

GENDER ACTION PLAN

A. Introduction

1. The Periodic Financing Request 2 (PFR2) consists of six water supply subprojects for urban and peri-urban areas in six provinces: Thua Thien Hue, Da Nang, Dak Lak, Binh Duong, Hai Phong and Quang Tri, involving the construction of new water treatment plants, expansion of primary water supply networks, extension of distribution to low income areas, a metering program, an investment plan for non-revenue water (NRW) and an institutional strengthening program. The implementing agencies (IAs) will be the six water corporations in charge of water supply in these six provinces and cities.

2. In the proposed project areas, women make up more than 50% of customers. The project preparatory technical assistance (PPTA) Social Assessments reveal that, with some exceptions, women within households have greater responsibility for water than men, not only in terms of ensuring water supply for household (HH) consumption but also for using water in household chores such as cooking, washing, cleaning, and caring for the sick. Yet women have poor representation in terms of employment in the water sector as well as less ability to participate in decision-making on public issues in general and therefore, less voice in water management in particular. Moreover, within water sector, incentives and opportunities for women are few as pre-conceived notions about the suitability of men for most jobs, a small budget for staff training, and the parallel burden of housework, act to further disadvantage women. A number of women from poor HHs and especially poor women-headed HHs face problems in getting water connection to their homes due to their lack of finances. In some subprojects, women are more vulnerable to resettlement impacts due to loss of land or livelihoods.

3. Due to the project's large scale and complexity, focus will be on technical design features enhancing water supply and promoting the greater participation of women in project management. The project will have tangible and direct benefits for women and men in terms of improved water supply. The impact on women will be more positive impact due to their role in water fetching, management and use. Hence, the Project (PFR2) is categorized as Effective Gender Mainstreaming (EGM).

B. Key Strategies

4. Key strategies for promoting gender equality will be in the areas of Staffing (S), Finance (F), Training and Capacity Building (TCB), and Community Involvement (CI). The following strategies are proposed to address gender disparities in water supply and management within this project:

- (i) Increase women's participation in key decision-making and implementing structures—e.g., Resettlement Committees, Project Management Units (PMUs) and Project Steering Committees, and Community Supervision Boards—so their needs and priorities are not overlooked. (S)
- (ii) Increase number of women in water and sanitation sector. The Project should support water companies to recruit and promote women for technical and leadership positions, through equal access for women's employment and capacity building opportunities. (S)

- (iii) Encourage involvement of Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) whose members can make valuable contributions to issues and policies on supplying the poor and pricing. (S, F)
- (iv) Improve knowledge and skills of women, including those in Ward Level Supervision Boards. Provide training and capacity building activities to all but make practical provisions to encourage women to participate. (TCB, CI)
- (v) Communicate with men and women separately, through channels and at times which are suitable to either gender. Matters to consult include network system design, and water, sanitation and hygiene issues. Separate awareness materials should be developed to target women, for example about pricing and water conservation. At meetings attended by both genders, women should be invited to speak to ensure they are heard. (CI, TCB)
- (vi) Increase income opportunities for women as unskilled labor during infrastructure construction and providers of support services such as catering for construction workers. Assist water companies to develop strategies to raise the number of women employed in meter reading and billing, and employ more women in community liaison roles. (TCB, CI, S)
- (vii) Improve gender awareness at all levels in water companies, the PMUs, the subproject steering committee, and among consultants. Focus on increasing the understanding of national gender policy, relative needs of men and women vis-à-vis the existing water supply situation, climate change, and gender issues in their provinces, institutional gender issues, the proposed social strategies of the Project, and ADB gender policies. (TCB)

5. Additionally, collect sex-disaggregated data essential for planning and monitoring, particularly for assessing the progress of the Gender Action Plans (GAPs). From the start of the subprojects, systems for recording data in this format need to be established and adopted by the IAs. Such sex-disaggregated databases facilitate analysis of issues by gender, including feedback obtained through customer satisfaction surveys and assessments of the potential impacts and mitigation of climate change.

