

**PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN FREE, PRIOR  
AND INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC) PROCESS OF  
THE UN-REDD PROGRAMME IN VIETNAM**

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Thematic Paper  
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**ABSTRACT**

Women play a crucial role in both protecting and managing forest resources. They have different roles, responsibilities, rights, needs and knowledge from men that could facilitate the sustainability and success of the REDD+ projects and programmes on the ground. To avoid future conflicts and unforeseen risks, their rights and responsibilities to land and forest resources need to be carefully considered. In line with this, the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme in 2010 has addressed the gender component by ensuring the participation of women in the decision making processes to reduce the emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in their community. However, the number of women participation cannot be considered as the effective and meaningful participation since women are to be involved in decision making in the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) process. Thus, this paper explores the participation of women in awareness raising events and village meetings in order to get the free, prior and informed consent from local people for the UN-REDD Programme in Vietnam. It also identifies the impediments for women's participation through consultation with experts who had facilitated the FPIC process in Vietnam.

**KEY WORDS: FREE PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC)/ WOMEN PARTICIPATION/ HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH/ FOREST MANAGEMENT/ AWARENESS**

35 pages

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CC	Climate Change
CERD	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination
COP	Conference of the Parties
ECSR	International Covenant on Economic, Civil and Social Rights
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
ILO 169	Convention on the Rights of Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries
RECOFTC	The Center for Peoples and Forest
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Forest ecosystem is considered as the major contributors to the global terrestrial carbon sink, which absorbs about 30 % of all carbon dioxide emissions every year (Canadell & Raupach 2008). The loss of natural forests through deforestation and degradation is estimated to contribute approximately 17 % of total global carbon emissions (UN-REDD Programme 2011). The Bali Action Plan that emerged from the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2007 confirmed the need to take action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. In recent times Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) mechanisms are underway in many countries to properly conserve and manage forest resources and enhance the carbon stocks. 'REDD+' goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (Gurung & Setyowati 2012). The UN-REDD Programme (2011) states REDD+ is an effort to implement policies and measures and create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives and building capacity for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands through sustainable forest management.

Men and women often have different roles, responsibilities, rights, usage patterns and concerns when it comes to forest management. These differences in needs, uses and knowledge of natural resources allow them to have different preferences for particular forest products. Men are generally dependent on forest products such as timber which are occasionally needed and can also be purchased easily (Agarwal 2009). Studies have shown that women are mainly involved in harvesting of forest resources for daily needs, firewood, fodder, and leaf litter (Agarwal 1997). Due to these and related reasons, women are considered as the key

player for proper conserving and managing forest resources. Despite the significant role of women in using forest resources, their consent has hardly been taken and their role in forest management has not been fully recognized. The UN-REDD Programme (2011) has put some light on the gender inequality issue that still prevails in forest management regardless of long-standing conventions, treaties and other instruments of international human rights law. As a result of such inequalities, women might not receive the actual benefits from the mitigation measures like REDD which basically provides incentives for better management and conservation of the forest resources. The gender-differentiated impacts of REDD+ in terms of increased negative consequences have still paid little attention. REDD has contributed to increase the workloads especially for rural women who are primary users of forest resources to earn their livelihood. Different factors such as climate variability, climate induced risks of natural disasters and change in crop production etc. make women more vulnerable as they often lose their means of livelihood. Women are considered to be more susceptible to the impacts of climate change as well. Development practitioners and policy makers have realized that inequitable distribution of benefits from REDD and excluding a large proportion of forest users and managers including women from meaningful participation in decision making may not achieve the anticipated outcomes under planned REDD initiatives or may require further efforts to deal with forest management (Behrman et al. 2011). Women participation is not only important to take into account their needs and interests but it also ensures the equitable benefit sharing among all stakeholders, raise the self-esteem of women, improved livelihood standards etc. Also, it has been found that the key to involving women in forestry projects is to identify their potential in forest management (Kumar et al. 2000).

