



OXFAM

Input to the “Gender Lens in the UNGP “

Introduction

The programme *Gender Transformative and Responsible Agribusiness Investment in SE Asia* (GRAISEA) believes that agricultural supply chains can be financially viable while advancing gender equity and sustainability. To achieve this, the GRAISEA programme supports responsible business practices that strengthen gender equality and women’s economic empowerment through influencing companies and governments to improve and encourage compliance with existing policies and frameworks by identifying the issues that affect women in supply chains; highlighting the influence that private companies can have in pushing for a gender transformative agenda throughout their value chains; stressing the structural and regulatory barriers that continue to prevent women’s equal access to resources and decision making.

The Context in Asia

Asia enjoys a relatively high participation of women in the labour force. With a female participation rate of about 70%, the rate is higher than in any other region globally.¹ However, stark inequalities between men and women remain. For example, women in East Asia and the Pacific are only paid 70% to 80% of what men earn for equivalent work². Similarly, Oxfam’s research on cocoa in Indonesia found that women receive \$1.55/ five hours (Rp. 15,000) for their work, while men get \$2.06/ five hours (Rp. 20,000). This was accepted by both the women’s groups and men’s groups because men’s work is more physically demanding. However, women’s work is critical for the quality of the cocoa. Women also do many physically demanding tasks, like hauling water, to support cocoa farms and households, often for no pay at all.³

Furthermore, although women constitute about 50% of the labour force in the agricultural sector in Asia (compared with 43% in the global average), women control far less of the resources and tend to receive globally a significantly lower share of financial support and extension services (see graph below). At management level the situation is similar: A McKinsey survey found that although women account for only six percent of seats on corporate boards in the ten Asian markets that they studied, less than 30% of the consulted companies had gender diversity among their top 10 priorities (in Europe, that figure was 47%, although women are more represented in senior management positions).⁴

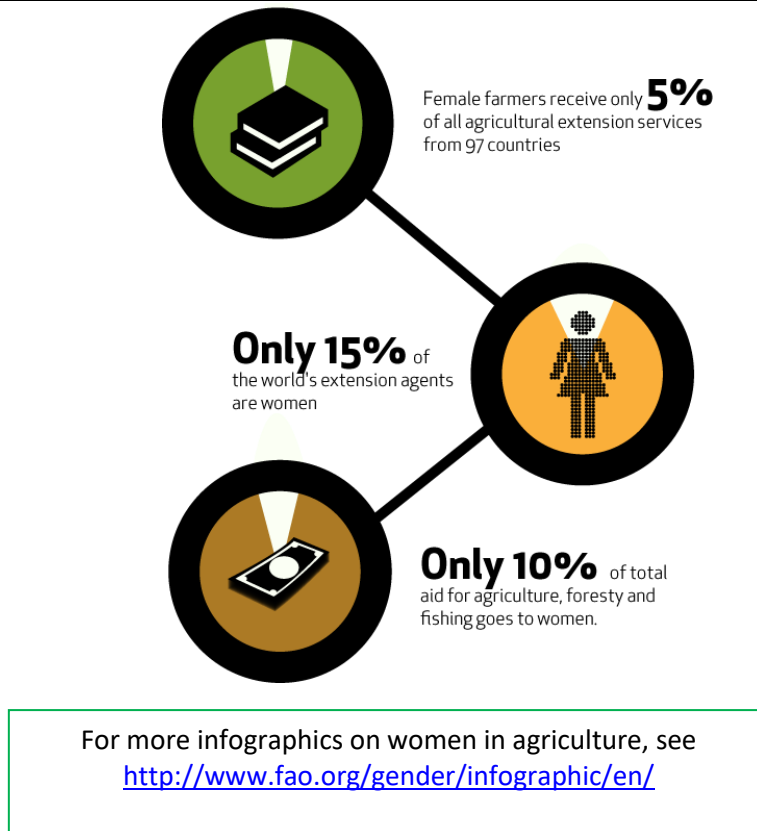
¹ World Bank, “Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific,” 2012.

² World Bank, “Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific,” 2012.

³ Oxfam, “Gender Inequality in Indonesian Cocoa Production,” 2013.

⁴ McKinsey, “Women Matter: An Asian Perspective,” 2012.

