



Gender Review Report Royal Norwegian Embassy Viet Nam



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**Gender Review Report
Royal Norwegian Embassy Viet Nam**

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Norad**

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Summary

This Gender Review has been carried out on request from the Embassy in Hanoi (the Embassy) and through desk studies and discussions with Embassy staff and management and partners in Viet Nam (25 – 29 October 2010).

The Gender Review methodology is part of Norad's ongoing quality assurance and professional assistance to MFA and Embassies. The main purpose of the Review is to build capacity and assist the embassies in promoting and integrating Women's Rights and Gender Equality (WRGE) in all levels of the development cooperation, in the policy dialogue with the multi- and bilateral partners as well as in the Embassy's own routines and procedures, including results-based management.

The review was carried out in conjunction with a Grant Management Review and by one adviser (not a team of two as is normally the case), hence this review was less extensive and included less interaction with implementing partners than what is normally part of the methodology.

The desk study included four projects that were also the subject of scrutiny by the Grant Management Review:

Project	PTA number
Administrative Reform in Ninh Binh	SRV-3/300
Capacity Building for Mitigation and Adaptation of Geo-Disasters Related to Environment and Energy Development in Viet Nam	SRV-2806
Hydropower licensing procedures	SRV-04/334
One UN Plan	SRV-07/061

Discussions were held with each of the programme staff responsible for these projects, with the Counsellor for Development and with representatives from UNIFEM and the Ministry for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). The review also included discussions on the gender dimensions in the UN-REDD Phase II proposal with representatives from the UNDP office and Embassy staff.

Key findings

- Although Viet Nam scores relatively high on many gender relevant indicators and indexes, many challenges remain pertaining to e.g. vulnerability of female-headed households to poverty; women working longer hours than men and for less pay; women's limited access to resources such as land, property and formal credit and job training; and poor representation in decision-making positions, particularly at the local level. Traditional concepts of women as the embodiment of harmony within the family also constitute a challenge. Domestic violence, including sex selective abortion, is a widespread problem.

- Inequalities are compounded by factors such as gender and ethnicity and women belonging to ethnic minorities fare generally worse than Kinh women in terms of development. The Embassy has a strong awareness of the challenges facing ethnic minorities and this is one of the priority areas in the UNICEF programme on mother tongue based bilingual education, supported by the Embassy, and is also one of the key focus areas for the cooperation within the human rights work of the “Group of Four” (Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland and Norway). It is important to keep the challenges of *compounding inequalities* (e.g. discrimination on the basis of both ethnic minority status *and* gender) on the agenda also in relation to other parts of the portfolio (e.g. UN-REDD, One UN).
- The Embassy’s portfolio includes strong components for women’s rights and gender equality, in particular in relation to the annual bilateral human rights dialogue and the strategic partnership with Norwegian Church Aid/NAV. However, the review of the four projects included in this exercise and the statistics generated on the use of the OECD/DAC gender policy marker indicates that there is a potential for improving the integration of gender in other sectors of the portfolio. This pertains in particular to the more technical sectors.
- Climate change has emerged as a key headline also in Viet Nam and climate change and in particular UN-REDD is a priority area for the Embassy in the years to come. The Embassy’s request that the UN-REDD improve the integration of gender in their framework in Viet Nam is a very important initiative and the Embassy deserves credit for having raised the issue. The global UN-REDD framework is to a great extent gender blind and if UN-REDD in Viet Nam can contribute to developing frameworks and initiatives that better integrates women’s rights, participation and gender equality in programmes and safeguards (and measure the impact of this), this could set an example for other UN-REDD pilots. Norway can make a difference by contributing to this.

Main recommendations

Results based programme management

- Make sure that the objectives and activities match the analysis. If there is an analysis of barriers to women’s participation, there must also be activities included that will address this and indicators to measure the impact.
- Enhance efforts to ensure the quality of the indicators and baseline right from the start – always ask for *sex disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators* that will enable tracking of impact relevant for women and gender equality.
- When reporting is weak, make more strategic use of mid-term reviews and end evaluations to ensure that the implementation and results of gender relevant activities and results are assessed and documented, bottlenecks identified and challenges brought up for discussion.

- Learning in projects – when supporting pilots – make sure there are concrete plans and design for scaling up successful interventions, or at least that actual learning will take place.

Administration/enabling environment

- Make strategic use of the newly established programme meetings to discuss cross cutting issues, potential synergies between different projects and partners sharing of experiences, and as an arena for capacity building
- Develop a clearer mandate for the staff responsible for the gender portfolio
- Prioritize capacity building for Embassy staff, particularly in emerging and 'hot' sectors, e.g. gender in climate change
- Request assistance where needed –Norad and local capacity
- Prioritize attendance at regional gender seminars

Policy dialogue

- The experiences with the Nora's Sisters seminars have created attention to and momentum for a dialogue on women's rights and gender equality – build on the goodwill and networks created to promote women's rights and gender also in other areas:
- Norway can play an important role in placing women's rights and gender equality on agendas where it may be difficult for partners like MOLISA and UNIFEM to get across
- Climate Change is one area where the Embassy can contribute to positioning gender on the agenda and ensure relevant partners are onboard - raise the issue, ask for participation, gender analysis and results.

