

# GENDER LEARNING REPORT

‘Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia to Support Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change’ project



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Contributions by partners and beneficiaries to this report must also be acknowledged, including DanChurchAid,  
ActionAid Cambodia and People in Need

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*Front cover credit: Women participating in training conducted by a partnership between UNDP and ActionAid Cambodia*

## List of Abbreviations

AAC	ActionAid Cambodia
DCA	DanChurchAid
EGED	Enhanced Gender Equality in Disaster Risk Reduction
EM-DAT	International Disaster Database
EWS	Early Warning Systems
GEF	Global Environment Facility
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoWRAM	Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology
MTR	Mid-Term Review
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
PIR	Project Implementation Report
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TE	Terminal Evaluation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WRI	Cambodia Women's Resilience Index

# Introduction

## Objective

This learning report was developed at the conclusion of the UNDP-supported ‘Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia to Support Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change’ project (known herein as ‘the project’), financed by the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) component of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Completion of this report is hoped to serve a dual purpose. The first of these is a discussion of gender within the project. In accordance with UNDP guidelines, the project was given a GEN2 marker. This marker suggests that the outputs of the project are either ‘gender sensitive’, or ‘gender responsive’. To be a ‘gender sensitive’ output, an outcome needs to have ‘*recognition of, and intension to reduce symptoms of gendered differences and gender disparity and promote equality in opportunity*’. To be a ‘gender responsive’ project, it must ‘*attempt to overcome historical gender bias*’. As a result, it was hoped that this report enables a reflection on areas where, consistent with UNDP gender markers, the project was able to (or otherwise) address gender issues.

The second purpose of the report is to facilitate a look forward as to what lessons can be learned from this project, and questions that need to be asked to allow these lessons to be implemented in future projects both locally and perhaps globally.

## The Project

The EWS project was developed with an aim to improve the availability of climate information and early warning system in Cambodia. The project is implemented alongside the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MoWRAM), who have responsibility for the collection and distribution of relevant weather-related information across the country.

The project has three key outcomes:

1. Transfer of technologies for climate and environmental monitoring infrastructure through improved hardware and software capacity to monitor extreme weather events (*Outcome 1.1*) and; increased institutional capacity to maintain EWS related infrastructure (*Outcome 1.2*).
2. Establish the capacity to synthesize/model the climate and environmental data by developing climate/weather forecast products (*Outcome 2.1*) and; training forecasters to use information from monitoring stations in modelling and data quality control (*Output 2.2*).
3. Facilitate easy dissemination of information to different sectors of the economy by generating tailored climate and weather information (*Outcome 3.1*); establishing Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for issuing and disseminating warnings through communication channels (*Outcome 3.2*) and; Conducting knowledge-sharing workshop through regional institutions involving other countries (*Outcome 3.3*)

The project was endorsed in 2014, with implementation expected to commence in 2015. Notably, the project was refined in 2017 (approved early 2018) and implementation methodology changed from NIM to DIM, after little momentum within the project had been made prior to this time. As a result, the project was expected to finish in May 2020, extended to October 2020.

## The Cambodian Context

In 2018, Cambodia's population sat at just over 16.2 million people, of which women made up approximately 51 percent<sup>1</sup>. Agriculture remains the biggest industry within the country, with a high dependency on subsistence farming; according to a report conducted by Asian Development Bank in 2015, 66 percent of women and 62 percent of men were employed in agriculture<sup>2</sup>.

Positioned in South-East Asia, Cambodia is acknowledged as a country with high risk to disasters. According to the EM-DAT, the international disaster database, Cambodia experienced 31 storms, floods and droughts of significance between 1987 and 2019, leading to just under USD \$23 million damage<sup>3</sup>. This is expected to increase, with Cambodia labelled as the 12<sup>th</sup> country most at risk to the impacts of climate change between 1988 to 2018<sup>4</sup>.

## Gender, Disasters and Early Warning Systems

In 2019, a report<sup>5</sup> was released found that systematically there are differences in resilience factors between men and women in Cambodia. Overall, communities in Cambodia scored 0.58 (on a resilience scale of 0 to 1), with males scoring 0.59 and females scoring 0.56. This demonstrates that overall Cambodia's resilience level is not high, with a difference of 3 percent in resilience between genders (however this gap becomes more pronounced when individual pillars and indicators are considered).

