



# Gender Assessment Findings & Recommendations October 2018

EU Switch Asia Project

Conducted by:  
Gender & Water Alliance - Bangladesh



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of SNV Netherlands Development Organisation and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

# Project Background



**Project Title:** Improving consumer awareness and access to certified safe tomato and mango products in Bangladesh

**Location:** Bangladesh; Regions: Dhaka, Rajshahi, Natore

**Duration:** 1 Jan 2016 = 31 Dec 2019

**Beneficiaries:** 10,000 farmers (5,000 mango farmers and 5,000 tomato farmers)

**Project partners:** Centre of Excellence for Agro Food Skills (CEAFS) and the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB)

## **3 Overall Objectives**

- O1 – Greater consumer confidence in domestically produced processed horticultural products
- O2 – Reduced food safety incidences in the domestically processed horticultural products
- O3 – Inclusive business development in the fruit and vegetable processing industry

## **1 Specific Objective**

SO – At the end of the four-year project at least 50% of the domestically processed tomato and mango products marketed and consumed in Bangladesh will be certified safe.

## **5 Expected Results**

- R1 – Consumer awareness on certified safe domestically produced mango and tomato products
- R2 – Setting (voluntary) food safety standards for the selected processed horticultural products
- R3 – Capacities of mango and tomato growers and other supply chain partners upgraded
- R4 – Independent monitoring and certification of safe production and supply arrangements
- R5 – Activities are effectively and efficiently coordinated and implemented

# Land Ownership

- Land ownership is a key reason for the low participation of women in the Farmer Groups.
- Most of the members and trainees were medium landowners (men), others were sharecroppers or leased land.
- Very few women own their own land, registered in their own name. In the few cases where women inherit from their fathers, they are usually too old to start farming themselves.
- Hindu women inherit nothing, and ethnic minorities have different rules of inheritance, which are not much in the benefit of women.
- The scope of earning opportunities for landless day labourers was mostly limited compared to all other groups, with women and ethnic minorities at the bottom of the group respectively.
- All women are primarily responsible for domestic work, which limits their earning opportunity.
- Some women have successfully cultivated mangoes on their own small area of land. One woman belonging to the Oraon minority, managed to buy some land with her savings from her work as agricultural labourer.



# Division of Task

- The study found that women do the major share of the agricultural work, especially in the first and the last phases of the production process of mangoes and tomatoes.
- Men do the farming in the field, while women carry out farming and post-harvest tasks in and around the house.
- Men farmers prepare the land, do part of the field work in the field, sell the product, either at the farm itself, or at the market, and spray the crops with pesticides, while cleaning of spraying equipment is done by women at home or by the labourers.
- Most women said that they are not involved during decision-making, and have no control over any resources. This makes their position vulnerable, and dependent on their husbands.
- Women's tasks were commonly overlooked. There was a tendency among the men to take the work women do for granted.
- Women's work includes managing the tomato nursery, preparing food for the farm labourers, sorting, grading, cleaning the harvested fruit, and packaging it for the market. Next to their agricultural work women are also responsible for all the household work, water collection, cleaning, cooking, etc.

# Capacity building

- As group membership entitles one to certain privileges, benefits, and enhanced social status, the men farmers are not keen to give these up, by letting their wives attend in their place.
- It would be more effective, efficient, sustainable and equitable to give the training regarding these subjects directly to the women farmers.
- The study identified that by excluding wives of farmers and landless labourers from the Farmer Groups, training is not reaching those persons who do the actual work at the farm level.
- If management of plant nurseries and grading is nearly always done by women, then they need to be present in the training about these subjects.
- It is of little use to impart training to men land owners who are not actually involved in farming and have a full-time job outside agriculture. All the agricultural work is then done by their wives and labourers.
- The SNV teams in Rajshahi and Natore are all male and have had no gender training.
- Recruiting qualified women in the SNV project management and field staff team would also catalyse efforts to integrate a gender approach in the project.



# Agro-processing factories

- The two agro-processing factories visited were found to be very hygienic, modern and well-managed.
- A lot of women in the region work in these factories, where otherwise there are not sufficient employment opportunities, and nearly all of the work is what the ILO denotes as decent work.
- while many women were employed as factory workers, it was men who serve as the overseers.
- In case of sexual or other harassment, the women write their complaint and put it in the Grievance Box, after which the Welfare Officer will deal with the case.
- Women constitute the majority of the floor-level workers in this factory, while men do easier work and are in a cooler environment.
- Women are viewed as less productive because they have babies and need to balance their work in the factory with their household and care-giving tasks at home.
- In both factories most women work on a daily basis, but those who have worked some years with the factory are given a permanent worker contract which entitles them to pregnancy leave with company benefits.