One main recommendation per project reviewed:

- One UN: Prioritize participating actively in the Gender PCG (priority issue for MFA; UN Women); following a cross cutting issue may also give you broader insights in priorities and progress in other sectors
- Capacity building for climate change and adaption: Follow up the component on socio-economic impact and the potential for including e.g. capacity building on impact analysis in training programme
- Public Administration Reform in Ninh Binh: Reconsider the usefulness of having an end-evaluation, perhaps focusing on the impact and lessons learned from the gender component in the programme – explore potential for knowledge transfer to other partners and provinces engaged in the reform.
- Hydropower: Little evidence of concrete measures to ensure that social conditions/gender needs are included in the design of the project – dialogue with

partner and find out whether the licensing guidelines include gender sensitive social safeguards or not and whether capacity building on this issue may be relevant

Further recommendations per programme is provided in chapter 4.

1. Introduction

In 2007 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) adopted an Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender equality in Development Cooperation (GEAP), and for the current government Gender Equality is one of five key priority areas. As part of the follow up of this Action Plan, the Embassies have been requested to strengthen their efforts to promote Women's Rights and Gender Equality (WRGE) in their development portfolios.

The Mid-term review of this Action Plan (2009) found that it is difficult to assess the results of Norwegian development support to women's rights and gender equality at country level and attributes this to among other factors weak reporting mechanisms and a lack of mainstreaming gender in the big programmes (like energy, environment, budget support etc). One of the specific tools provided by Norad is the development of Gender reviews. The reviews are also in line with the implementation of the commitments in the White Paper (St.melding) number 11 *On Equal Terms*, Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation (GEAP) and the Norwegian Government's Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security.

The Gender Review Methodology is developed in partnership between Nordic Consulting Group (NCG) and Norad as a tool for Norad's ongoing quality assurance and professional assistance to MFA and Embassies.

1.1 Methodology

The purpose of the gender reviews is to "build the capacity at the embassies and assist in operationalising gender mainstreaming throughout the development assistance portfolio" (Norad, Concept Note, 2010) with the aim of strengthening the embassies' ability to promote WRGE in programme and project activities and in the policy dialogue. There is a strong focus on learning in the gender reviews, aiming to improve current practices and create forward-looking strategies. The Review has been carried out through desk studies, discussions with Embassy staff and leadership, and to a lesser extent with development partners in Vietnam.

The model below illustrates some of the key elements of the framework the Embassy works within. In all four elements there are important issues relevant to mainstreaming of gender and women's rights.

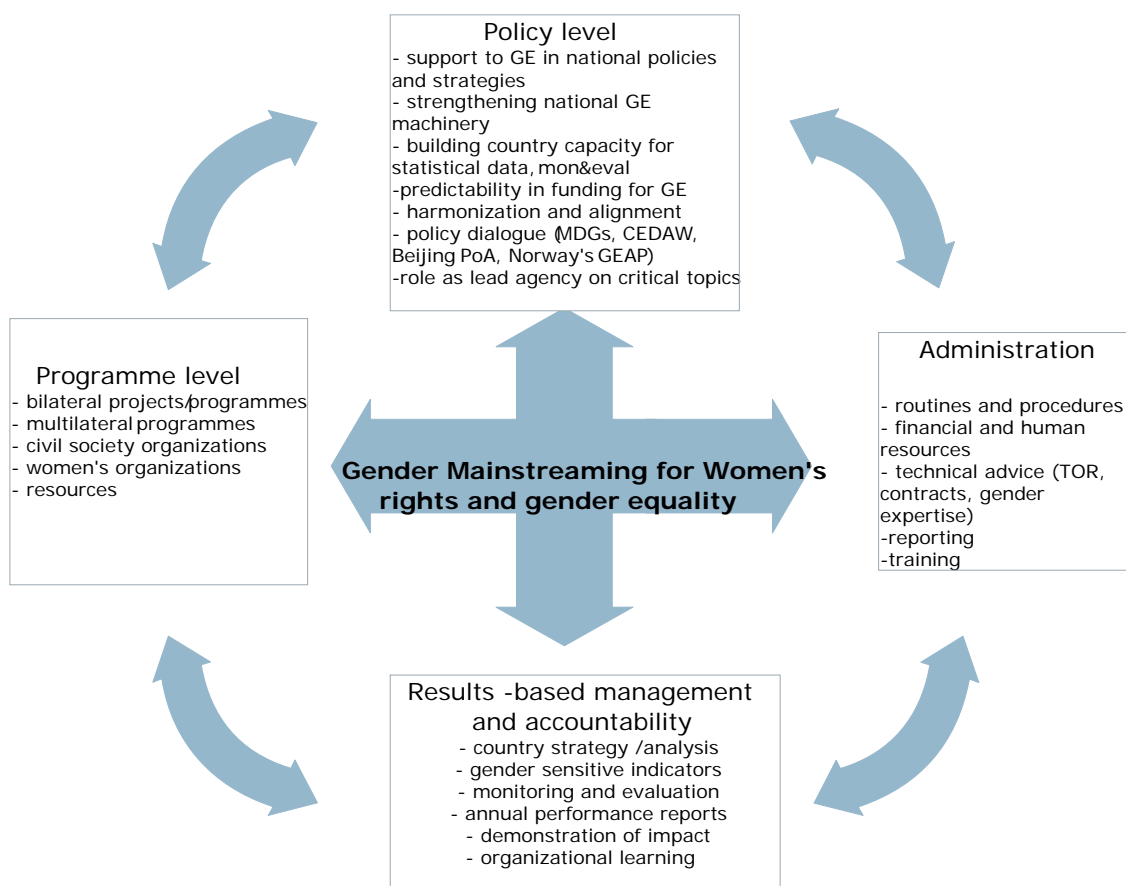


Figure 1 Gender Review Model (NCG, 2010)

1.2 Limitations

The review was carried out in conjunction with a grant management review and by one adviser, not a team of two as is normally the case. Hence this review was less extensive and included less interaction with implementing partners than what is normally part of the methodology.

