience of the gender team is that more time and effort is needed in order to change attitudes and behavior since cultural norms of gender bias are deeply ingrained. ([See presentation](#))

Overview of National REDD+ Programme, Update on Progress and Dialogue on Gender Integration

Mr. Khun Vathana, Chief of the national REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat provided an update on the National REDD+ Programme, followed by an interactive dialogue with the audience on gender integration. First, he explained that the inter-agency national REDD+ Taskforce is intended to support the development of the national REDD+ system. Its objectives include development of REDD+ strategies, effective engagement of stakeholders, capacity building in REDD+ related areas, and establishment of a forest monitoring system. The Forestry Administration, the General Department of Administration for Nature Conservation and Protection (GDANCP) at the Ministry of Environment, and the Fisheries Administration serve as the implementing partners. In the first stages, agencies will be conducting initial assessments for how REDD+ is integrated in strategic plans, also looking at potential costs and benefits from REDD+ in different forest areas. The Taskforce has a focus on completing the existing pilot projects and identifying priority areas for REDD+ at the subnational level. Following the presentation, the audience was requested to provide feedback on how gender might be integrated in the national REDD+ framework. Several suggestions were raised including: 1) the need for a gender mainstreaming strategy and plan, 2) the MWA should be part of the Taskforce, 3) gender-sensitive members (male or female) should be part of the team, 4) make sure women at the grassroots level have a voice, 5) keep places for women throughout the management structure, 6) mandate gender balance (at least 40% women) for participation in all capacity building activities, 7) within the national MRV systems, ensure that data collected is disaggregated and analyzed to track gender issues, 8) organize workshops to introduce gender and REDD+ topics to key stakeholders and support gender mainstreaming, 9) provide support to REDD+ demonstration pilots to integrate gender and pilot strategies for improving gender balance and women's participation in REDD+ activities at the local level. ([See presentation](#))

The Oddar Meanchey CF REDD+ Gender Assessment

Pact staff Mr. Yeang Donal and Ms. Net Channa presented the methodology and results of a gender assessment of the Oddar Meanchey Community Forestry REDD+ project conducted in early 2012 by Pact with the support of WOCAN. The assessment was conducted using the Harvard Analytical Framework and included focus group discussions and interviews villagers in four CF areas. According to WOCAN's Jeannette Gurung, this could be the first such assessment in the world. The assessment team discovered a number of interesting findings related to participation; decision making and leadership; knowledge, skills and capacity; equitable benefit sharing; and resource access, use, and control. With regards to participation, men are taking a primary role in community forestry and REDD+ activities, while women are "partly involved" in almost all activities. Women participate less actively in meetings, trainings,

forest patrolling, and forest assessment work due to a number of constraints such as lower membership on elected committees (with approximately 80% of seats held by men), lack of confidence in speaking, lower literacy levels, childcare and household duties, security issues, and a perceived lower level of knowledge (i.e. tree and wildlife species). Financial management and non-timber forest product (NTFP) marketing activities are exceptional since women play the primary role in these activities. The disproportionate number of men in leadership positions in the CF management structure indicates that women also have less influence in decision-making. The study summarized findings from research on the distinctions in perceived benefits from the forest and drew links to future REDD+ benefit sharing. While women and men tended to have similar ideas on how future REDD+ revenues might be spent, there were some important differences. For instance, women were most interested in literacy training, better health services, and capital for small businesses, while men noted gasoline for forest patrols. Recommendations for remedying gender imbalances within the project included gender sensitivity training, focused training for women on literacy, leadership and NTFPs, mainstreaming of gender in project implementation including MRV (monitoring, reporting, verification) systems, and measures to ensure equal access to benefit sharing and decision-making. ([See presentation](#)) ([See presentation](#))

Findings from the Ministry of Environment Gender Assessment

Ms. Ly Sophorn of the Ministry of Environment (MoE) presented on the Ministry's gender assessment. Gender mainstreaming is part of the MoE's 2009 – 2012 strategic plan and includes objectives of 1) raising awareness about gender among all MoE officers, 2) improving the roles and responsibilities of women leaders in the MoE, 3) building capacity of rural women to use and manage natural resources and other environmental services, 4) establishing information management systems and a database based on sex, role and skill, and 5) monitoring and evaluating all the program and activities of MoE to ensure that they respond to gender. The aim of the assessment was to study the perception of MoE officers on gender mainstreaming in the MoE, and to define recommendations for the next strategic plan (2013-2015). A total of 38 questionnaires were completed by an equal number of male and female MoE officers. The respondents generally praised the achievements of the MoE in raising gender awareness, promoting more women to higher positions and involving them in decision making, and preventing gender-based discrimination. However, they also called for additional training, capacity building, public debate, and support from leadership in the MoE. A regular gender group meeting was recommended and gender topics should be included in the Environment Magazine. ([See presentation](#))

