



FORUM ON "PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY FOR SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT"

Binh Dinh, 5-6 October 2023



Thank you for your participation in making the Forum a great success!

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Summary

Under the motto "Gender Equality for Sustainable Forestry," the Forum brought together about 160 participants to promote gender equality in the forestry sector in Viet Nam. The event fostered dialogue and provided a space for sharing experiences. Developed collaboratively across different stakeholders, recommendations for facilitating gender equality in the forest and timber sector can serve to inspire actions and guide policy enhancements at individual, organisational, provincial, and national levels. The Forum encouraged participants to commit to and take further actions to promote gender equality for sustainable forestry.

Insights into gender policies and implementation

At the Forum, participants gained insights into the policy framework and status of gender-related issues in Viet Nam's agriculture and rural development sector, and more particularly in relation to the forestry sector. MARD updated participants on its achievements towards gender equality, and the German Embassy to Viet Nam provided insights into the German Feminist Development Policy.

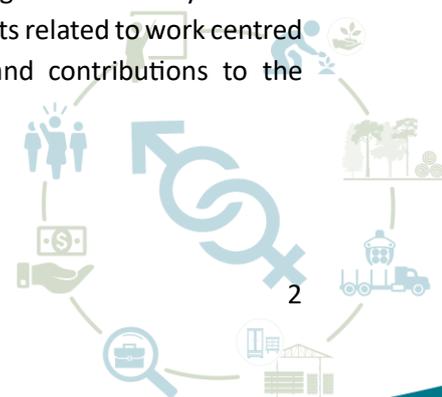
MARD has made a concentrated effort to mainstream gender equality in all aspects of its work in previous years. Overall, it was recognised that more attention had to be paid to the planning and training of female officials. Furthermore, equal opportunities for female officials for leadership and management positions needed to be strengthened. Consequently, MARD's gender action plan for 2021-2025 aims to increase the proportion of females in leadership positions as well as the proportion of female officials receiving technical and professional training. Both will aid in addressing workplace gender inequality.

The German Feminist Development Policy, presented in March 2023, puts gender equality at the centre of German cooperation activities. The policy outlines how gender equality contributes to tackling discrimination and oppression while building prosperous, stable, and peaceful societies worldwide.

These insights highlighted the firm commitment of political leaders. The presenters also underlined the critical role of legal frameworks and development policy in creating foundations and standards to promote gender equality and address discrimination.

Participants were also inspired by the insights and passion for engaging in the forestry sector from different participants, including female leaders in government institutions at the national and provincial levels, researchers, forest rangers, technical officers, and students. By telling their stories, these women highlighted their perspectives on, contribution to, and expectations towards equal opportunities for men and women in the forestry sector.

Selected stories were included in the Photo Exhibition "Forestry through Women's Eyes." The authentic accounts of daily life, challenges, areas of passion, and achievements related to work centred around forests provide a comprehensive view of women's vital roles and contributions to the development of the forestry sector in Viet Nam.



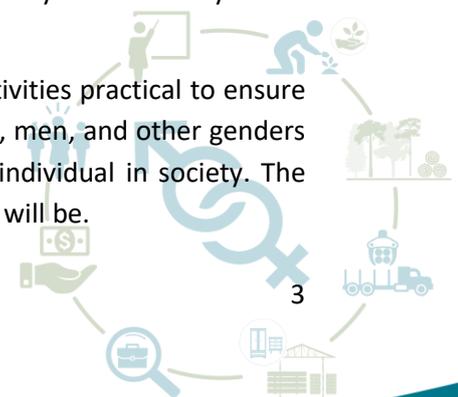


Panel discussion "Actions for promoting gender equality"

Panellists highlighted the ongoing efforts and actions, at both the individual and organisational levels, to promote gender equality in Viet Nam's forestry sector. Guest speakers included representatives from Government agencies at the national and local levels, i.e., the Department of Forestry and the Forest Protection Department from Binh Dinh province, the Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH - an international development partner, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (representing local non-state actors), and the Van Diem Fine Arts Furniture and Timber Association representing the private sector.