Therefore, it is imperative to include local women in decision making processes to have their voices heard while designing and implementing any programmes or activities at community level. Studies have also shown that if women are to be involved in any programmes from the beginning, it might lead to the successful completion of such programmes. Yet in the growing level of concerns on gender perspective in forest management, it mainly focuses on women's limited presence and participation in management bodies and on effects of gender equity (Agarwal 2002). However, it largely overlooks the issues of consent taking, quality

participation of women and gender related impacts in forest management. Thus, this paper identifies the participation of women in one of the UN-REDD Programme country action programmes on applying FPIC Principles in Vietnam. It mainly looks upon the meaningful participation of women in FPIC process through their quality involvement in village meetings and awareness raising events. It also highlights some of the constraints to women participation that occur in forest management. As women being primary forest consumers, taking consent from them prior to design and implement the REDD+ initiatives can undoubtedly reduce the risk of failure of such initiatives at community level.

### **1.1.1 Overview of the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme**

The UN-REDD Programme has started the ‘country actions programme’ in nine pilot countries including Vietnam. It has designed and implemented Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process, one of its national REDD+ programmes in Vietnam and Indonesia to seek the consent of people at the community level and subsequently starting in other countries as well. In the case of Vietnam, the programme was hosted by the Ministry of agriculture and Rural Development and was implemented by the General Department of Forestry (GDF). The main objective of this programme is to assist the Vietnamese Government to develop effective REDD+ frameworks so as to reduce the impacts of green house gases emissions and climate change. It had pioneered the FPIC process in Vietnam in 2010 depending upon its ‘guidelines on stakeholder engagement in REDD+ Readiness’<sup>1</sup> naming ‘UN-REDD Vietnam Programme’. The principle of FPIC is considered to be important to uphold the human rights of indigenous peoples and local communities where the proponent is going to initiate any development projects (Casas 2004). The UN-REDD Programme (2010) states that its approach to FPIC is consistent with international human rights instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and reveals the draft UNFCCC CoP15 AWGLCA text which recognizes the need for full and effective engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities

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<sup>1</sup> The Joint Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and UN-REDD Stakeholder engagement guidelines give focus on participation of indigenous people and other forest stakeholders to sustainably manage the forest resources. It can be found at [http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=1120&Itemid=53](http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=1120&Itemid=53)

including women in REDD+. Furthermore, taking consent explicitly involves the inclusion of a gender perspective and the participation of indigenous women (UNPFII 2005).

Forest resources in Vietnam have endured dramatic changes over the passage of time. In 2008, Vietnam covered 19.2 million hectares of forest land out of which only 13.1 million hectares was forested (including 10.3 million ha of natural forest and 2.8 million ha of plantation forest) with the rest consisting of bare hillsides and barren lands (UN-REDD Programme 2010). The report prepared by the Center for Sustainable Development in the Mountainous Regions (CSDM) shows that between 1995 and 2005, the area of the natural rich forest decreased by 10.2 % and medium forest reduced by 13.4 %. It also mentions that due to deforestation and forest degradation of both timber and non-timber products, there is decrease in forest quality and biodiversity. Therefore, there is a need to address REDD issues that relate to sustainable forest management and conservation of natural resources in Vietnam. For that reason, the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme is the first attempt for applying FPIC principles that enhance the understanding and awareness among indigenous people and other forest dependent communities to implement REDD+ projects and programmes.

The UN-REDD Programme (2010) have also reported that Vietnam population consists of 53 minority groups which includes around 16 million people, most of them live near the forest areas and consume forest products. In the process of implementing the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, attitude of different stakeholders and their engagement was explored through consultation with community people. For this purpose, the UN-REDD Programme had first chosen two districts Lam Ha and Di Linh in the central highlands of the Lam Dong province in order to identify the ways in which local forest can be conserved and the amount of carbon dioxide emitted in air can be reduced. The reason behind choosing Lam Dong province was its diversity in ethnicity (approximately 40 ethnic minorities are found there). Likewise, Di Lihn and Lam Ha districts of Lam Dong province are also considered as rich in cultural identities and forests resources. However, there is a rapid degradation of forest lands for agriculture, extraction of fodder, illegal logging etc. which is a common practice among low income people who are directly dependent on forest resources for their