Figure 1: Women are under-served and under-empowered in agriculture. (Source: FAO)



In the ASEAN region, ensuring that the economic progress is gender inclusive remains a challenge, despite a reduction of overall poverty levels, economic growth and high foreign investment inflow. Although the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is anticipated to have overall positive impacts on the number of jobs created, the growth of the employment market is likely to take place in sectors where women are not well represented. Women in the ASEAN economies tend to dominate the workforce in lower-skilled and lower paid segments of the labour market, in the agriculture and the garments sector, where growth has been stagnant. The majority of women continue to be in vulnerable employment, with limited access to benefits and social protection. Furthermore, the presence and recognition of customary laws in some countries creates legal barriers to women's rights and participation, e.g. with respect to acquiring land, equal remuneration etc., all contributing to a high gender wage gap in the ASEAN region (up to 40% in the fishery sector in Indonesia).⁵

Human Rights Case for Gender

Women are vulnerable to human rights abuses in business supply chains. They are more likely than men to face harassment and violence, be victims of discrimination in the form of less stable contracts, lower wages, and less skilled jobs than men and may be restricted by cultural barriers and norms that make it difficult for women to seek better opportunities for themselves.

There are many complex interlinked factors that cause this vulnerability (e.g. social norms; national legal contexts; etc.), often going beyond the exclusive responsibility of corporate actors. However, as the UNGP constitute, companies have a responsibility to respect

⁵ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, et al., Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community, 2015

human rights in their own business operations and supply chains and provide access to remedy, if violations have taken place. Understanding the human rights risks in its business - including human rights risk for women – needs to be part of a company’s human rights due diligence process. To do this effectively, companies should, for instance, maintain sex-disaggregated data on their operations and value chains, to be able to identify and mitigate discriminatory trends.

Human rights issues that companies must address include:

Harassment and violence against women: Women are often at risk of violence in the workplace, in transport and at home. Companies’ practices can increase or decrease this risk.

Box 1: Strawberry companies on women & sexual harassment

Strawberry production in Morocco relies on a mostly female labour force. Women are informally recruited by male intermediaries, which gives them significant power over the women, creating high risk of sexual harassment. With support from Oxfam and civil society partners, women workers were trained in literacy and on their rights, enabling them to assert and claim labour rights, call for adequate health and safety measures and address the problem of harassment. In addition, 52% more workers were registered for social security, which entitles a woman worker with two children to 40% more income. The Moroccan government has welcomed this approach and now sends social security staff to support women workers in registering for the benefits. Employers report increased productivity and a more stable workforce.

Discrimination at the workplace: Discrimination comes in many forms both for wage workers and for smallholders. A result of discrimination is that more women than men work in temporary and informal positions that are not covered by the law. Higher-paid positions as well as formal employment is often dominated by men. Even in co-operatives, women smallholders can face discrimination. If only one person per household is, for example, allowed to join a co-operative, or if only the landowner can join, woman will often be excluded from the co-operative and the benefits that it provides.

Box 2: Finlays on women & co-operative membership

The FRICH (Food Retail Industry Challenge Fund) project is supporting tea company Finlays’ outgrowers in Kenya to set up five new co-operatives. To ensure that female as well as male outgrowers can join the co-operatives in their own name, the project bases membership eligibility on the grower having been assigned land where they have control over the produce: formal land titles are not necessary (which is important as most African women do not own land). Moreover, as women producers are often registered under their husbands’ names even when the husband is not involved in farming, the project insists that, in such cases, the woman must be registered as the member. Finally, to ensure that women (and youth) are represented in the co-operatives’ governance structures, quotas have been established at various management levels: for example, each buying centre must elect one older man, one older woman, one young man, and one young woman to form its committee.

Concentration of unpaid care work on women and girls: Women are usually the primary care-giver for children, dependents/ill adults, and other household members. Engaging in paid work impacts – potentially negatively - unpaid care work that women are primarily responsible for. For example, when women work outside the home without adequate childcare arrangements, this can have a negative impact on children, especially girls/older women who may take over the mother’s work in the home. There are also serious implications for women’s well-being and ability to fulfil their rights more broadly as, even though they engage in paid work, they often remain primarily responsible for care activities in the household (unless directly addressed by government, employers, communities). This can imply that women have less time for sleep, self-care and fulfil other social, political or economic activities they may want to engage in, with implications for their health and empowerment. Moreover, although they may contribute positively to a families’ finance, the woman’s emerging financial capacity can threaten men and contribute to an increase in domestic abuse.