2. Country Gender Profile

2.1 Overview and main indicators

Viet Nam ranks relatively high on gender related statistics compared to other countries in the region.

Gender relevant statistics for Viet Nam:

Human Development Index Rank	113
Gender Inequality Index	53
Seats held by women in parliament	127 (25.8 %)
Gender Parity Index in primary level enrolment (2001)	0.95
Gender Parity Index in tertiary level enrolment	0.73
Maternal Mortality Ratio	56

Fertility Rates	2.1
Labour Force Participation, female/male ratio	0.92
Legislators, senior officials, and managers, female/male ratio	0.28

Source: Human Development Report 2010; World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index 2010, UNStats MDG Indicators

On average, Viet Nam performs well in terms of delivering education and health services to women and men. School enrolment data show little difference between boys and girls. Adult literacy is also high, 90% for women and 95 % for men, and the gap between male and female literacy rates has been decreasing over time. Viet Nam is still struggling with many gender inequalities common to other developing countries in the region including: vulnerability of certain female-headed households to poverty; women working longer hours than men and for less pay; women’s limited access to resources such as land, property and formal credit and job training; and poor representation in decision-making positions, particularly at the local level (ADB 2005, World Economic Forum (WEF) 2010).

Another gender challenge is violence against women, including domestic violence and exploitation for prostitution, trafficking and sex selective abortion. Although there is a lack of data on prevalence of gender based violence, research indicates that different types of GBV are wide-spread (UNFPA 2007)

Viet Nam has a nationwide healthcare network with relatively good coverage. This is particularly important for women, who are more frequent users of health care services due to their reproductive role. Overall, around 77 percent of women live in communities with a health care worker (ADB 2005). However, there are great challenges: Viet Nam has one of the highest abortion rates in the region, particularly among adolescent girls. It also appears that sex-selective abortions are on the increase with the sex ratio at birth becoming skewed towards males. UNFPA finds that data from the 2009 census indicates a sex ratio at birth of 110.6 boys to 100 girls, a level that significantly exceeds the standard biological value of 105 (UNFPA 2010).

Viet Nam has one of the highest economic participation rates in the world: 81 percent of men and 74 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 60 were engaged in economic activity in 2002 (WEF 2010). According to FAO, in 2007 women accounted for 49 percent of the economically active population. Women contribute substantially to the agriculture sector: 65 percent of economically active women are engaged in agriculture, comprising 49.5 percent of the entire agricultural labour force and not including rural women’s unpaid work in farm and family economies. Women are the key source of labour in rice production and also accounted for 60-70 percent of the workforce in food processing, including fish processing, and marketing, as of 2005.

The retirement age of men and women differs; whereas men retire at the age of 60, women retire at the age of 55. This is reported as a great drawback in terms of career development, as women are not likely to be promoted or benefit from training and capacity development etc. when they reach the age of 50.

Women are also comparatively politically active at the national level. However, while the percentage of women in Parliament is currently 25, 8 %, it still lags behind the target of 33%

and only 4 % of ministerial posts are occupied by women (WEF 2010). However, women are still a large minority in technical and professional fields and in local leadership. Men dominate in communal decision-making, and women in Commune People's Committees (CPCs) are often in junior positions. According to a survey made in 2002 women accounted to less than 10% among the CPC staff. In the whole country, women occupy only less than 5% of the leadership positions in CPCs and District People's Committees (DPCs) and just above 6% in the Provincial People's Committees (PPC). Female Village Chiefs are very rare. Women account for nearly 50 percent of the total agricultural workforce and for a large share of the total annual new jobs created in agriculture. However, only 25 percent of the participants in livestock extension training courses and 10 percent of the participants in cultivation extension training courses are women (ADB 2007).

The development divide between ethnic minorities and the majority Kinh population, rural and urban areas and different regions in Viet Nam is acting to compound gender-based disadvantage. At least one-quarter of ethnic minority women are illiterate and according to one survey around one-fifth of ethnic minority young women have reported never attending school. Moreover, ethnic minority women are doubly disenfranchised when it comes to accessing credit and land (ADB 2005)

2.2 The legal framework

The Constitution and laws of Viet Nam recognize gender equality as an integral part of the general equality between all the citizens of the country. The 1992 Constitution states that *Male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields—political, economic, cultural, social, and in the family. All acts of discrimination against women and all acts damaging women's dignity are strictly banned.*

The Party Directive No. 37 in 1994 instructed that women should hold at least 20% of all positions in the Party and Governmental organizations. In 2006 the National Assembly passed the Gender Equality Law and in 2007 the Law on Domestic Violence was passed. Despite this legal framework, gender inequalities still need to be addressed. Institutional capacities in implementation and reporting, gender analysis, data collection, reporting, and monitoring of the two laws need to be further strengthened (ADB 2007).

2.3 National machinery and policy for gender equality

In early 2002 the Prime Minister approved *the National Strategy for Advancement of Women in Viet Nam to the year 2010*. The main aims are to reach gender equality in labour and employment, education and health care, political, economic, cultural and social life, as well as strengthen efforts for capacity building for promoting gender equality. A process of developing a national strategy on gender equality for the 2011-2020 has been initiated by MOLISA and consultations have started. Following the National Strategy for Advancement of Women in Viet Nam to the year 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, MARD, in 2003 developed *Gender Strategy in Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) to the Year 2010*. MARD Strategy is of central importance for majority of Vietnamese women, as 75% of them live in rural areas and acquire their subsistence from agricultural activities.

