

# Exploring Gender in a coastal community



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The Centre for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD) believes that gender equality is a key principle in developing informed, empowered communities that sustain healthy, productive coastal and marine ecosystems.

MCD aims to improve gender equality by recognising gender equity in the community development process.

### What is a gender equality and equity?

*Gender equality* means men and women have an equal position in society and are free to make choices without limitations of stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices.

It is central to human development if women and men are empowered to equally contribute to their households and society then everyone benefits.

*Gender equity* takes into account the different needs, opportunities and benefits for men and women, and seeks to address any imbalance.

Gender equality and equity works to address gender discrimination and basic human rights for everyone. If half of the population cannot equally contribute their skills and abilities then that society is surely missing out.

In many societies around the world, women are not considered equal to men. They do not have the same status in their communities, they are not encouraged to receive an education nor are they given rights to own property.

Vietnam, while having similar inequalities, has specific gender policies that position Vietnam as a leader in Southeast Asia in improving gender imbalance.

## What is a gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming promotes equal opportunities for men and women, as participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries of policies, programs and projects. It ensures that women's concerns and experiences are considered alongside men's. MCD works with key stakeholders to promote gender mainstreaming by:

- Assessing and analysing gender roles and relations in community development and environmental conservation.
- Planning, implementing and monitoring how women and men can best contribute to equitable and sustainable development.



## Gender in Vietnam's coastal areas

About 43 million people live along Vietnam's coast and women make up 51 per cent of this population.

In coastal communities, women are dependent on marine resources for their livelihoods and face the following challenges:

- Less access to and control of resources (such as land, capital and technology).
- Limited education, skills, and access to information, and lower mobility
- Persistence of traditional gender stereotypes such as subordinate roles in the home and community.

There is a need to address this inequity because it hampers women's progress as equal participants and partners with men in the development of their coastal communities



## **Xuan Thuy National Park: A case study for gender mainstreaming**



Xuan Thuy National Park is located on the coast about 150km south-east of Hanoi where the Red River meets the sea. It has coastal wetlands ecosystems, rare migratory birds and high biodiversity.

In Giao Xuan commune, one of five communities in the buffer zone of the national park, women account for 51 per cent of the population. The local community depends heavily on agriculture and fisheries and possesses valuable traditions and culture. The women are engaged primarily in agriculture but during the off-season 70 per cent are involved in fisheries resource exploitation such as harvesting mud crabs and shellfish or working on clam farms.

However coastal resources are degrading, decreasing livelihood options for women and men living within the area.

Community-based ecotourism (CBET) is currently being developed in Xuan Thuy National Park to provide supplementary income for local people and to contribute to coastal wetlands conservation.

MCD's gender mainstreaming approach focuses on improving women's involvement and capacity in all stages of the development, management and delivery of ecotourism to increase gender equity.



## Gender in ecotourism development



The development of community-based ecotourism in Xuan Thuy National Park addresses a range of gender issues that are relevant to all coastal communities in Vietnam.

Ecotourism development provides opportunities to apply gender mainstreaming to improve the environment

and increase livelihood options and gender equity.

Some of the opportunities, benefits and challenges for women and men are outlined as follows:

### Opportunities in management and service provision:

- Participate in the development and management of CBET (meetings, decisions).
- Coordinate and organise all activities and services, and networking with different groups and organisations (tourism companies, government, NGOs).
- Provide home-stays (hospitality, meals).
- Establish and organise cultural performance groups.
- Act as local guides.
- Promote environmental education and conservation.



## Benefits of ecotourism:

- Learn to become entrepreneurs and gain skills and experience in eco-businesses and CBET development.
- Understand how to protect the environment and use natural resources in the sustainable way.
- Become more confident and active in decision-making in communities and households.
- Improve access to supplementary income generation.
- Achieve a clean environment and reduce health risks (especially for women).
- Increase cultural and social life through everyday interaction, communication and artistic performances.
- Strengthen social networks and community image.



## Some of the challenges and actions for gender equity in ecotourism development:

- Women's involvement might increase their workload in both the family and community. Gender equitable CBET should improve their recognised position and voice in decision-making processes of ecotourism management.
- CBET is relatively new to Vietnam and requires more time, skills development and capacity building. Women, especially, having less opportunities and access to education and training, need long-term access to such training to achieve gender equity.
- Leadership positions in livelihood development and management are limited for women. Gender equitable CBET should provide long term opportunities to develop women as leaders.

Small Projects Facility



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