Notably, regarding early warning systems, these differences included: have ability to make decisions in community (men = 67%, women = 54%), and no awareness of disaster management plans at commune/Sangkat level (men = 57%, women = 65%). There is also a noted difference in ability to read/write (men = 76%, women = 59%), which may determine how early warning messages and information are disseminated. Finally, there is a difference between men and women in daily income of less than \$1.90 (men = 29%, women = 43%), which may determine economic resilience in the face of extreme weather events.

While many of the results were similar across male- and female-headed households, there were also noteworthy gaps in phone ownership (male-headed households = 51%, female-headed households = 29%), which may determine accessibility of information and usage of phone-based early warning systems. A total of 53 percent of female-headed households did not receive any warning on the last hazard they experienced, compared to 40 percent of male-headed households. Even if they did receive

## The Gender Gap

*"[Cambodian] women play an important role in disaster risk reduction but have been overlooked, often ignored and left behind in decision making and politics. This is particularly so in disaster management."*

Ms. Chantevy Khourn, Team Leader for Women's Right for ActionAid Cambodia

<sup>1</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/country/cambodia>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/156499/promoting-womens-economic-empowerment.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://public.emdat.be/data>

<sup>4</sup> [https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/20-2\\_01e%20Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202020\\_14.pdf](https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/20-2_01e%20Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202020_14.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://cambodia.actionaid.org/publications/2019/cambodia-womens-resilience-index-2019>

warning, there were significantly more female-headed households that stated they did not trust and act on these warnings at 52 percent, compared to 38 percent of male-headed households.

Consistent with these findings, the GEF Guidance on Gender states three gaps in which women are unequally disadvantaged regarding the environment:

1. Unequal access to and control of natural resources;
2. Unbalanced participation and decision making in environmental planning and governance at all levels; and
3. Uneven access to socio-economic benefits and services.

Such issues are often further exacerbated in times of disasters, when a lack of inclusion in disaster management plans and strategies, gender-based violence, and differing health needs can all further create divides between men and women. One study, based in Nepal and Peru, proposed that ‘gender is a critical consideration in ensuring effective EWS leave no one behind. However, limited research has focused specifically on the connection between gender and EWS, and there is a shortage of evidence on best practices to ensure EWS are effective for all.’<sup>6</sup> The same study found that women’s vulnerability to disasters was compounded in situations with more significant gender inequalities.

Identified issues that contribute directly to women’s increased vulnerability during disasters include a lack of representation in government (which will be discussed further in following sections), increased vulnerability and lack of protection at safe sites, gendered health concerns, and not being identified and targeted in preparedness and response activities. Furthermore, differences in educational access may contribute to ability to work and obtain and understand knowledge, which may include capacity to access disaster and climate change information. Ms. Somountha Mith, from ActionAid Cambodia, acknowledges that women in Cambodia (and indeed beyond) experience a double burden as they are tasked with ensuring both the food security and caring needs of themselves, as well as children and often elderly relatives – a burden which is exacerbated during disasters.

It is acknowledged, however, that disasters also potentially provide opportunity for gender inequalities to be addressed, particularly when gender-sensitive programming is available<sup>7</sup>. As a result, it emphasises that gender needs to be a priority in disaster risk reduction planning and implementation.

Mainstreaming of gender should align not only with UNDP and GEF guidelines, but relevant guidelines within the country (if they exist). In Cambodia, the most relevant guideline is probably the *Master Plan on Gender and Climate Change (2018-2030)*, which in the introduction states, ‘*The vision of the Master Plan is to institutionalize and internalize gender mainstreaming in adaptation, disaster risk reduction and mitigation investments for contributing to equitable, climate resilience and sustainable society of Cambodia.*’ Gender mainstreaming relevant to this project is also mentioned in the *Royal Government of Cambodia (RCG)’s Rectangular Strategy*<sup>8</sup>, as well as the *Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014-2023*, therefore reinforcing the need to consider how the project can support national goals to mainstream gender and reduce gender inequalities.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://practicalaction.org/knowledge-centre/resources/>

<sup>7</sup> [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org) › 7 Disaster Risk Reduction – Gender

<sup>8</sup> <http://cnv.org.kh/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Rectangular-Strategy-Phase-IV-of-the-Royal-Government-of-Cambodia-of-the-Sixth-Legislature-of-the-National-Assembly-2018-2023.pdf>

## Box 1: Lessons Learned: Summary

### During Project Design

- Projects should have clear **gender expertise input, a gender analysis and gender action plan** from the outset.
- The inclusion of gender in the project design can **enhance the uptake and sustainability of EWS-related outcomes** and is a missed opportunity if not facilitated.