subsistence. Therefore, awareness on REDD and climate change seems meaningful in these areas to control further destruction of forest resources and reduction in the amount of carbon dioxide released in air. As women play an imperative role in forest management, incorporating gender perspectives in FPIC process could significantly contribute to the livelihood of people in Vietnam.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Though the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) has established a framework to protect the rights of indigenous people including women, simply presuming that the right of women can be protected through the protection of indigenous people's rights and other local communities may not be pertinent in all cases. Despite several decades of forestry policies and programmes in forest management, gender inequality still exists and women are marginalized or disadvantaged within their own communities. There may be several impediments which obstruct women's ability for free expressions in public meetings and their active role in decision making processes such as social and cultural structures, low literacy rates, lack of information flow, little or no access to legal processes etc. As a result women may not always participate equally in village meetings, community consultations, decision making processes and hardly raise their issues and concerns in public. Gurung and Setyowati (2012) utter that even in the case of REDD+ plans, policies and projects, there is a complete neglect of gender issues and women's roles as stakeholders which has raised the question of programme's success and sustainability.

Thus, there is a need to analyze the REDD+ initiatives through a gender perspective. In the case of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, studies have shown that it has set an example by addressing the gender component through the higher level of participation of women however, the quality of participation still needs to be reviewed. Though the independent evaluation of FPIC process in Vietnam has been conducted, there is no mention on the report regarding analysis of process through the gender perspective in applying 8-Steps FPIC principles. As women are major stakeholders of forest management, an evaluation considering their meaningful participation may help

the UN-REDD Programme and other development organizations to review their FPIC strategies so as to make FPIC principles more gender inclusive and result oriented. Thus, this study explores the women participation in the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme for the greater good of the all FPIC stakeholders. Also, it looks at the meaningful participation of women in FPIC process especially in village meetings and awareness raising activities.

### **1.3 Rationale of the Study**

Men and women have different interests, needs, roles and responsibilities. Even in forest management, their roles and responsibilities vary depending upon the extent of using and managing forest resources. Different studies have shown that discussion on REDD+ initiatives hardly consider gender issues and if considered, has not structurally incorporated in all its plans, policies and projects. But for the effective implication of the principles of FPIC, it is important that development agencies involve indigenous people and other forest dependent groups including women in decision making in order to mitigate the negative consequences in the livelihood of people (Masaki 2009). So, it is crucial to take into account the differences between men and women while designing and implementing REDD+ projects or programmes on the ground. The experience from the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme has showed that applying the FPIC principles effectively on the ground simply require the active involvement of the indigenous people, forest dependent communities along with active participation of women. Thus, this study provides information on how participation of women is taken into account by the UN-REDD Programme in community consultation and decision making in FPIC process in Vietnam. It basically looks upon the different steps in FPIC process in the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and analyses the quality of participation of women in those steps.

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

- To analyze the gender participation in the FPIC process of the UN-REDD Programme in Vietnam.
- To assess the participation of women in community consultation and in decision making.
- To identify the impediments for women stakeholders to participate in the FPIC process if any.

## **1.5 Methodology**

This study especially looks into the participation of women in the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme which was implemented in two districts namely- Lam Ha and Di Lihn in 2010. The study used the secondary data analysis using existing dataset which has previously been collected on FPIC process and gender dimensions in applying FPIC principles. The researcher used both internal data i.e. those inside the organization like organization's reports and files and external data such as electronic databases like scholarly journals, articles and reports, libraries and websites. The data thus collected was supplemented with the help of four expert interviews.

Through the referral from the UN-REDD Regional Coordinator, purposively four experts were selected that included the UN-REDD Vietnam Coordinator (worked as the team leader for the FPIC process), RECOFTC Vietnam Coordinator and two Consultants who had facilitated during the FPIC process in Vietnam. The consultants basically work at the Department of Environmental Science at the University of Dalat, Vietnam so their contribution was believed to be helpful in providing relevant information on the given contexts. The personal email was asked from the informants for further communication. As they agreed to be the participants, the same open ended questionnaire (see Appendix) was sent to all the informants through email. Since, the interview was through email, informants were free to respond on the given open ended questions from their convenient location. It was easy for keeping the record of responses as the informants answered the given open ended