To further realize its commitment to gender equality, the Government set up in 1993 the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW) with the mandated to

promote the status of women and to provide advice to the Prime Minister's Office on development and implementation of the five-year National Plans of Action for Women's Advancement. NCFAW has committees (CFAW) in different ministries and in all provinces and cities. However, NCFAW and CFAWs have no separate budgets and no full-time members or staff. In 2008, the Department of Gender Equality in the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) was tasked with "the responsibilities and duties to assist the Minister in execution a harmonized state management in the area of gender equality, in the whole country and in line with laws" (Molisa).

Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MOCST), more specifically the Family Department of MOCST, is responsible for coordination of implementation of programs and plans on domestic violence prevention and control, development of family counselling and domestic violence counselling including support to victims, as well as for training of officials.

The Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) was established in 1930 to mobilize women for an independent Viet Nam. The VWU is a mass organization and part of the socialist structure; it advocates for the women's rights and benefits and works on the four governmental levels (national, provincial, district, commune). Its programs and projects are directed mainly at poor, rural and marginalized populations

3. Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the Embassy's Development Cooperation

This part contains assessments regarding the Embassy's efforts to integrate women's rights and gender equality in the development portfolio along the four dimensions of results based management, administrative/enabling framework, policy dialogue and a project review.

The portfolio includes strong components for women's rights and gender equality, in particular in relation to the human rights dialogue and the strategic partnership with Norwegian Church Aid/NAV. The support to education also scores high on the OECD/DAC gender policy marker. However, the review of the four projects below and the statistics generated on the use of the OECD/DAC gender policy marker indicates that there is a potential for improving the integration of gender in other sectors of the portfolio. This pertains in particular to the more technical sectors.

3.1 Results Based Management

Programming for results

The reviews of the projects consistently indicates a potential for strengthening the approach to results based management and to engage in dialogues with partners on the need to include sex disaggregated data that will enable a results oriented approach to gender mainstreaming. E.g. many projects involve capacity building; hence establishing whether both men and women obtain access to training is important. It is also important to make sure that the objectives and activities match the analysis and risk analysis – if the proposal or programme document includes an analysis of barriers to women's participation – are there also activities included that will address this?

When reporting is weak, one could benefit from making more strategic use of mid-term reviews to ensure that the implementation and results of gender relevant activities are assessed

and documented, bottlenecks identified and challenges brought up for discussion. Also important when supporting pilots is to make sure that there are concrete plans for scaling up successful interventions or at least that there are mechanisms in place to ensure knowledge management and learning in the project. Otherwise the risk is high for the pilot to become a one-off.

Tracking of resources

The gender policy marker score high in the Education sector, Government and Civil Society and the Other Multisector (presumably the support to One UN). Out of a total of 231 870 000 NOK of aid from 2007-2009, 139 000 000 NOK had a gender marker (In the other sectors it is non-existent (figure 5 below). When comparing the three previous years, 2007-2009, 2008 stands out with a relatively high percentage of development assistance being marked with gender equality as main and significant goal. This relates to the Nora's sisters project and the partnership with Norwegian Church Aid for which the grant management now has been transferred to Norad. The shares of assistance allocated to projects with gender equality as main or significant goals are comparatively low to other Embassies and the Embassy may wish to look at how gender equality can be integrated as significant goals in broader parts of its portfolio.

Figure 2: Use of the Gender Policy marker in development aid managed by the Embassy in Hanoi, 07-09 (NOK 1000)
Source: Norad/Amor

PM - Gender equality	2007	2008	2009
Main objective	2 051	21	1 933
<i>% av total</i>	2 %	29 %	4 %
Significant objective	65 767	19	28
<i>% av total</i>	60 %	26 %	60 %
None	42 471	33	17
<i>% av total</i>	39 %	45 %	36 %
Grand Total	110 289	74	47
		455	126

Figure 3 Use of the Gender Policy marker in development aid managed by the Embassy in Kathmandu, 07-09 (NOK 1000)
Source: Norad/Amor

PM - Gender equality	2007	2008	2009
None	50	598	67 020
<i>% av total</i>	28%	35%	32%
Significant objective	78	974	74 306
<i>% av total</i>	43%	38%	62%
Main objective	52	731	51 896
<i>% av total</i>	29%	27%	6%
Totalt	182	193	228 321