### During Project Implementation

- There is always opportunity to **integrate gender** throughout a project, even if there have been challenges with mainstreaming from the project's inception.
- **Explicitly identifying, challenging and addressing gender inequality** in project activities is important.
- Consider **location and timing** of activities to increase the likelihood that women can attend.
- **Include various levels of lower-level government** in project implementation.
- Consider **integration of women at all levels**, with a focus on meaningfully including women in decision making processes.
- Ensure that a **method of communication** is established which is not solely dependent on the project.
- All project team members can **enhance their understanding of gender**, which will help with more gender-sensitive project implementation.

### When Developing National Strategies

- Opportunities should be taken when working at national, sub-national and local level to **implement gender-mainstreaming into policies, strategies and activities**, which may be done by ensuring that **gender specialists or advocates** are actively involved and identifying **gender inclusion and mainstreaming** as a specific agenda item at events.
- Any consultants responsible for the development of national strategies should have **experience and training in gender mainstreaming**.

### During Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

- **Listen for stories that might challenge traditional gender perspectives** and report them.
- Ensure **gender-sensitive indicators and targets** are included in log frames **in a meaningful and relevant** way.
- **Measure more than women's participation in training** – look for qualitative data.

## Methodology

The analysis was conducted using project documents including the Mid-Term Review (MTR) and Project Implementation Reports (PIR), interviews with project partners and beneficiaries, and an assessment of project data. The results of this will be presented below through a series of summaries, stories and lessons learned at different stages of the project.

# Results

## Project Design

Since the original pro-doc was developed in 2014, prior to the latest set of UNDP and GEF guidelines on gender being implemented, there was limited gender inclusion from the outset.

The pro-doc does mention gender, stating that due to lower literacy rates in women than men, *‘women, therefore, have especially weak adaptive capacity, given challenges in understanding and responding to early warning messages, and in applying climate information to better inform their agricultural planning.’* The pro-doc also proposes that there are more women actively engaging in the agricultural sector than males. As a result, it suggests that the project would be likely to significantly impact gender equality and women’s empowerment, while also referencing differentiated impacts on different societal groups (including women and men) and challenges in engaging women. It proposes that EWS messaging needs to accommodate for these different needs, as well as indicating that gender-disaggregated data should be collected where possible. In doing so, it is implied that by considering and integrating these gender needs, the project overall could potentially have a bigger impact in the uptake and sustainability of its EWS work.

These factors, however, are not reflected in the proposed project M&E. Within the indicators, the only mention of gender is a disaggregation of data under Indicator 2, which considers the *‘% change of agricultural productivity in select communities.’* This indicator, however, was acknowledged throughout the project as being challenging to measure at all, let alone in a gender-sensitive manner. As a result, there were effectively no useful indicators of gender within the project.

In the Terms of Reference, the pro-doc describes the need to develop a gender mainstreaming strategy during project inception under the role of the Project Coordination Technical Advisor. Due to the project stalling for several years, before being changed in modality, this role was not fulfilled during the initial implementation. As a result, there was no gender expertise in the development of this project nor in its restructure. Consequently, a gender mainstreaming/action plan was never developed for this project.

It can therefore be concluded that, while briefly mentioned, gender was insufficiently incorporated into the project’s design. This is reflected in the Mid-Term Report, which stated that, *‘in the pro-doc, relatively little attention is given to gender specific approaches to ensure a gender balanced implementation of the project. As the project is in its later phase of implementation and is progressing to implement more interventions at sub-national level, in districts and communities, attention to inclusiveness and gender balance in capacity building efforts is required.’*

In later PIR’s, in which gender reporting was a requirement, it was then identified that there were two of the GEF areas that the project would contribute to gender equality in. The implementation of these will be discussed in following sections:

1. Improving the participation and decision-making of women in natural resource governance;  
and
2. Targeting socio-economic benefits and services for women.