Key messages derived from this panel discussion include:

- Promoting gender equality plays an important role in shaping a sustainable forestry industry. There are many individual and organisational efforts made to promote gender equality in the forestry sector in Viet Nam. Actions are taken by state management agencies, companies, non-state actors, and international partners.
- Integrating gender in forestry development plans, strategies, and interventions contributes to effectively solving gender and social inequality issues. To radically solve the problems of gender inequality, joint efforts are needed at all levels and with comprehensive participation.
- Gender equality is of great importance not only for women but also for men, not only for one individual, one organisation, or one sector but also for the whole society and for all sectors. Acknowledging the challenges related to social norms, practices, and policies is a crucial first step. This is supplemented by commitments to address gender inequality in the forestry sector collectively.
- Achieving gender equality, making legislation and development activities practical to ensure equitable benefits, and protecting the rights and dignity of women, men, and other genders depend on the attitudes, behaviours, and commitments of each individual in society. The more individuals practice gender equality, the more equal a society will be.



Statistics on gender and forestry in Viet Nam

The summary report of the situational analysis of gender and forestry in Viet Nam provides an overview of available statistical evidence on the current situation of gender-related aspects in the forestry sector and forestry industries. It examines critical issues and trends in the fulfilment of gender-related rights. The analysis also shows future priorities and opportunities to advance gender equality in the sector.

The analysis indicates that women have played a significant role in the widespread adoption of farm forestry systems and the rapid growth in the forest economy in Viet Nam over recent decades. Besides, rural women are still often disadvantaged by gender disparities in access to the benefits from policies and services, such as the policy on Payment for Forest Environmental Services. The gender wage gap in some parts of industries in forestry is substantially wider than in other economic and industrial sectors in Viet Nam, and there is even wide fluctuation within the forestry sector. Social welfare provisions for employees in some parts of industries in forestry lag behind other economic and industrial sectors. Women in industries in forestry are still generally disadvantaged in terms of access to professional and technical training opportunities.

The study's primary recommendation is to broaden the scope for applying gender-related rights in forestry policy. Additional issues need also to be addressed in both policy and practice.

Practical exchange and learning

Four thematic groups, which were facilitated by the European Forestry Institute (EFI), the Centre for Rural Economy Development (CRED), the Centre for Rural Development in Central Viet Nam (CRD), the Viet Nam Forest Owner Association (VIFORA), the Timber and Forest Products Association of Binh Dinh (FPA Binh Dinh), and ECUE Consultancy and Service Company Ltd., explored different dimensions for promoting gender equality. The topics included:

(i) State management agencies of the forestry sector - based on the presentation of best practices of mainstreaming gender equality in state management, participants explored opportunities and challenges and jointly developed concrete solutions to enhance the effectiveness of gender equality in the forestry sector in Viet Nam.

(ii) forest production and protection - the discussion focussed on necessary preconditions on the ground with companies, cooperatives, and smallholders. Participants highlighted the importance of increasing access to and control over land resources as essential for empowering women in the forestry sector.

(iii) forest smallholders and micro and small enterprises - the exchange on a supportive environment for women's participation and leadership in forest and small-scale processing facilities emphasised the significance of a decent workplace and working conditions for both men and women. This includes providing fair wages, a safe working environment, and equal opportunities for career advancement.

(iv) timber processing and exporting industry - the session addressed the capacity of companies in Binh Dinh province to promote gender equality in labour and employment within the export timber processing industry. Participants included managers and employees to discuss and recommend solutions to increase gender equality in the timber processing industry, such as social welfare, childcare, maternity support, support from trade unions, ...



Key highlights and takeaways

The outlook, recommendations, and commitments of participants at the Forum to promote gender equality in the forestry sector are numerous and varied. They concern different levels, dimensions, and aspects, from awareness raising and policy enhancements to resources and attitudes.

Awareness raising

- Organise information and communication activities focused on gender, including training, workshops, and seminars for both men and women.
- Utilise information technology to enhance the dissemination of information.
- Promote gender equality through communication initiatives in schools.
- Communicate and highlight the capacity and potential of women in advancing the forestry sector.
- Summarise and promote the advantages of gender equality for businesses and the forestry industry.

Policy

- Provide an enabling environment to promote gender equality in recruitment and eliminate gender-based discrimination in job assignments; foster gender equality in the workplace; close disparities of gender-based wages; increase quality and quantity of female leaders.
- Develop policies supportive of women at the workplace, including provisions for child support (daycare/preschool/kindergarten) and pregnancy coverage; enhance and facilitate training opportunities for women in the field of engineering.
- Set up a process for monitoring gender equality indicators, including female participation in engineering, leadership, and management roles.
- Promote access, utilisation, and ownership of resources such as land, forests, and carbon payment agreements.
- Integrate gender analysis requirements and policies into forestry programmes and projects.

Resources

- Improve facilities for women engaged in male-dominant jobs, such as patrol/duty accommodations; ensure the equipment and machinery are suitable for women.
- Allocate funds for activities promoting gender equality or implementing gender policies.
- Mobilise resources from non-state organisations and international partners.