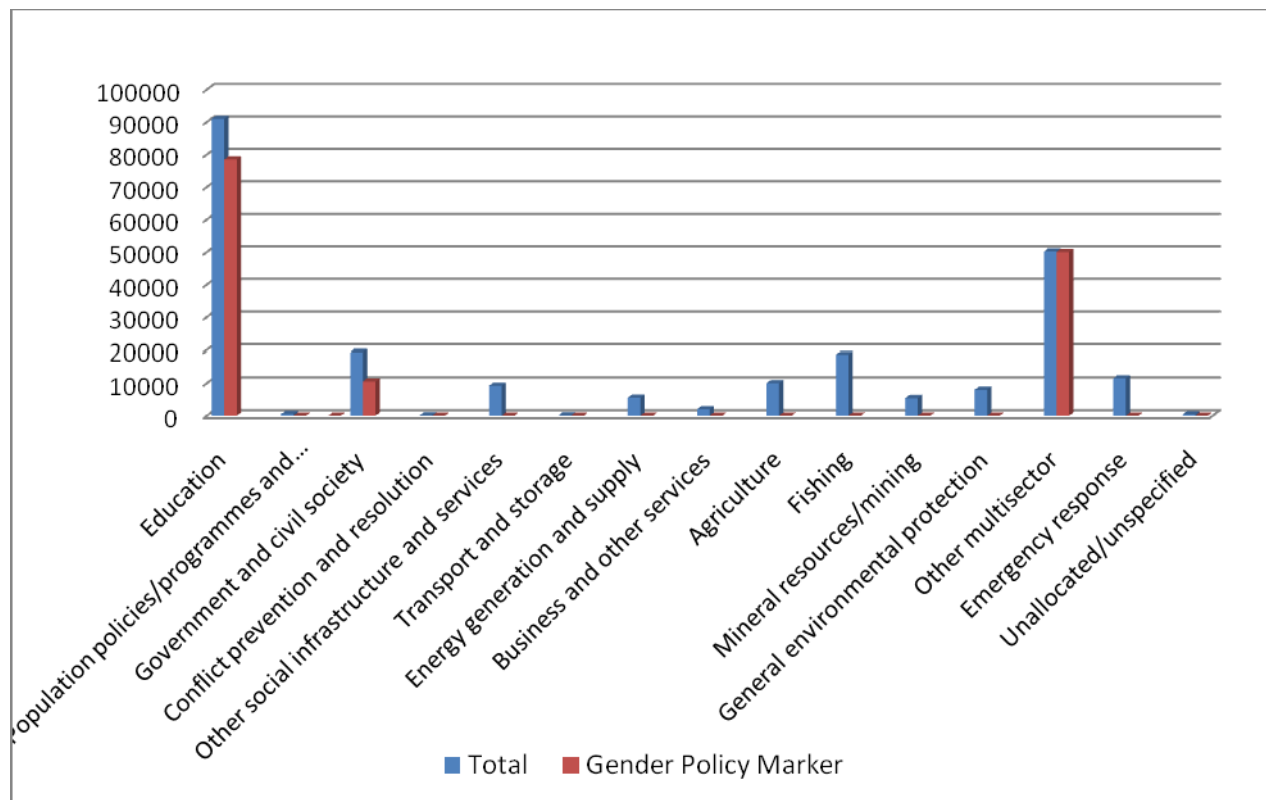
	302	223
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Figure 4 Use of the Gender Policy marker in development aid managed by the Embassy in New Delhi 07-09 (NOK 1000)

Source: Norad/Amor

PM - Gender equality	2007	2008	2009
None	35 390	67 618	48 459
<i>% av total</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>47%</i>	<i>57%</i>
Significant objective	77 630	70 430	26 027
<i>% av total</i>	<i>66%</i>	<i>49%</i>	<i>30%</i>
Main objective	3 763	5 139	11 090
<i>% av total</i>	<i>3%</i>	<i>4%</i>	<i>13%</i>
Total	116 783	143 187	85 576

Figure 5 Use of the Gender Policy Marker in the development aid managed by the Embassy in Hanoi (2007-2009) by sector Source: Norad/Amor



3.2 Administrative/ enabling framework for working on gender at the Embassy:

The current situation is that there are two staff with particular responsibility for gender; one diplomat (main responsible) and one local staff (support). Having two staff engaged in this area will reduce the vulnerability of having only one person following this agenda and portfolio.

The 'gender responsibility' implies following up the projects that are gender/women specific, following up the HR dialogue and the working group on gender and responding to requests for reporting related to gender (e.g. assessment of UNIFEM at country level and the future of UN Women). There is apparently no mandate to contribute to the integration of gender in other sectors. There is no explicit job description and no guidelines as to how much of the staff's time is to be allocated to these tasks as compared to other responsibilities. It is recommended that the Embassy develops a job description for the gender responsibility and agrees upon the prioritization of this work (may include time to follow up the Gender PCG, keeping the gender profile updated, responsible for including gender as a cross-cutting issue in the two-weekly development management meetings, organizing x number of learning events per year for Embassy staff etc.).

Recently, the Embassy has introduced two-weekly programme meetings mainly for sharing of information and updates. It is recommended that the Embassy makes strategic use of the platform to discuss cross cutting issues, potential synergies between different projects and partners, sharing of experiences, and as an arena for capacity building. Following this it is also highly recommended to prioritize capacity building, particularly in emerging and 'hot' sectors, e.g. gender in climate change.

It also appears that the Embassy does not make full use of the assistance available to it through e.g. Norad and the use of consultants. It is recommended that the Embassy in the process of developing the next annual plan critically assesses the potential for requesting Norad for technical advice (this has now already taken place in relation to the new One UN proposal for the transition year 2011). Lastly, the regional gender seminars are important platforms for both capacity building and sharing of lessons learned among Embassies and the Embassy in Hanoi is encouraged to prioritize attendance in these seminars in the future.

3.3 Policy dialogue

The experiences with the Nora's Sisters seminars have created great interest in Norwegian policy on gender equality and a momentum for a dialogue on women's rights and gender equality in Viet Nam. The Human Rights dialogue working group on gender equality represents an interesting and seemingly fruitful platform for sharing of experiences between the Vietnamese and Norwegian gender machineries.

It is hoped that the Embassy will follow up on this and use the its credibility and contacts in the field of women's rights and gender equality to engage in women's rights issues in other arenas. Norway can play an important role in placing women's rights and gender equality in contexts where it may be difficult for partners like MOLISA and UNIFEM/UNWomen to get across. Climate Change is a priority for Norway and Viet Nam and an area where the Embassy can contribute to positioning gender on the agenda and ensure relevant partners are onboard. The Embassy can do this by raising the issue and ask for the participation of relevant partners such as MOLISA and NCFW also in meetings where 'women' or 'gender' is not specifically on the agenda, but where they may have an interest and important contributions to make.