Despite this acknowledgement, these PIR reports simply once again stated the more ‘technical’ nature of the project, and that gender would be integrated into sectoral or end-user EWS components, without consideration of how these would be accomplished or measured (for an example, please see

the 2018 PIR). It should be noted that in 2019, following the MTR, gender components were integrated into the design of the project, and will be discussed in the following section.

### Project Design Lessons to be Learned

- It is clear from the outset that a lack of consideration of gender within the project development stage influenced the mainstreaming of gender throughout the project. In learning, having **gender expertise input, a gender analysis and gender action plan** should be a critical part of future projects, and is now expected for all UNDP projects. In doing so, gender can be proactively integrated into projects (as is now required under both UNDP and GEF funding), rather than trying to reactively integrate.
- Ensure **gender-sensitive indicators and targets** are included from the outset.
- The inclusion of gender in the project design would likely have not only result in enhanced gender equality, which in and of itself would have aligned with its GEN2 marker, but also could have been used to **enhance the uptake and sustainability of EWS-related outcomes**. As the example given from the pro-doc, as well as statistics regarding the differences between men and women in receiving and trusting EWS warning messages and technology access, it would appear that a lack of integration of gender at design stage may have resulted in a missed opportunity to address some of these underlying issues, and in turn enhance resilience.

### Project Implementation

The project has a complete table of sex-disaggregated results, covering all components of the project. Within this, of the 12,026<sup>9</sup> participants directly trained in the project, 4,174 (35%) were female.

One reason for the lower female to male ratio is the lack of female representation within government ministries. Initially, the project was almost exclusively developed to be technically focused, primarily based on both infrastructure and capacity building of government officials at national, provincial, or commune level. When considering only these trainings, only 18% were female thus representing a significantly unbalanced gender ratio. As a result, when these trainings considered within other populations involved in trainings where a more equal gender balance could be expected to be seen, this may skew gender ratios downwards.

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<sup>9</sup> During project implementation, funding was also sourced from another donor to complete tsunami preparedness training with school children. If these figures are included, a total of 14,397 people were involved in capacity building, including 5,294 females (37%).

## Box 2: Why is there such a big discrepancy between men and women in national level trainings?

There is still underrepresentation of women in meteorological and hydrological capacities, a difference acknowledged in the 2015 PIR. Whilst there were attendances by women in almost all training sessions, these tended to be women in administrative roles rather than active forecasters. It must be noted, however, that one of MoWRAM's most senior meteorologists, [Ms. Tep Phollarath](#), and the Deputy Director of the Department of Meteorology, [Ms. Peou Phalla](#), are both women. Through this project, both of their stories were able to be captured and communicated (see links in name), representing historically important information within the country's development.



*Ms. Tep Phollarath, one of Cambodia's most senior meteorologist © Kelsea Clingeffer/UNDP Cambodia.*

At community level, there was often a reflection from beneficiaries that while both men and women experience disasters, women are more vulnerable due to the traditional gender roles places upon them. Men are seen as the breadwinner, whereas women have a responsibility to look after children and food – to take care of 'family issues'. As one female beneficiary described, she saw women taking on more responsibility in disasters as "disasters were an event related to family." Similarly, another woman described how water shortages will only affect men in the home if they want to bathe, whereas for a woman they must cook and ensure the children have enough water. Furthermore,

several beneficiaries described how women experience different health conditions due to disasters (such as floods), which they feel they cannot talk to their husbands or other men about.

Notably, there were two project components which had higher representations of women than others – DanChurchAid’s (DCA) Drought Resistant Agricultural Techniques Training, and ActionAid Cambodia’s (AAC) Enhancing Gender Equality in Disaster Risk Reduction.

## Drought Resistant Agricultural Techniques Training

DCA’s training follows a cascade model, in which training occurs as commune level, at Agricultural Cooperative leader level, then at community/Sangkat level. At commune level, participants numbers are still dominated by males, showing a strong leaning towards males in official positions; this trend, however, is found to be inversed at community level, where women make up majority of the participant numbers.

When asked why this is so, DCA Program Manager Mr. Nop Polin proposed that many of the men in these areas migrate or work away from the home during the day – as a result the women, who traditionally take on the role of staying home to look after the family and subsistence agriculture, are available for community events such as training.