# Consumers

- Women consumers were found to be more concerned about food safety than men, because they considered themselves to be the manager of food security and food safety of their families.
- Most women said they were pushed by their children to buy mango and tomato juices and sauces, while others (who owned food stalls) bought them to serve to their customers, along with snacks.
- Middle-aged men and women appeared more conscious and concerned about safe food while young men and women did not bother about what processed food they ate every day, particularly snacks and drinks.
- In general, men and women had very little knowledge on processed food and its ingredients.
- Men are often responsible for doing the grocery shopping, but their wives and/or mothers instruct them on what to buy.

# Empowerment

- The report uses the **empowerment** framework for analysis to sum up the findings on the project's influence on the level of empowerment of different stakeholders.
- The findings show that the men farmers group members empower themselves mostly through the project activities, the women members somewhat less, whilst the non-member farmers and labourers are least empowered, and even disempowered by project activities.
- The impact of the project on the consumers is rather indirect, and not yet visible.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

# Staff and team

- The process of involving more women farmers would be catalysed if qualified women are recruited to strengthen the all-male teams/farmer groups of SNV.
- The Agricultural Extension Department can be asked to involve more women AOs and SAAOs in the project, who also would be helpful in selecting more women farmers as group members.





# Farmer Groups

- Conditions for group membership selection should be revised to include those who actually work in the farm, rather than those who own the land. This would open membership to many women and poorer farmers, including bargadars (sharecroppers).
- Couples should be selected for the activities instead of just involving the head of the household.
- Women-only groups will enable empowerment of women at individual and group levels. Such groups could also serve as good examples for others to follow or compete with.
- The Oraon Adivasi women, who undertake the majority of the tasks in tomato cultivation, often as sharecroppers, should be allowed to become group members. Santhal women could be group members too, or form a separate group. Adivasi women are not limited in their mobility. It is recommended to involve more women farmers from ethnic minority groups in the project, if there is scope to have more groups.

# Capacity Building

- The SNV staff in Rajshahi and Natore is genuinely interested to learn more about including gender and diversity in their work. Training and support should be provided to SNV staff through the help of a specific, practical and attainable gender action plan.
- Women farmers and the wives of the (male) farmer members need to be present during training on tasks that they usually perform. It is very inefficient to train one person, and transfer skills and technology indirectly to others.
- Labourers who do certain tasks, such as the spraying of pesticides, which is a key activity in the project, should be included in specific training sessions on these topics.
- It is crucial that the AOs are up to date about Integrated Pest Management (IPM), GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) and the gender aspects of agriculture since they provide training on these to farmers.
- Gender and diversity of people should be integrated in all the trainings organised by SNV.
- Women usually clean the pesticide tanks. Any activity in which hands come into contact with pesticides should not be done by women as they handle food, water, utensils, and look after children. This information should be shared in the training.



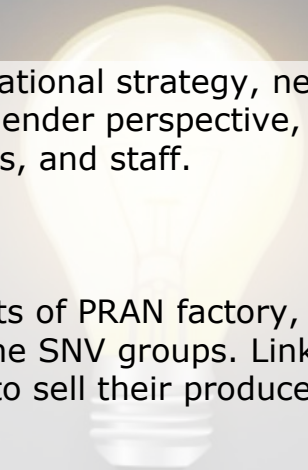
# Documentation

- A column needs to be added on the Attendance Sheet for women. This is an easy start to make all training documentation sex disaggregated.
- Gender disaggregated data collection is necessary to develop a base-line for monitoring progress on gender equality in the project.
- Indicators can include socio-economic category of households (ultra-poor, poor, non-poor), access to land of women and men, source of livelihood, education, farm work, composition of the family by sex, age, marital status, disability by sex, ethnicity, disease patterns by sex, age and class, etc. The programme can then adapt and direct specific gender-responsive interventions to people who need them the most, and involve people for whom the trainings are more relevant.
- The work of the members and of their wives are not included in the project documentation and value chain analysis. Farmers now consider the market price they receive for their produce minus the costs (of inputs and hired labour) as their profit. For a more gender-responsive and sustainable value chain analysis, the farmers should count their and their family's work and give themselves a shadow-salary, at least as much as the day-labourers get.

# Project Strategy

- A Gender Action Plan, including gender and inclusion guidelines and an operational strategy, needs to be developed for the project. The project can thus be strengthened from a gender perspective, as well as become more beneficial for member farmers (women and men), labourers, and staff.
- The project document needs gender and inclusion indicators.
- The GWA team was told in FGD that traders, vendors, buyers, and the agents of PRAN factory, form a syndicate, which exploits the farmers, even the ones who are members of the SNV groups. Linking the farmers directly to other larger (foreign) buyers would increase their scope to sell their produce at higher prices, and make the project interventions more sustainable.

Strategy





**THANK YOU!**