4. Project Reviews and recommendations

Administrative Reform in the Ninh Binh project, SRV-03/300

The project is one component in a public administration reform process that has been ongoing for a decade and includes many different pilots supported by different donors country-wide. The project is designed in a comprehensive manner and includes interventions that cover many dimensions of public administration reform and potentially many interesting entry points for gender mainstreaming. To a great extent, explicit goals related to women's participation and gender responsiveness are included in the project document: there is one specific objective (No 4) on women's participation: *To enhance the capacity and participation of women at all three levels of local government.* The other objectives have to some extent gender related outputs and/or activities attached. The activities are mainly related to capacity building, awareness creation, apart from the construction of the one-stop shop.

The programme document refers to the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (to 2010) and to the Ninh Binh Action Plan for the Advancement of women (to 2005). The Programme Document states that gender equality is linked to PAR in two related manners: the public administration system has to be gender-responsive, and women should be given equal opportunities to enter the public political scene. There is some analysis and baseline data on women's political participation and barriers that prevent their participation. The risk analysis does however not include assessments related to women's participation and the activities address a limited range of the constraints on women's participation described.

There is no definition of what constitutes a gender sensitive public administration system, no analysis of the situation at the time in terms of women and men's needs, user-profiles or access to public administration and no concrete indicators that would enable measurement of improved gender sensitive public administration. The chosen indicators for outcome 4 relate to increased awareness and capacity and improved quality of work done by female cadres and statistics on number and percentage of women cadres and officials. None of the indicators are suitable for measuring the impact of the training and awareness or identifying what e.g. 'Improved quality of work' implies. Regarding the objective that has had the most success, the One Stop Shop, there is no information on the consequences for men and women or the use of men and women of the facility (Have men and women's different needs and roles been considered in the design and planning of the facility? Has it improved women's access to public administration?).

The Embassy has followed up these issues with the partners at different phases of the programme implementation. The appropriation document does mention the gender component in the description and asks for a clarification of the modalities for gender mainstreaming in the assessment.

Strengthening of integration of the gender perspective has been pointed to in field visit reports. The lack of progress on objective 4 has been raised in annual meetings, but these efforts do not seem to have resulted in increased efforts or further explanations as to what the bottlenecks for implementation are.

The Mid Term Review report provides a rather bleak picture of the implementation of objective 4, regarding implementation to have failed. It points to poor planning and coordination as main reasons. The MTR provides little hard facts on the achievements in terms of the integrated gender activities. Interview statements like 'gender equality is improved' does not provide much information. The reports from implementing partners are

activity based and it is also difficult to assess any impact of gender training etc. from these either. Moreover, the reporting on activities is to a limited extent sex disaggregated, so there are no means to determine whether men and women have had equal access to the training provided in the project.

Recommendations:

As this project is going to be phased out, this report does not attempt to provide recommendations for improved gender programming. Lessons learned from reviewing this project has however gone into the general recommendations for improved gender programme management.

The Embassy was initially reluctant to conduct a final evaluation of the project as it was going to be discontinued. However, the actual impact emanating from the gender components of the project is hard to evaluate on the basis of reports and the MTR. That the reporting has not been optimal does not mean that there has been no impact. If these gender specific interventions are unique for the project in Ninh Binh, a review of lessons learned in implementation and assessment of actual results could be highly beneficial and contribute to lessons learned that could be beneficial for the nationwide public administration reform efforts. It is recommended that the Embassy considers evaluating at least the gender components of the project.

Hydropower licensing procedures SRV-04/334

The Norwegian engagement in the energy sector has a long history, starting in 1998 with support to the development of the National Hydropower Master Plan. This agreement was signed in 2006 and entails support to a process of developing guidelines and a capacity building package on licensing water resources for exploitation of hydropower. The goal of the project was to contribute to sustainable, environmentally as well as socially sound management of water resources and development of hydropower projects in Viet Nam.

The appropriation document does include a risk analysis that includes an assessment regarding the impact of implications of dams and other hydraulic structures for the livelihood of the affected local communities. The inception report also refers to consultations where the issue of poor people in rural areas who depend on the biodiversity were brought up and the need for the licensing system to be an effective management and control mechanism for promoting sustainable and balanced management of the water resources. There are however no specific considerations regarding the gender dimensions (or ethnic minorities) of hydropower projects in the appropriation document, in the external assessments or in the inception report.

Although the awareness of women's participation is reported as being high in the Vietnamese government counterpart (ref. national policy), there is little documentation of this in the project documents, reports or in the Mid-Term Review report. This applies to both participation in training related to the project and to stakeholder consultations (how many men and women accessed training? Who were consulted?).

The assessment of the licensing guidelines was conducted by local consultants with experience in different relevant sectors, including an expert on environmental impact assessments/environmental law and planning and land law. However, no gender competence

was required for any of the individual ToRs and there was no expert on social impact analysis contracted to the team. The ToR for the Mid-Term Review did not include any specific considerations regarding gender, though the qualifications listed for the team include knowledge and experience in socio-economic impact assessment. There are no qualitative assessments of the guidelines in the MTR report as parts of these were not translated to English at the time of the MTR. There are no assessments regarding gender relevant issues such as participation of men and women in the project or qualitative assessments of the projects success in establishing a framework that will ensure a “sustainable, environmentally as well as socially sound management of water resources”. If and end review of the project is organized, it is recommended that the ToR ensures that these issues are included.

Recommendations

The Embassy plans to phase out of this project and recommendations for future programme management is not deemed necessary. However, it is recommended that the Embassy looks into the licensing guidelines and that an assessment is made of whether they adequately include gender sensitive social safeguards that also protect vulnerable groups and ethnic minorities, as this was not assessed by the MTR. If the guidelines are perceived to be inadequate in this regard, it would be recommendable to engage in dialogue with other donors that are active in the sector on how this dimension can be strengthened in the sector.