By completing the cascade model, the project also enabled women at community level to feel more empowered, which in turn led to a feeling that they could engage in agriculture-based decision making at higher levels. In doing so, the GEF priority of enhancing women’s participation in decision making processes has been supported.

### Box 3: Why did more women participate in community-level agricultural training than men?

When considering DCA’s training participation, there is an approximately half-half balance (51% male, 49% female) of gender participation. However, when only considering training at community level, there is a sudden shift in the gender balance of training participation, with 36 percent male and 63 percent female. So why did this trend occur?

One reason is the roles of women in the communities targeted. Many of these villages have high levels of migration, or the men work outside the home at factories or other farms. As a result (in line with traditional values), it tends to be women who are home during the day, and therefore are more available for training. Suitably, it also tends to be the women who are involved in the household agriculture.

To support this notion, the trainings are held at a household in the local area, so that women do not have to travel long distances to get to the training. Schedules also cater to the fact that gender norms require women to get home and prepare midday meals – for example, finishing morning sessions at 11am rather than right on 12pm enables this extra time.



*A female agricultural cooperative leader trains her community on drought resistant agricultural techniques ©Kelsea Clingeffer/UNDP Cambodia.*

## Enhancing Gender Equality in Disaster Risk Reduction in Cambodia

Based on a recommendation in the project’s MTR, a partnership with ActionAid Cambodia (AAC) was developed. AAC are experienced in engaging women in disaster management activities within the Cambodian context. AAC’s Enhancing Gender Quality in Disaster Risk Reduction in Cambodia (EGED) program had three aims:

1. Improve women’s capacity on Commune 3-year rolling Investment Programme and Commune 5-year Development Plan (CIP/CDP) development process;
2. Increase women’s voices and demands on DRR and CCA issues; and
3. Increase women collective actions to address community’s challenges in DRR and CCA.

One of the ways these aims were advanced was through the development of Women Champions, which was completed in several stages: 1) conduct community training with women and local authorities on gender equality and disaster risk reduction, 2) identify community women who can be further trained as Women Champions, including developing an appropriate action plan, and 3) provide ongoing support to women through mentoring and establishment of online communities of practice for the conduction of their action plans and other relevant activities including rallying community support for ecological sustainability events, mangrove plantings etc. The training helped provide an understanding of and involvement in commune development plans and rolling investment programs (amongst other topics), thus providing an opportunity to enhance the role of women in decision-

making processes in line with GEF guidelines. Pre- and post-training assessments (of both women and local authorities trained in this topic) showed an increase in knowledge from 56 percent to 81 percent. For more results from this activity, see *Box 4*.

The program acknowledges that traditional gender roles of domestic work and supporting family makes engagement with women challenging and requires a lot of support. However, despite this, it appears to be clear that approaches such as was implemented by AAC were highly valuable. By directly targeting women, particularly at village level and training these women in areas that can change the underlying challenges of gender (e.g. involvement in local decision-making processes), women began to not only realise the issues, but become effective in solving them. Notably, AAC also ensured that local authorities were actively involved in activities, which resulted in reduced tension and increased buy-in from all involved. This is an easily replicable approach for other projects, and similar approaches were also seen in the DanChurchAid project and People in Need (another UNDP project, not discussed in this report). By ensuring ongoing communication (via social media etc.), the sustainability of these women's actions is ensured.

### The Cambodia Women's Resilience Index (WRI) and Charter of Demands

The Cambodia Women's Resilience Index was developed and released by AAC at the end of 2019. Information was gathered using a desk review of literature, household surveys, focus group discussions, key information interviews and in-depth interviews, conducted across a range of geographical locations (e.g. Phnom Penh, coastal, Tonle Sap and mountainous), with a particular focus on the experiences of marginalized groups. The aim of the document was to create a profile of equality across men and women, with consideration of locality.

The Charter of Demands was a set of province-specific demands set out by women from those areas. Over 350 women and local authorities were interviewed in this process, which then set out a clear set of demands over 5 topics: infrastructure, safe areas, emergency response, education and awareness raising and advocacy. In doing so, women were given a tool by which to communicate and interact with stakeholders and local authorities, and potentially have some power in decision making process related to disaster management.