Box 3: Women’s access to economic opportunities & household care

One of the factors that restricts women’s engagement in the labour force is their heavy and unequal responsibility for care work in the household and in the community. The concentration of unpaid care work to women is a significant, often invisible, barrier to their involvement in the labour market, affects their productivity and food security, and can severely limit their opportunities to generate income. Oxfam surveyed 20 enterprise development initiatives and found that women leaders were dropping out as they found it difficult to renegotiate household responsibilities. Positively, investments in care infrastructure and services by governments, NGOs and employers, combined with strategies to address cultural barriers can reduce and redistribute care work. In Tanzania, for instance, a one-hour reduction for every ten hours spent on collecting water and fuel, increased the probability that women would engage in off-farm business activities by 7%.

Companies can play a role in addressing care responsibilities by improving access to care-related infrastructure (e.g. facilitating access to water) and services (e.g. childcare facilities) and influencing social norms that are barriers to women (e.g. progressive paternity leave policies, promoting men’s role in care work) to enable women’s engagement in paid work while contributing to community/household well-being.

Box 4: IPL on women & childcare

In Kenya, Oxfam and International Procurement and Logistics Ltd (IPL) studied the role of women horticultural workers and smallholder farmers in the supply chain for cut flowers and green beans. The study found that women wage workers were generally disempowered, with roles highly demarcated by gender and a high risk of sexual harassment during the recruitment of contract labour. There was also a lack of quality childcare provided by employers, so informal providers have sprung up, carrying the risk of negligence and abuse of children. In this case, ‘economic empowerment’ of adult women can come with costs for their children’s welfare and education and the women’s capacity to earn an income. This study was done before IPL started sourcing from Kenya and informed IPL’s future sourcing strategy.

Social norms that impede women’s empowerment: If social norms put a low value on women’s lives and welfare, the autonomy of women’s bodies, their work in the households and communities, their knowledge and skills, and their participation and leadership in governance, social norms can contribute to the perpetuation of the vulnerability of women and girls to discrimination and violence. Companies are usually reluctant to challenge social norms, reasoning that this is a local cultural issue. But companies have the capacity to introduce practices that advances women’s human rights and gender equality. For instance, finance institutions can provide loans to women, and challenge norms about who controls income and assets. Companies can also promote positive social norms through their own policies: equal pay; women in leadership positions; zero tolerance of sexual harassment etc.

Box 5: Pavitra on women & collective action

In Nepal, Oxfam works with Pavitra, a vegetable and seed production enterprise. As well as supporting the enterprise from a business perspective, Oxfam has facilitated women’s discussion groups as a key instrument of empowerment. Women seed producers in these groups have gained confidence, access to information, and a collective voice on their priority issues. For the first time, women report, they realized that their voices could be heard in a public space. Groups have successfully taken on issues ranging from latrine construction through training on new seed varieties to polygamy.

Key Recommendations for Companies

Companies often want specific guidance on what to do. However, before deciding on specific interventions, companies should first know where the women are in its value chain and how they are being treated. Oxfam’s Behind the Brands campaign sets out a 3-step plan as follows:

1. **“Know and Show”:** Companies should undertake due diligence in their value chain to analyse the differences between men and women in terms of activities, income, access to and control over resources, power positions, etc. This should be done with local stakeholders including trade unions, women’s rights groups and other civil society groups. It is particularly important to conduct confidential and off-site interviews specifically with women.
2. **“Commit”:** On the basis of these assessments, companies should commit to adopt, announce, implement and review policies and an action plan specifically to improve women’s empowerment and fulfilment of rights. This should be done in a transparent manner, so that the companies can be held accountable for their actions.
3. **“Advocate”:** Companies should use their power to influence other actors to improve women’s empowerment and the access to their rights. This includes engaging with the government, certification schemes, suppliers and sector initiatives.

Other specific actions that companies may want to take, here are some suggestions:

- End the gender pay gap – pay equal remuneration for women and men.

- Ensure equal access for decent and safe employment opportunities for women, including opportunities as suppliers
- Ensure non-discrimination in the workplace and women’s right to organize.
- Support women’s freedom from violence by establishing zero-tolerance towards all forms of violence at work, prevention of sexual harassment
- Recognize the contribution of unpaid care work, and help reduce the burden of unpaid care work disproportionately borne by women, by providing child and elderly care and paid family and medical leave, flexible working hours, and paid parental leave.
- Support women’s leadership and professional development, for example by sourcing from women-led producer organizations, investing in women’s education and training, supporting women to move into higher roles and ensuring women occupy managerial positions.
- Ensure that suppliers/other chain actors to also have same standards and gender policies.
- Measure, analyse and report on their performance on gender equality, for example, through the Global Reporting Initiative’s Sustainability Reporting Guidelines and the UN Women Empowerment Principles.