Capacity Building for Mitigation and Adaptation of Geo-Disasters Related to Environment and Energy Development in Viet Nam, SRV-2806

The Embassy entered into the agreement with Viet Nam National University in 2008 and the current project runs to 2011. The project aims to contribute to the country’s capacity for geodisaster mitigation by building expertise and establishing scientific procedures for research and assessments of geodisasters at hydropower plants, cities and coastal zones “in the typical natural and socio-economic condition of Viet Nam”.

The project proposal was sent to Norad for appraisal in two rounds. Both times, Norad commented that the proposal failed to include the social and socio-economic dimensions of disaster mitigation and that this could potentially affect the relevance and effectiveness of the results of the project. The Embassy on the other side deemed that it was acceptable that the project had a narrower focus, not including these dimensions. The reporting in the project does however several places refer to e.g. vulnerability assessments, investigations conducted by a ‘economic and social vulnerability group’ (Annual Report 2009 p. 5) and ‘interesting findings’ generated by such assessments (Annual report 2010 p. 7), but without much information on what this actually entails or the consequences for the project.

This review strongly agrees with the initial Norad appraisal in that the social and socio-economic dimensions of disaster mitigation is of vital importance and that the project would be strengthened by including this dimension. There is a strong body of evidence on the importance of including a gender perspective in relation to disaster mitigation as women and men have different roles, responsibilities, opportunities etc. that define their vulnerability and their options both in terms of mitigation and adaption (e.g. when being forced to move from an area due to high risks of disasters).

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Embassy looks into what is actually taking place in the project regarding social and socio-economic assessments and together with the Vietnamese and Norwegian partners explore possibilities of including components on gender sensitive social and socio-economic assessments in the capacity building part of the project in order to strengthen it. It is also recommended that the Embassy requests the partners to provide sex disaggregated data on training activities to ensure that both women and men have access to the capacity building that is taking place.

One UN Plan, SRV-07/061

Viet Nam is a pilot country for One UN and has since 2006 made good progress in establishing the six Ones (One Plan, One Budget, One Leader, One Set of Management Practices, One Green UN House and One Voice). The UN has also initiated several positive measures to improve gender mainstreaming in the One UN framework.

Gender is fairly well integrated in the One UN Plan, including references to national and international policies and commitments and including relevant national stakeholders. There is no specific outcome related to gender equality, rather, gender is identified as a cross cutting issue. Gender is highly relevant to all five outcomes and to a great extent also included in expected results. Outcome 3 (environmental protection and use of natural resources for poverty reduction) is the weakest in terms of including a gender perspective.

The document specifies that the implementation strategy will ensure that gender equality “will be improved by pursuing ways to ensure that women and men enjoy equal economic social, political and civil rights including equal access to services, decent work, credit and legal protection through gender mainstreaming and specific activities to empower women.”

The results framework does include gender sensitive indicators (outcome 3 is the weakest in this regard), but could be more consistent in specifying that data should be sex disaggregated where relevant (E.g. within the same outcome, indicator 2.2.12 states “increased proportion of men and women who received RH information...”, while indicator 2.24.8 states “increased % of clients expressing satisfaction with quality of health services”). The activities are to a great extent directed towards policy and framework development, capacity building of government and the indicators process oriented. One could wish for more focus on what *impacts* one expects from the awareness creation, improved knowledge and capacity and how it will be measured?

The Country Led Evaluation of Delivering as One UN Pilot Initiative in Viet Nam Report (the Evaluation Report) also raises the issue of M&E and the need for improved focus on monitoring and evaluation in the next One Plan, moving away from maintaining records of activities and outputs towards assessing contributions to outcomes. The reporting through the PCGs also receives a very negative assessment in the Evaluation Report.

A gender audit of the UNCT was conducted in 2008, followed by the development of a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (2009-2011) with two objectives: 1) To enhance the capacity of the UNCT to respond to national priorities for gender equality and women’s empowerment and 2) To mainstream gender in One Plan development and implementation, including Partnership Coordination Groups.

The one UN also includes a specific Joint Programme (JP) on Gender, focusing on the implementation of two relatively new laws on Gender Equality (2006) and Domestic Violence (2007). The JP includes 11 agencies and 3 national partners and is coordinated by the PCG on Gender. The Evaluation highlights this particular JP and PCG, supported by the mainstreaming strategy as a successful example of new, joint programming. The PCG is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Mainstreaming Strategy. However, the JP on gender does not receive funds from the One Budget, but is funded by the Spanish Government.

In total, the One Plan has allocated 20 million USD to gender activities (5% of the One UN Budget), of which 4.5 million is for the JP. The stock taking report of 2008 reports that the UNCT will implement piloting exercise of tracking of funds to gender in the One UN budget framework (following OECD and Joint Programmes markers), the results of this is not referred to in the Evaluation Report, which on the contrary states that gender mainstreaming is not tracked in allocations or expenditure at the UNCT. Tracking of allocations and expenditures within the One UN budget framework should be a priority mainstreaming measure in the next phase.

The OPF fund allocation criteria do include one gender specific criteria (funding requests shall be based on areas of UN comparative advantage and key cross cutting issues in Viet Nam, and more specifically, they shall include analysis of gender differentials for target beneficiaries and a strategy to promote gender equality.)¹.