While it is too early to see whether these documents have actually had an impact (particularly given the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020), these are the sorts of outcomes which can contribute to community-wide shifts in how women are engaged in decision making processes and local governance.

Notably, it can be seen above that both unequal engagement of women in decision making processes and impact of traditional gender roles are issues explored within this project. Based on qualitative results collected in this project, unequal access to natural resources was not a dominant theme.

## Shifts in Old Mindsets

*"We recognise the old mindset and understand that in the past, only men have made a living for family. Men did not know about the issue of gender, and many women did not have education or knowledge. That's why there is disparity between men and women... When we share information with our community, we see they are more courageous and brave. Then, when we have meeting to discuss commune and village plan, the authorities invite villagers to be part of the meeting and we see they are more courageous than before."*

– Ms Bun Panharith, Pursat Women Champion

*"My favourite thing about becoming a Women Champion was that now I feel like I have the freedom to speak."*

- Ms. Hok Laykeang, Kampot Lor Women Champion

## Box 4: What happens when you teach women about gender equality and EWS / disaster risk reduction at the same time?

The Women Champions, trained as part of the partnership with AAC, clearly expressed how engagement with the program has left them feeling empowered, and has also challenged traditional gender norms. One participant stated that, following the course, she felt that **“women socially are constructed to be victims, society thinks they cannot do big things. But we want to be leaders!”**. Another discussed how previously, she had felt unequal in discussions with her husband, however following the training, she felt like she could challenge him if he was not being fair and voice her own thoughts – this may reflect a notion of family ‘violations’, which can represent unequal and aggressive power dynamics and gender-based violence. Furthermore, a third women felt that her participation and the ongoing support from peers of the activities was fundamental to her gaining the confidence to take on a role as village leader.



The ActionAid Cambodia partnership brought together Women Champions and local authorities, therefore enhancing the ability of women to engage in decision making processes © Kelsea Clingleffer/UNDP Cambodia

## Project Implementation Lessons to be Learned

- There is always opportunity to **integrate gender** throughout a project, even if there have been challenges with mainstreaming from the project's inception.
- One of the successful components of the AAC agreement was **explicitly identifying, challenging and addressing gender inequality**, particularly alongside the concept of DRR. Whilst this doesn't have to be the primary focus of every activity, an acknowledgement of the challenges facing women in preparing for and responding to disasters could become a required component.
- Consider the **location and timing** of activities to increase the likelihood that women can attend. By avoiding long travel and time periods when women are otherwise engaged, participation can be increased.
- **Include various levels of lower-level government** in project implementation – this was part of the success of both the AAC and DCA agreements. In this type of project, it is common to work with national level ministries (the challenges of which are described earlier), but by including local authorities (AAC) and provincial and district ministries (DCA), buy-in was increased, women's networks were increased, and women were more likely to be able to advocate at these levels.
- Consider **integration of women at all levels**, with a focus on meaningfully including women decision making processes. Part of the success of this project was bottom-up and top-down empowerment approaches (even if limited at national level). Training community-level women directly provided an opportunity for them to engage at these various levels.
- Ensure that a **method of communication** is established which is not solely dependent on the project. For example, the active online communication networks of both the DCA and AAC activities will increase the likelihood of sustainability of activities beyond the life of the project.
- All project team members can **enhance their understanding of gender**, which will help to contribute to more gender-sensitive project implementation. This can be done through sources such as regular check-ins with someone who has gender expertise, as well as training courses such as the [Gender and Environment E-Course](#).

## Integration of Women into National Strategies

One of the key results of the project has been support in developing a number of national strategies and reports, including but not exclusive to: the *Disaster Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2019-2030)*, *National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction (2019-2023)*, *National Groundwater Management Strategy*, *Standard Operating Procedures for Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems in Cambodia*, and *Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)*.

The development of these documents provided a prime opportunity to mainstream women's engagement into national strategy – however, there was limited gender mainstreaming of significance within these documents. For example, the *National Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* simply states that 'the special needs of women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly will be identified and used to inform risk reduction policy and strategy at all scales and levels', which is repeated in several formats throughout the document without providing concrete actions to be taken.



