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PRESS RELEASE

Gender Equality is indispensable for Sustainable Forestry

Binh Dinh, 5-6 October 2023

Women are not only beneficiaries of forests but also actively engage in forest management and conservation efforts. Their contributions are invaluable. 140 participants of the national Forum on "Promoting Gender Equality for Sustainable Forestry Development" join their voices in recognizing and empowering women as key actors in forestry sustainable development.

Quy Nhon City, Binh Dinh, 6 October 2023 - The Forum not only enhanced participants' understanding of gender equality in the forestry sector and provided a platform for connecting and forging alliances among same-minded peers in the sector. It also offered pathways to enhance gender equality and benefits for sustainable forestry development. For instance, enhancing forest quality and mitigating climate change impact will yield more effective and sustainable results when incorporating social and gender considerations. "Increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions and women receiving technical and managerial training will aid in addressing workplace gender inequality."

Mr. Tran Quang Bao, Director, Department of Forestry of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development: "In the diverse spectrum of forestry activities, including management, protection, development, utilization, processing, and trade, disparities in labor, wages, and job opportunities can emerge. Women are particularly affected by these inequities, facing significant obstacles in their journey towards advancement. Therefore, prioritizing gender equality in the forestry sector becomes crucial, benefiting both sustainable sectoral development and fostering a harmonious and progressive society for the entire nation."

Recognising the different roles, needs, and experiences in forest management and protection of women and men, is a first and important step in transforming the forestry sector to a sustainable and socially just direction. Societal and policy environment should strive towards creating equal opportunities for the professional development of women and men. However, more efforts are needed to ensure that women and men receive equal benefits from forests.

Mr. Santiago Alonso Rodriguez, Head of Cooperation, German Embassy to Viet Nam congratulated MARD and all involved Vietnamese partners for the outstanding efforts in closing the gender gaps. "We need the strength of women urgently, but it is sometimes underutilized in the Vietnamese forestry sector as in many other sectors and countries. So, there is still a lot to do in many areas on many levels."



Promoting gender equality plays an important role in shaping a sustainable forestry industry. Gender equality is not only a matter of social justice but also a crucial factor in the long-term viability and success of the forestry sector. By actively involving women and men from different social groups in forest management and protection, recognize that they bring diverse roles, needs, and experiences to the table. Acknowledging and addressing these differences can lead to more inclusive and effective decision-making processes, resulting in sustainable forest practices.

In her presentation at the forum, Ms. Hoang Lac Tu Minh, Chief Accountant of Quy Nhon Forestry Co., Ltd, recommended on mainstreaming gender and gender equality by raising gender awareness, eliminating prejudices and non-discrimination. It is also important to enhance monitoring, inspection and evaluation of compliance with gender equality laws in leadership and management of officials.

The photo exhibition “Forestry through Women’s Eyes” was launched at the Forum to highlight the diverse roles and contributions of women in the forestry sector. The exhibition showcases the inspiring stories, perspectives, and experiences of ten remarkable women who are instrumental in integrating and strengthening gender equality in the forestry sector. After the Forum, this touring exhibition will be displayed at many more occasions to allow a broad audience to be inspired by these ten remarkable women.

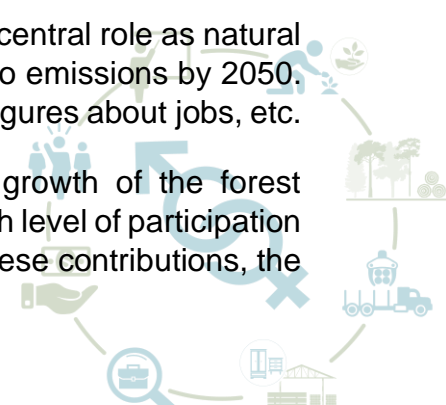
The Forum brought together 140 industry leaders, policymakers, experts, practitioners, and stakeholders from the forestry sector to address the critical issue of gender equality. The Forum on “Promoting Gender Equality for Sustainable Forestry Development” was organised jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), represented by the Department of Forestry (DOF) and the Management Board of Forestry Projects (MBFP), and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Following the one-day forum, a field trip is taking participants to learn more about best practices for promoting gender equality. These include how the integration of gender in forestry development plans and strategies is contributing to solving gender and social inequality issues in the case of Quy Nhon Forestry Company. And Nguyen Hanh Seedlings Company - a leading women-led enterprise, and its commitment to gender empowerment and fostering women's leadership in the forestry sector.

Information about the forestry sector in Viet Nam

Covering 42.02 per cent of the nation's land area, forests play a central role as natural carbon sinks that contribute to Viet Nam's goal to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The forestry sector is also an important economic branch some figures about jobs, etc.

Women have provided significant contributions to the rapid growth of the forest economy in Viet Nam. This historical precedence of women's high level of participation in the forestry labor force spans over many decades. Despite these contributions, the



economic role and contribution of women in forestry production systems often remain overlooked and underestimated.

A study conducted by MARD and GIZ in cooperation with European Forest Institute in 2023 showed that women in the forest industries are still generally disadvantaged in terms of access to professional and technical training opportunities. Consequently, women earn less, and the gender wage gap is substantially wider than in Viet Nam's other economic and industrial sectors. Rural women are still often disadvantaged by gender disparities in access to the benefits from policies and services, for instance, in the rates of registration to receive Payment for Forest Environmental Services (PFES). However, challenges related to gender equality also exist for men. Some parts of the forest industries are dominated by a male workforce, for instance, in physical, labour-intensive tasks. However, since such activities are often arranged informally or seasonally, these men work without a labour contract and hence lack a social safety net. This leaves them, in turn, more vulnerable than women, who are more frequently employed in administrative tasks with stable contracts.

The Forum aims to address this gap in understanding by examining the common division of labor in forestry work and the differentiation of economic roles between men and women in forest-based livelihood systems. It also provides recommendations on strengthening gender equality for sustainable forestry development.

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