The appropriation document does not make an assessment of cross cutting issues. Rather, it states that cross-cutting issues, gender and environment shall be assessed in programmes, following UN standards. Although one can say that this is a rather ‘easy way’ of escaping the task of assessing cross-cutting issues in a complex programme, this means that each new proposal from the UN must include assessments of cross-cutting issues. It is however not clear what UN standards imply in this regard and we recommend that the Embassy makes assessments on the basis of Norwegian guidelines for assessing cross cutting/sustainability elements.

Recommendations

It may seem as the follow up of the One UN by donors has been predominantly focused on process and ‘getting the systems in place’ rather than following the substantial issues of programming and whether the One UN approach has improved the ability to support government and achieve results. This is understandable in a period of intense institutional reform. It is however recommended that the Embassy in future also prioritizes using the opportunities of participating in the PCG, explore opportunities for participating in joint monitoring trips and make strategic use of annual meetings in a results based approach to the management of the programme support. It is recommended that the Embassy particularly follow results in the following areas:

- Implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and the planned evaluation of it in 2011, including the process of implementing the UNCT Indicators on Women’s rights and gender Equality Scorecard that is underway.

¹ However, the overall allocation process receives a mixed assessment in the Evaluation Report.

- Mainstreaming of women's rights and gender equality in the 'hard(er) to reach' sectors is particularly important.
- Improving systems (internally and in government partners) for collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated data
- Tracking allocations and expenditure for gender
- The establishment of and coordinating role of UN Women.

Related to this, the idea of establishing a One M&E team launched in the Evaluation Report should be supported. There are several challenges in terms of following up on results from non-earmarked funds into large programmes such as this. A weak results based management system makes it hard to assess the quality of the policy and development results the UN is supposed to contribute towards in Viet Nam.

Another recommendation is to network more closely with other bilateral donors that are taking more actively part in the gender agenda and who participate in both the GAP and PCG (E.g. include gender in the G4 agenda and invite to quarterly luncheons with the gender advisers in the G4 Embassies?) and find out if other donors have done assessments of the progress in terms of gender mainstreaming in the One UN and the implementation of the JP on Gender that can be shared?

For future funding of the 2011 transition year it is recommended that the appropriation assessments include assessments on gender that will inform the dialogue with the UN.

According to UNIFEM, the UNCT is considering implementing the Performance Indicators on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Review in relation to the development of the new One Plan, the progress and results of this exercise should be followed up on and used in the dialogue with the UNCT.²

UN-REDD Phase II

During the UNFCCC conference in Bali in 2007, Viet Nam was listed as one of the top five countries in the world most threatened by climate change and it is now one of nine UN-REDD pilot countries. Currently, one is in the phase of entering the second phase of the programme, as the preparatory 'Reddiness' phase has been concluded. The objective of phase II is to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation in five pilot provinces, while preparing for up-scaling of the initiative in Viet Nam and regionally.

The Embassy's request for the UN-REDD to improve the integration of gender in their framework in Viet Nam is a very important initiative and the Embassy deserves credit for having raised this issue. The global UN-REDD framework is to a great extent gender blind and has been criticized of this. If UN-REDD in Viet Nam can contribute to developing frameworks and initiatives that better integrates women's rights, participation and gender equality in programmes and safeguards (and measure the impact of this), it could set an example for other UN-REDD pilots. Norway can make a difference by contributing to this.

² More information on the Scorecard: <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=222>

The challenges of ethnic minorities and compounding inequalities are important topics for Norwegian development cooperation in other partnerships in Viet Nam and should be equally so in the UN-REDD partnership.

During the Gender Review, discussions were held with representatives from the UNDP UN-REDD programme and embassy staff.

There is capacity both within the UNDP and in-country on gender, climate change and UN-REDD. The challenge is not to find this, but more a question of making use of it and identifying the right entry points. For the embassy it will be important to continue placing this on the agenda in the dialogue and request for information and results throughout.

Gender sensitive socio-economic analysis: It is strongly recommended that the pilot provinces are subjected to gender sensitive socio-economic analysis that can inform the design of the participatory monitoring mechanisms and the Benefit Distribution Systems. It is very important to have a baseline for the monitoring of the impact of the UN-REDD interventions on the social dimensions as well as the reductions of emissions.

Consultations: Specifically require targets for equal participation and reporting on this.

Participatory monitoring: Ensure that both men and women can take part in these exercises, important also because men and women may have different types of knowledge about their forest environments.

Benefit Distribution System: Ensure equal access to the benefits for men and women and that both men and women's priorities are taken into account while making sure that the gender sensitive analysis identifies and contributes to mitigation of risks related to distributing funds to communities and individuals/households.

Reporting: Ensure that all relevant data is sex disaggregated and that gender sensitive indicators are identified in the results matrix.

5. Conclusions

The Embassy has many positive initiatives to put forward regarding women's rights and gender equality and has great potential for further improving this. Good initiatives to build on are the networks and contacts originating from the Nora's sisters seminars and its facilitation of the Human Rights dialogue and the working group on gender equality. Climate Change is an agenda where the Embassy can contribute to positioning gender on the agenda and ensure that relevant partners are onboard.

There is room for strengthening the administrative frameworks for gender mainstreaming at the Embassy both in terms of strengthening the function of the designated staff with the responsibility for the gender portfolio and making strategic use of the programme meetings. The review identified great potential to strengthen the gender dimension particularly in the technical sectors, as it is evident both in terms of the document review and the use of the OECD/DAC gender marker that these sectors lack a systematic gender perspective. Exploring the opportunities for improving this should be done in dialogue with the partners and if necessary, technical assistance should be requested.

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Embassy staff:

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UNIFEM and Molisa

Suzette Mitchell, UNIFEM Country Programme Manager
Hoang Thi Thu Huyen, Gender Equality Department, Molisa

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