Key Recommendations to Governments

Governments have a key role to play in setting the rules and incentives for companies to improve women’s empowerment. Governments should:

- Implement social and economic policies and legislation to close the economic inequality gap for women, including measures that provide social protection and benefits for women, promote equal pay, decent work, access to credit, equal inheritance and land rights, and recognize, reduce, redistribute and represent the issues relating to heavy and unequal unpaid care work
- Systematically analyse proposed economic policies for their impact on girls and women; improve data in national and accounting systems – including below the household level – to monitor and assess such impact (for example on the distribution of unpaid care work).
- Prioritize gender-budgeting to assess the impact of spending decisions on women and girls, and allocate it in ways that promote gender equality.
- Implement policies to promote women’s political participation, end violence against women and address the negative social attitudes of gender discrimination.
- Include women’s rights groups in policy making spaces.

In the ASEAN context, there needs to be a broader focus on women’s empowerment and rights, going beyond entrepreneurship. There is an opportunity to ensure that the growing private sector investments in the ASEAN Economic Community are inclusive of women.

Key action points for a more gender responsive economic community can include:⁶

- Monitoring should include gender indicators
- Bridge the education and skills divide

⁶ Ebert Stiftung, et al., Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community, 2015

- Improve access to finance for women entrepreneurs through subsidized loans and other financial incentives
- Remove gender biases in family benefit policies
- Reform the entire child care system and family support system to help working mothers and not penalize them for taking time off
- Address the persistent gender based discrimination persists in national policies relating to occupational choices and asset ownership
- Remove labour market distortions caused by unclear labour laws and create a level playing field
- Provide fiscal incentives for companies to encourage women in senior management positions
- Strictly enforce work place harassment laws

More specifically for the agricultural sector:

- Facilitate women's increased participation in formal workforce and gradual renegotiation of gender roles.
- Established standards for minimum wages.
- Established structures for training and credit provisions.
- Leveraging ICT and smart phone technology to connect women with technical and market information and better communications.
- Gender mainstreaming from conventionally 'non-gender' government departments like Trade, Commerce, Finance and Planning.

Resources for further reading

Agri Pro Focus toolkit on Gender in Value Chains. <http://agriprofocus.com/toolkit>

CSR Asia, "The Role of the Private Sector in Women's Economic Empowerment in Asia"
<http://www.csr-asia.com/report/Womens-Economical-Empowerment.pdf>

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, UNWomen, ASEAN, Australian Aid (prepared by Shreyasi Jha and Abha Shri Saxena), "Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community", 2015
http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2015/November/27thsummit/ASCC_documents/Projected%20Gender%20Impact%20of%20the%20ASEAN%20Economic%20Community.pdf

Mondelez International, Cocoa Life: Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Cocoa, 2015 Update
<http://www.cocoalife.org/Progress.aspx>

WEMAN

www.wemanglobal.org

Oxfam, "Better Jobs in Better Supply Chains"

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/better-jobs-in-better-supply-chains-114001>

Oxfam, "Business and Human Rights: An Oxfam Perspective on the UN Guiding Principles"

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/business-and-human-rights-an-oxfam-perspective-on-the-un-guiding-principles-293857>

Oxfam, “Even It Up: Time to end extreme inequality”

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/even-it-up-time-to-end-extreme-inequality-333012>

Oxfam, “Gender Equality: It’s Your Business”

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/gender-equality-its-your-business-213389>

Oxfam, “Gender Inequality in Indonesian Cocoa Production”

<https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/gender-inequality-cocoa-indonesia.pdf>

Oxfam, “Guide to Integrating Gender Transformative Strategies in GRAISEA”

Oxfam, “Labour Rights in Unilever’s Supply Chain: From compliance to good practice. An Oxfam study of labour issues in Unilever’s Vietnam operations and supply chain.”

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/labour-rights-in-unilevers-supply-chain-from-compliance-to-good-practice-an-oxf-267532>

Oxfam, “Meaningful Action: Effective approaches to women’s economic empowerment in agriculture”

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/meaningful-action-effective-approaches-to-womens-economic-empowerment-in-agricu-334788>

Oxfam, “Oxfam analysis and recommendations to Mars, Mondelez and Nestle on gender equality in the cocoa sector”

<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/women-and-cocoa-evaluation>

Oxfam, “Steps Towards a Living Wage in Global Supply Chains”

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/steps-towards-a-living-wage-in-global-supply-chains-336623>