questions and sent back to the researcher through email. In this regard, data was kept at least for two months, especially after the written interview and discussion of findings were done. Then, data was destroyed through deletion and formatting. A month was given to respond on the open ended questions to the agreed informants.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study mainly looks upon the quality participation of women in awareness raising events and village meetings in the FPIC process of the UN-REDD Programme that had implemented in 2010. As women play a decisive role in forest management, low or passive participation of women in different forest management practices might hinder the long-term success of such initiatives. Thus, it is imperative to obtain the quality participation of women in all REDD+ activities throughout the programme designing and implementation levels. Though the present study yielded some preliminary findings on women participation in awareness raising events and village meetings, further research are required to see different forms of participation of women and how the participation in FPIC process help them to improve their capacity to manage REDD and climate change.

It basically used the secondary data analysis and the data thus collected were validated with the help of four experts. Experts were purposively selected who basically worked as consultants for the entire FPIC process. This study relies on interviews with four experts in a very limited time. Also, language barrier was viewed as another limitation during the selection of experts due to which only four experts were selected. Furthermore, there was no direct interaction with communes in Di Linh and Lam Ha districts, thus the findings are limited. It is obvious that there is a need to analyze the whole process through a gender perspective. Also, an in-depth study is required using women informants who had participated in the process to get their opinion on how they see the overall FPIC process and what should be further incorporated to make it gender inclusive.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Elements of FPIC

Free: a process that is self-directed by the indigenous people and other forest dependent community. The consent to be sought should be free of coercion, corruption, interference and external pressure.

Prior: mutually agreed period of time in advance of an activity or process when consent should be sought as well as the period between when consent is sought and when consent is given or withhold.

Informed: the type of information that should be provided prior to seeking consent and also as part of the ongoing consent process

Consent: customary decisions made by indigenous people and other forest dependent communities reached through their socio-cultural decision making process. It is a freely given decision given by the community on those issues that matter them.

From: UN-REDD Programme, 2010, Guidelines on Free, Prior and Informed

Consent, see

[http://www.unredd.org/Stakeholder\\_Engagement/Guidelines\\_on\\_FPIC/tabid/55718/Default.aspx](http://www.unredd.org/Stakeholder_Engagement/Guidelines_on_FPIC/tabid/55718/Default.aspx)

#### 2.2 Legal Framework of FPIC with Gender Dimensions in REDD+

Below are the specific obligations that basically address the right to FPIC including gender-:

**International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR)** - Article 1 of the ESCR states the right to self-determination. Self-determination is considered to be the fundamental right of all individuals. The right to self-determination is also meant to be the starting point to require FPIC from the

indigenous people and the community (including women) as a whole. The principle of FPIC thus ensures the right to self-determination of indigenous people and other forest dependent communities including women to have an access and ownership over their lands and resources.

**United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)** -The UNDRIP contains a number of provisions on FPIC including relocation from lands and territories (Article 10), make use of cultural such as archeological and historical (Article 11), adoption and implementation of any legislative and administrative measures (Article 19), storage or disposal of hazardous materials (Article 29), military activities (Article 30) and utilization and exploitation of mineral, water and other resources (Article 32). The Article 22 of this Declaration explicitly states that particular attention should be paid to vulnerable groups such as women, elderly people, youth, children and person with disabilities. In addition, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stresses the need to consider the valuable contribution and rights of indigenous women to address their vulnerable situation.

**ILO 169, Convention on the Rights of Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries**- The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 on the Rights of Tribal Peoples in independent countries is the first law that refers to FPIC. It is the main binding international instrument that provides the human rights based approach to deal with the right of indigenous peoples. The Article 3 (1) of the Convention explicitly states that it shall be applied to both men and women members of indigenous tribal population.

**Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** - The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has also recognized FPIC principle in response to benefit sharing of genetic resources (World Resource Institute 2005). Casas (2004) states that FPIC under the CBD is projected to facilitate a transparent exchange of information and aids in achieving conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing between men and women . As stated in its Preamble, it also considers the full participation of women at all levels of policy making and implementation.

**Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), 1965**- The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) also

made the general recommendations on State obligations and indigenous rights to ensure that members of indigenous peoples have rights in respect of effective participation in public life and that no decisions directly relating to their rights and interests are taken without their informed consent (CERD 1997). The general recommendation no. 25 i.e. gender related dimensions of racial discrimination ensures that gender-related impediments such as gender biasness and discrimination of women in private sphere of life should be eliminated (CERD 2003).

**UN-REDD Programme's Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria-** Principle 2, Criterion 8 under the UN-REDD Programme's Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria ensures the promotion and enhancement of gender equality, equity and women's empowerment. The criterion 9 specifically refers to seeking FPIC of indigenous peoples and other forest dependent communities including indigenous women during project implementation.

**United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples Issues, 2008-** In line with the legal obligations, United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples Issues (UNDG) 2008 provide the basic guidelines to mainstream and integrate indigenous people's issues in planning, implementing and evaluating the programmes and operational activities. It also emphasizes on application of the principle of FPIC in development planning and programming giving due consideration to indigenous women's rights, empowerment and gender equality.

**Cancun Agreements decision on REDD+ Projects-** In the context of REDD+, the Cancun Agreements decision on REDD+ Projects provides the basis to apply FPIC by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws and requesting the state parties to respect the rights and knowledge of indigenous peoples (UNFCCC 2012). These agreements explicitly link gender to vulnerability and identify gender equality and the effective participation of women as being important for effective action on all aspects of climate change.<sup>1</sup> It also requests the developing parties to consider gender while developing and implementing national strategies and action plans.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://unfccc.int/documentation/decisions/items/3597.php?dec=j&such=j&cp=/CP#be>

### **2.3 FPIC right in REDD+**

FPIC is a collective right recognized in international laws and is included in national laws in some countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Venezuela, Peru and in some parts of Australia for all activities affecting the lands and territories of people (Hill, Lillywhite & Simon 2010). FPIC also involves the implementation of risk analysis, project design and management, participatory agreement of compensation if the proposed project brings any negative consequences (Sanit Watch 2012). Earlier the concept of FPIC was basically used in the context of communities affected by mining process however, in today's context this principle is largely used in different development projects such as in the construction of hydro power dams, building the roads, allowing logging in forest areas traditionally owned by indigenous peoples, tourism development projects etc (World Resource Institute 2005). It is a process to negotiate with local communities who have land ownerships to resolve the pertained disputes. The report prepared by the World Commission of Dams in 2000 found that dam projects do not consider its impacts on gender during the designing and implementation stages. It also reveals that women in affected communities have less access to the benefits and employment opportunities provided by dams as compared to men. It has been seen that not recognizing the right to FPIC prior to initiate any projects may lead to project failure or conflicts where proponents misinform or mislead the local communities who are the owners of lands and have the tenure rights. As large dams have different social, economical and environmental impacts, exclusion of women from such projects can bring the negative impacts and may affect the long-term success of large development projects.

Respecting the right to FPIC is, by definition, a locally and culturally specific process in which the affected communities themselves determine the steps involved (RECOFTC 2012). While implementation of REDD+ projects and programmes are in initial stage in many countries, consultation and stakeholders engagement at the grassroots level seem to be promising tools for the sustainability of such REDD+ activities. FPIC recognizes indigenous peoples and other local communities inherent and prior rights to their lands and resources and respects their legitimate authority as owners of the lands where the third parties should maintain an equal and respectful relationship with them (Commission on Human Rights 2004). It

is based upon the principle that the community or the local people who customarily owns or occupy the land have the right to give or withhold their consent on any proposed REDD+ programmes or initiatives that may affect their land and livelihood. As communities are never homogenous, it is essential to figure out an effective mechanism that could address the needs and interests of whole community especially for REDD+ that aims to compensate for reducing the amount of carbon dioxide released in air.

FPIC is considered to be a fundamental part of the Human Rights based Approach where indigenous people and other forest dependent groups including women are expected to have the ownership of the projects in their community. Anderson (2011) mentions that the communities affected by REDD+ projects have rights to give or withhold their consent under the international conventions, national laws, voluntary industry standards etc for the field activities or policy and management changes involved in a REDD+ project or programmes. So prior to project implementation, seeking consent from indigenous peoples, forest dependent groups including women and respecting the decision taken (whether consent is given or withheld) can ultimately prevent the future risks and project failures.