Initial Lessons on Gender Mainstreaming in Community Forestry Management Planning (CFMP) of Prakas Project

Mr. Chhneang Kirivuth, Coordinator of RECOFTC- Prakas II Project supported by Cives Mundi and AECID presented the results and initial lessons from gender mainstreaming on CF management planning with 16 community forestry sites in Northeast Cambodia. One of the specific objectives of this project is to improve women's participation in community forestry management. In order to achieve this objective, RECOFTC organized a training of trainers (TOT) on gender in natural resources management/ community forestry for its local NGO partners and local FA staff. These trainers conducted 16 CF field trainings for CF management committee members, CF members, and commune councilors as well as a gender gap assessment of the CF development process. RECOFTC and local NGO partners established coordination links between CF gender focal persons and commune council members in charge of women and children to ensure that gender issues are integrated into commune development plans, and mainstreamed into the CF management planning process. In each CF site, two gender focal persons (32 in total) were selected by CF members to lead the process of mainstreaming gender

in CF management. As a result of these efforts, the participation of women in the CF activities increased significantly. For instance, more women than usual were involved in forest management planning activities - i.e. preparing for CFMP development (44% female) managing CF development funds (24%), dividing CF management blocks and field verification (34%), participatory CF resource assessment/forest inventory (20%), and drafting CF management plans (31%). Kirivuth concluded that the “training for action” adopted by the project was an effective approach to support women’s involvement in the process of CF management planning ([See presentation](#))

Open Discussion

During the open discussion, participants were asked what ideas and inspiration they had after listening to the presentations. The following comments were shared:

NTFP (local NGO) has a strategy on gender, but frankly speaking it is just on paper. Now I have some more ideas on what to do. Many of the ideas (in the seminar) relate to community people, but let’s look at NGO staff. Many have studied gender, but the change in behavior takes a long time. During facilitation, many women are quietly sitting at the back. Our facilitation skills are important and we need to think about ways to get women to participate. (Long Serey, NTFP)

I would like to share my experience in getting women to participate. Often, people speak using technical terms, so then local people can’t understand. They explain the legal articles of the law and women don’t understand. But I ask them in simple language – “What do you do in the case of an illegal logger? What if someone hires you to cut the forest? Now you harvest wild potatoes freely, but what do you need to do in order to be able to harvest potatoes in the future?” The leadership level needs to take the lead in emphasizing the role of women and taking action on gender. We need to think about ourselves first. (Sa Thlay, CF Network, Oddar Meanchey)

There are challenges related to gender and women not participating enough. However, as a monk, we have a radio program and education in villages and schools. Women pay more attention to the monks and ask more questions. They have perceptions that forestry work should be done by men. We believe that women and men have equal rights and can do the same activities. (Venerable Bun Saluth, Monks Community Forestry, Oddar Meanchey)
We work with groups of women. They often come with their children, so we have to think of a solution for child care, and organize meetings at a convenient time. It should be arranged in a way that does not embarrass women. (Sun Chhorvy, CWDA)

If we consider knowledge, equipment (upakaw), and mechanism all together, it will be more effective. We need to think about the compensation for their time. Now, there is no holistic approach, which is what is necessary. So, the assessment and training are not effective unless all the steps are included in a complete set. (Nhem Sovanna, UNDP)

We don’t think enough about the communication/connection between women. For instance, the connection between village women and women in the commune and women in the MWA. We need to encourage communication between women. (Rith Bo, CDA)

The gender reports should be in Khmer. We need to do a lot more awareness raising, and we need to share the experience more widely with communities. The RECOFTC case study is a good example of a case that should be shared and replicated. (Yeang Donal, Pact)

The National Community Forestry Coordination Committee should be re-activated and then we should use this network and other networks to raise gender issues. (Amanda, Pact)

One of the first steps is that we ourselves need to be clear on gender. (Hou Kalyan, RECOFTC)



Event Photos

Mr. Khun Vathana, Chief of the national REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat provides an update on the national framework.

Ms. Itziar Barriuso of Cives Mundi poses a question during one of the presentations.



The organizing team including members from Pact, WOCAN, and RECOFTC.

Institutions Attending

Representatives of the following institutions attended the seminar:

AECID

Birdlife International

Cambodian Women's Development Agency

CDRI

CF Network – Oddar Meanchey

Children's Development Association CDA

Cives Mundi

Clinton Climate Initiative

Conservation International (CI)

Danida

EU

Fauna and Flora International (FF)

Forestry Administration

Indigenous Community Support Organization (ICSO)

Ministry of Environment

Ministry of Women's Affairs

Mlup Baitong

Monks Community Forestry

NTFP

Pact

Prek Leap University

RECOFTC

REDD+ Taskforce

Royal University of Agriculture

Save Cambodia's Wildlife

The Learning Institute

The NGO Forum

UNDP

USAID

Winrock/LEAF

WOCAN

Women's Media Center

*In addition, there were several local media groups at the event.