C. Project Impact

6. While men and women will gain from an improved and reliable water supply delivered by the Project, women stand to profit more because they have primary domestic responsibility for obtaining, paying for and using water. Any improvement in the availability and cost of water will be an immediate gain for them. Approximately 882,700 women will have access to better quality and reasonably priced water within their homes, thus saving time spent in collecting water of doubtful quality or money spent buying bottled water at exorbitant rates. About 536,600 women who are already piped water users will benefit from improved pressure, water availability, and security of supply. Better knowledge of pricing, conservation and quality issues will also benefit women more than men, since they deal with these issues on a daily basis.

7. Women will be empowered in making decisions about water services through participation on Community Supervision Boards, and in project management structures. Through their participation in various project structures, women, as primary users of water, will have more balanced representation on water decisions that potentially affect them.

8. Men and women in water companies will be more sensitive to gender issues in water supply. This could potentially have a wider benefit of changing the public perception of water companies and encouraging more women to work in the sector.

9. Negative impacts for women are only related to resettlement and these will be mitigated through social support programs, GAPs and Resettlement Plans. Resettlement impacts, especially permanent ones, have been avoided where possible and those remaining minimised.

D. Summary Gender Action Plan

10. The table below is a consolidated Gender Action Plan that guides subproject GAPs to address gender disparities and ensure that subprojects benefit both men and women.

Table 1: Gender Action Plan

| Project Outputs | Proposed Actions and Targets |
|--|---|
| Output 1: Increased coverage | |
| Planning and construction of water supply and distribution systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of residents within the project area consulted on construction design and planning, at least 40% are women • Direct consultations with poor women/women-headed households during planning and implementation of pro-poor water distribution systems • 100% coverage of identified poor and women-headed households by network extension • 40% female representation in Community Supervision Boards with training provided in planning and technical monitoring to all members • Equal employment opportunities and equal pay for equal work, for local women and men in project civil works • Target 40% female laborers with support of local Women's Unions • Separate women's and men's latrines at construction sites • If subsidies are extended to enable water supply access, ensure 50% recipients are women |
| Output 2: Improved business planning, asset and financial management | |
| Improve operation and maintenance, improve strategic analysis and planning of the water supply companies and effective monitoring and evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide gender awareness training for all water company and project staff to increase sensitivity on water and gender issues. • Target 30% female staff for new recruits in each PMU and water companies/enterprises, especially in technical positions. • Ensure 40% female staff participation in all training on water supply management, operations and maintenance • Partner with Women's Union in IEC planning and delivery that target both male and female residents and local authorities' representatives equally • Gender-responsive IEC materials integrating women's issues and needs, disseminated through channels accessed by women • Ensure 50% of IEC facilitators are women • During construction, inform women of water supply interruption schedules to enable better household planning and minimize disruptions • Conduct baseline and final surveys in the project area in relation to household access to water with gender and poverty as parameters • Ensure that all project reports including Project Completion Report (PCR) include analysis and reporting on progress against GAPs and on GAP budget allocation vs actual expenditure in all PFR2 subprojects. • Disaggregate customer feedback by gender for use in future planning |

| Project Outputs | Proposed Actions and Targets |
|--|---|
| | Specific Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thua Thien Hue: support women's clubs for gender and water, sanitation, hygiene awareness raising; study tours; resettlement support • Quang Tri: credit access support for household sanitation • Hai Phong: combined social support program and GAP • Dak Lak: additional gender strategies included in Resettlement Plan; special strategies to target ethnic minority women in WASH sector • Da Nang: participation of women in ward committees highlighted • Binh Duong: IEC campaign to target poor women-headed households |
| Output 3: Effective NRW reduction | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure roadmap for water tariff increase takes into consideration gender and affordability issues • Ensure appropriate monitoring mechanism for the implementation of decree 117/2007 to ensure lifeline tariff and free connections to 100% of identified poor and women-headed households in the project areas |

IEC = information, education and communication; GAP = gender action plan; PMU = project management unit; PCR = project completion report; PFR = periodic financing request; WASH = water sanitation hygiene.

E. Implementation arrangement

11. At least one PMU member in each IA will have the expertise and experience needed to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the GAP. Where necessary, external specialists may be recruited to support and build the capacity of the PMU-appointed gender focal person(s), who will also ensure that the Coordinating Agency of PFR2, viz., the Ministry of Planning and Investment, and ADB are updated regularly of all issues and progress related to the implementation of the GAPs.