There are some examples of projects failure especially in the case of Nepal and India where the reforestation projects which exclude women from forest management have faced problems while plantation, forest protection and forest policies implementation thus, ultimately affect the long term feasibility of those projects (Agarwal 2002). Another important example is from Dayak Hibun, Indonesia where 518 cases of conflicts have been recorded between local people and the Sawit Plantation Development as little attention has been paid to the informed consent, gender implications of oil palm plantation expansion or corporate land grabbing (White & White 2011). On the other hand independent studies have shown that conservation projects with good consultation and partnerships with forest stakeholders and indigenous peoples are mutually beneficial and have accomplished good results. Thus, to avoid future conflicts the REDD+ initiatives should be informed and consulted beforehand to the local communities.

## 2.4 Right to FPIC for Women participation in REDD+

According to World Bank (1994), *'Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them'*. Participation is sometimes difficult but the rewards of truly participatory processes can be impressive, particularly if forests are conserved effectively (Lutz & Caldecott 1996). As mentioned in Agarwal (2001), participation can have range of levels and participation of local communities living around the forest areas can ensure sustainable outcomes. She has outlined a typology of participation as presented in table 2.4 to understand the level and quality of participation of local communities for forest management.

**Table 2.1: Typology of participation (Agarwal 2001)**

<b>Form/level of participation</b>	<b>Characteristics features</b>
Nominal participation	Membership in the group
Passive participation	Being informed of decisions, ex post factor or attending meetings and listening in on decision-making without speaking up
Consultative participation	Being asked opinions in specific matters without guarantee of influencing decisions
Activity specific participation	Being asked to (or volunteering to) undertake specific tasks
Active participation	Expressing opinions whether or not solicited, or taking initiatives of other sorts
Interactive (empowering) participation	Having voice and influence in the group's decisions

The participation could be considered meaningful when it goes from lower to higher level leading to empower the participants. Full and effective participation in REDD+ projects and programmes may lead to decrease in forest deforestation and degradation. To acquire the right to FPIC, informed participation (where the information regarding the planned projects is made available) takes place and community people are involved throughout the project organization and decision

making processes. Nevertheless, the gender component in forest management could not be avoided as it influences many aspects in the sustainable forest management practices. Women's rights to resources through forest tenure can be a very important step in achieving social and environmental sustainability, as well as efficient production of forest products and social justice (Giri 2012).

Women's participation in the context of forest management is the process of inclusion and involvement of women for the management of forest resources that aims to increase the forest productivity in a sustainable, equitable and inclusive way (Kafle 2011). Women being primary consumer of forest resources are highly dependent on forest products for their families' subsistence. Thus, assumptions can be made that if women's roles, rights and responsibilities are being neglected, there could be possibilities for REDD+ projects to marginalize them. Hence, there is an urgent need to consider women's needs and interests that will increase effectiveness of REDD+ through reducing later disputes.

There are several factors that could limit the participation of women in decision making and forest management practices such as social norms, the gendered division of labor and gendered behavioral norms, as well as gendered spaces and species (Howard & Nabanoga 2007). The participation of men and women in forest management varies depending upon class and caste as well. It has been also found that local elite and village leaders (usually men) dominate the decision making processes and tend to take charge of village meetings and leadership, as a result the marginalized groups like women and indigenous peoples remain un-benefited (Lama and Buchy 2002). Such a position also prevents them from voicing their opinions and interests in public meetings and programmes (NACFP 1997 as cited in Lama and Buchy 2002). Also, it brings negative impacts to protect forest resources as women are more likely to involve in harvesting fuel food and other forest products for their families subsistence. Thus, the fact cannot be denied that in most of the cases inequality still prevails and women participation is limited to attendance and passive engagement and men are mostly the decision makers.