*Participants at the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction (2019-2023) consultative workshop. © Manuth Buth/UNDP Cambodia.*

The *PDNA* does specify that gender equality needs to be included as an implementation arrangement in post-disaster situations, as well as asking questions regarding how women are specifically impacted by disasters and ensuring there is gender-aggregated data. This is a positive step for integration of gender equality into national strategies.

Documents such as the *Drought Management Study* has no inclusion of gender aspects, and the *Drought Training Manual* focuses on how women and female-headed households are targeted for participation in trainings. There is an interesting statement to be observed in this manual however – in reflection on a discussion held regarding drought impacts, the statement was made that “*women, men and authorities group indicated their group were similarly affected by the climate change impact.*” This may influence decisions to strategically ensure that women’s empowerment was included or otherwise within these strategies.

The lack of mainstreaming in these national strategies could be due to a number of reasons. One reason could be a lack of gender specialists or advocates, such as UNWomen representatives or local gender-based organizations, at the events. Similarly, consultants responsible for developing these documents may not have experience of training in gender mainstreaming, therefore not seeing this as a priority. It is also possible that the need to do gender mainstreaming (as well as inclusion of other vulnerable groups such as those with disability, elderly, and children) was not explicitly included as an agenda item at consultation workshops, resulting in it being ‘missed’.

## Integration into National Strategies Lessons to be Learned

- Opportunities should be taken when working at national, sub-national and local level to **implement gender-mainstreaming into policies, strategies and activities**. As demonstrated in the AAC components, sometimes these are most successful when implemented at a grassroots level, however, there needs to be integration at national level consistent with national gender strategies. This may be done by ensuring that **gender specialists** or **advocates** are present and actively involved in consultation workshops and processes, as well as by identifying **gender inclusion and mainstreaming** as a specific agenda item at events. Similarly, it should be ensured that any consultants responsible for the development of national strategies have **training in gender mainstreaming**.

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

One of the main communication series produced under the project was ‘Climate Change Champion Profiles’, which depict short stories of Cambodians doing exceptional actions and demonstrating leadership in adaptation to climate change. Of the 27 profiles produced representing 29 individuals, 12 women were exemplified (41%). These included the stories of five Women’s Champions (Ms. Mao, Ms. Sothy, Ms. Siphon, Ms. Laykeang and Ms. Pov), two national meteorologists (Ms. Phollarath and Ms. Phalla), two local researchers (Ms. Navin and Ms. Nary), an Agricultural Cooperative leader (Ms. Ry), a commune chief (Mrs. Try Teang), and a provincial officer (Ms. Iet).

### Box 5: Why can’t we just report number of women trained?

Reporting on the number of women trained will describe how many women turned up on the day. It doesn’t, however, describe who these women are, or the actual impacts on gender equality that having this knowledge might have on both that individual and the community around them.

For example, simply reporting quantitative statistics would have missed the story of [Ms. Oak Iet](#), one of the underrepresented female population who are officials with the Provincial Department of Water Resources and Meteorology. Ms Iet manages to successfully balances both family and her daily measuring duties for the department. It also misses the story of [Ms. Nov Siphon](#), whose participation in the Actionaid Cambodia activities led to her helping a group of local women advocate for a new canal to control drought impacts. Ms. Siphon also extended her community training to an additional 10 villages, teaching many of them about gender equality and disaster risk reduction for the very first time.

Of 5 video materials produced with the project, 2 specifically addressed the topic of gender and the project (40%). [One revolved around Ms. Pak Pov](#), a participant of the AAC partnership who has since become a village chief, and centres around her views on the role of women in climate adaptation. The second [video](#) was broad overview of how addressing gender equality alongside DRR has contributed to the project.



*Some of the Women Champions trained in partnership with ActionAid Cambodia, including Ms. Pak Pov, third from the left © Kelsea Clingeleffer/UNDP Cambodia.*

### Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Lessons to be Learned

- **Listen for stories that might challenge traditional gender perspectives** and report this important qualitative data. Whilst not quite gender balanced (but almost in regards to the climate change champions), the communications of this project provided opportunities for the voices and stories of women to be heard and highlighted, particularly when working in fields that are predominantly male oriented such as meteorology and hydrology. In doing so, it is hoped that dialogue around gender involvement in these fields can begin to shift.
- **Measure more than women's participation in training.** Qualitative data doesn't have to be complicated and time-consuming. It can simply be asking questions during a training such as 'I noticed that there are many more males than females at this training. Why is that?'. This may allow an uncovering of issues that were not even realised previously. Including questions (aligned with both UNDP and GEF guidelines) which determine women's participation in decision making, natural resource ownership and access, and socio-economic benefits will create a fuller understanding of how the project has impacted gender equality.
- Ensure that gender is **included in log frames in a meaningful and relevant way**. There is no point disaggregating data if this does not represent a meaningful difference/similarity between men and women, or if it is attached to an indicator which cannot be gender disaggregated as was seen in this project.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, whilst gender was not overly well integrated throughout the project, it became more apparent as the project went on. In saying that, the gender advances that were made within the project – the Women Champions, Cambodia Women’s Resilience Index, Charter of Demands etc. – will have impacts that extend far beyond the boundaries of this project, and will influence other areas such as women’s participation in leadership, agricultural practices and so forth.

Individual results within the project can enhance learnings for improving gender equality in other projects. For example, the Cambodia Women’s Resilience Index can provide locality-specific insights into factors such as the difference between educational access, poverty, and planning process for men and women, which can be integrated into project design.

In moving forward into future projects, it is hoped that some of the lessons from this project can be considered. For example, training and empowerment of Women Champions, who can then go on to support other activities, is not exclusive to DRR but can be more generalized. Likewise, the lessons learned from DCA by hosting training in close locations and with consideration of household schedules will further enable the engagement of local women in training. Implementation of gender empowerment at national level should be of strong consideration going forward, as should support for women hoping to train in the meteorology/hydrology sector.

It is clear that in the future, projects should extend beyond simply collecting disaggregated data on how many men and women turned up at a training event, but ask questions such as why, and how does this impact women and men. In doing so, we can create stories which emphasise the humanity of the women that are part of our projects.



*Women Champions supporting a mangrove planting event. ©Manuth Buth/UNDP Cambodia.*

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## Annex 1: Questions to Be Asked During the Project

### During Project Design:

- Are gender considerations integrated in the project's design, including through a **gender analysis** with the specific context of the project for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, and a **gender action plan**, with a specific implementation plan for the delivery of gender activities with **indicators, targets, budget, timeframe and responsible party**?
- Does the project **align with national policies and strategies on gender equality**?
- Are **gender issues integrated in the project's strategy, rationale, and theory of change**, including how advancing gender equality and women's empowerment will advance the project's environmental outcomes? Identify any gaps in integrating or addressing gender issues in these areas.
- Does the project's **results framework include at least one gender responsive indicator**? Are indicators and targets sex **disaggregated**, where relevant?
- Have **adequate gender expertise** used in the design and development of the project? This could be in the form of external consultant and/or internal UNDP capacity. Identify any gaps in gender expertise.

### During Project Implementation

- To what extent was the **gender action plan and gender-related components** of the project's results framework used to **guide project implementation**?
- Was the **budget expended to deliver gender-related activities and targets** of the gender action plan sufficient?
- Were **gender-related recommendations from the mid-term review implemented**, if applicable?
- Was there **adequate gender expertise to implement and oversee** the gender-related aspects of the project? This could be within the Project Team (e.g. Project Gender Officer), implementing partners or in the UNDP Country Office. Identify any gaps and lessons learned in gender expertise.
- During implementation were there systematic and appropriate efforts **to include diverse groups of stakeholders** (e.g. women's groups)?
- Does the **location and time schedules** of training support the participation of women?
- Are gender issues **explicitly considered and discussed** in project activities?

### When Developing National Strategies

- **Are those involved in the strategy development process representative** of different gender perspectives? If not, **how likely are they to champion** these perspectives?
- Does the consultant responsible for the development of these policies have **experience or training in gender mainstreaming**?
- Do the strategies and policies include **clear, concrete actions and targets** that mainstream gender equality?

### During Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

- **What questions should be asked** during monitoring and evaluation that will help develop an understanding of gender, outside of just training numbers? For example:

- Did you find that your experience was the same, or different, to the men in your household/community? How?
  - Why were there more/less women than men involved in this training event?
- **How many women are represented** in communication materials? Are these **fair, equitable representations**, do they highlight an inequality or issue, or do they further compound traditional gender roles and stereotypes?