Gender equality culture

- Honour exemplary women in leadership, production, and engineering to inspire and affirm women's competencies.
- Build a network of women in forestry or women's clubs in forestry.
- Emphasis on male-female equality rather than female preference or male exclusion in activities promoting gender equality.
- Shift and expand the roles of women and men beyond the role of "caregivers" and "providers," respectively.



Gender equality in action

The Forum provided the opportunity to visit Nguyen Hanh Seedling Service Company and the Quy Nhon Forestry Company.

During the visit to Nguyen Hanh Company, participants were introduced to the company's efforts in gender equality. After nearly 20 years as a women-led enterprise with more than 80% female workers, the company has created strong, favourable working conditions and ensured welfare for female workers. This includes training opportunities, social insurance and/or flexible working hours. The company shows good practices in mainstreaming gender equality in small and medium-sized enterprises.

The exchange with the leadership of Quy Nhon Forestry Company provided insights into how to incorporate gender equality practices into workplace practice. The company achieved FSC certification in 2020. Over the past three years, gender equality was progressively integrated into statutes and practices. The director underlined that this has resulted in tangible benefits. Gender equality action not only fulfils the requirements for forest certification to fetch higher timber prices on the market but also creates a diverse working environment that attracts skilled workers and motivates the team.





Follow up after the Forum

In addition to the outlook from the Forum, concrete actions were derived for follow-up by State agencies and the private sector.

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- Continue implementing its Gender Action Plan and share the implementation results and achievements at events similar to this forum.
- Continue mobilising resources from both the State budget and relevant partners and stakeholders for the implementation of its Gender Action Plan.
- Share potential future events where the *Photo Exhibition "Forestry through Women's Eyes"* may be relevant for display.

Department of Forestry:

- Re-structure the Committee for Advancement of Women in early 2024.
- Revise and update the Gender Action Plan for adoption and implementation.
- Organise two events in March and October 2024 to raise awareness and knowledge and enhance communication activities about gender-related issues among DoF staff and relevant stakeholders.
- Participate and share gender-related information/best practices at relevant forums organised by MARD, Women's Union, and international partners.
- Display the *Photo Exhibition "Forestry through Women's Eyes"* at relevant sector events.

Provincial Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development:

- Raise awareness and disseminate information/best practices on gender equality at relevant sector events.
- Include gender equality as one criterion for the appraisal process of forestry sector plans, programmes and projects.

Forest and timber processing companies:

- Develop and implement gender action plans.
- Organise training on gender awareness and gender equality for company leaders and staff.
- Promote communication on gender equality to local partners and implementing partners/sub-contractors.
- Inclusion of gender and social issues into training, planning, staff recruitment and promotion.





“I am impressed with the Forum, from agenda, content, the moderator, and panelists to logistics arrangements. I highly appreciate the tremendous efforts of the Organising Committee to successfully organise this event.”



“Women themselves should also remove self-imposed stereotypes and barriers. Just do things you've never done before and learn how to firmly respond to unbiased attitudes from others.”



“The Photo Exhibition, 'Forestry through Women's Eyes,' is the corner that impressed me most at the Forum.”

BACKGROUND

Viet Nam has established a comprehensive legal and policy framework to promote gender equality and has ratified several major international human rights conventions, in addition to promoting gender equality in national laws and strategies. With that, the Vietnamese policy and legal framework provides the basis for gender equality in society, the economy, and the political/administrative system, and clearly regulates respective responsibilities. The first gender strategy in the area of agriculture and rural development was issued in 2001 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). A more recent one includes the formulation of an Action Plan on Gender Equality for the agriculture and rural development sector for the period of 2021-2025, aiming at continuously narrowing the gender gap, creating opportunities for males and females to equally participate in and share responsibilities while enjoying benefits in the agriculture and rural development sector.

In the forest and timber sector, policies issued by the Party and Government always pay attention to ensuring the equal participation of all state and non-state stakeholders, as well as prohibiting discrimination based on religion, personal beliefs, or gender in forest and forest land allocation, leasing, and utilisations. However, significant challenges to gender equality in the forest and timber sector remain. Inequalities in labour division, accessibility to employment opportunities, social and economic benefits sharing, as well as remuneration gaps pervade the sector. These inequalities predominantly affect women. Therefore, anchoring gender equality into the forest and timber sector is crucial for the sustainable development of the sector and goes a long way toward contributing to the national and international SDG achievement.