In Vietnam, the gender issues have either not been considered, or if considered, have not been systematically incorporated within project objectives and activities of the projects reviewed, including those of the UN-REDD Programme

(Gurung and Setyowati 2012). Even the UN-REDD Programme (2011) has highlighted that issue that the policy makers and programmers lack the evidence base from which to understand the gendered dimensions of resource use, needs, access and knowledge. Women's recognition as forest manager provides critical spaces for women to gain experience and confidence, lack of providing such recognition could make it difficult for countries to make REDD+ effective and sustainable. Thus, at this point of time there are two options left for REDD+ initiatives either it can further marginalize the women within their own community or integrate women's roles and responsibilities in all its plans and policies and pave the way for sustainable forest management.

Nevertheless, some previous studies have shown that women's inclusion in forest management and their effective participation in decision making can lead to improve forest governance and resource sustainability (Mai, Mwangi & Wan 2011). Acharya and Gentle (2006) have also noted positive changes in community forest user groups in Nepal when women participated and held key decision-making positions in the groups. Participation can also reduce several other aspects of gender inequities in cost and benefits (Agarwal 2001). Indeed, Agarwal (2010) found that active participation (such as attending meetings, consultation and speaking out their issues and concerns) is a necessary intermediate step for women to influence decisions. Moreover, full and effective participation of women also boost up their confidence and ultimately leads to their empowerment. Having facts that the participation of women in forest management brings positive changes, implementation of FPIC process requires more and more participation of women to have their voices heard in a wider sphere.

As Moser (1993) suggested, women's practical needs (that is, needs arising from actual conditions in women's engendered position) should be addressed first if the strategic needs (that is, those arising from the analysis of women's subordination to men) are to be fulfilled. Thus, land rights are rights of women and failure to access this right may give rise to issues like protection, security etc. which further leads to struggles among local people and creates unwanted conflicts. Thus, one of the pitfalls of FPIC especially include exclusion of gender including failure to provide women's tenure rights, lack of gendered division of labor, lack of

opportunities for women in community consultation and meetings, lack of employment opportunities, unequal benefit distribution and so on. Therefore, it is important for the REDD+ projects and programmes to address the gender dimensions and incorporate it in all activities at local, sub-national and national levels. It has been found that especially the rural women have an imperative role in the forestry sector since they are directly engaged in the extraction of forest resources for food, fuel wood, fodder etc. and also in selling these products to sustain their livelihoods (Gurung et al. 2011). Apparently, they are the ones who are more likely to be affected by REDD+ activities. Thus, the participation of women is very crucial in programme organization and decision making in any matters that may affect them and can contribute to reduce the future conflicts.

## CHAPTER III

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Participation of Women in UN-REDD Vietnam Programme

Till date only the UN-REDD Programme and SNV REDD+ Pro-poor project have conducted FPIC process in Lam Dong province in Vietnam. In the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, FPIC had been implemented through 8 steps process including 3 phases- 1st phase covers 22 villages, 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase covers 31 villages and 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase covers 25 villages in Lam Ha and Di Linh districts. Table 3.1 below presents the total number of participants in three 3 phases in both the districts. The table clearly shows that the participation of women was considerable in all three phases in both the districts in the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme. Looking at the data presented in table 3.1, the total percentage of women participation in all three phases was 51.6 whereas men participation was 48.4. Thus, it can be simply assumed that the participation of women (in number) was sufficient during all three phases however, there is no evidence on how the participation has helped the women beyond this stage, either in the form of raising their awareness or capacity development activities.

**Table 3.1: Synthesis of FPIC in Villages of Lam Ha and Di Linh Districts<sup>1</sup>**

Location	Total house holds	Number/ % of participants	Age group			Sex		Ethnic minority		Voting		
			15-25	26-45	>46	Male	Female	Kinh	K'Ho, Ma, others	Consent votes	Non-consent votes	No voting
Lam Ha Phase 1 (*)	2,192	935	*	*	*	516	419	285	650			
Ratio of Lam Ha Phase 1		42.7%	11%	49%	40%	55.2%	44.8%	30.5%	69.5%	92%	4%	5%
Lam Ha phase 2	2,304	1,295	103	711	476	620	675	672	623	1,197	6	57
Ratio of Lam Ha		56.2%	8.0%	54.9%	36.8%	47.9%	52.1%	51.9%	48.1%	92.4%	0.5%	4.4%

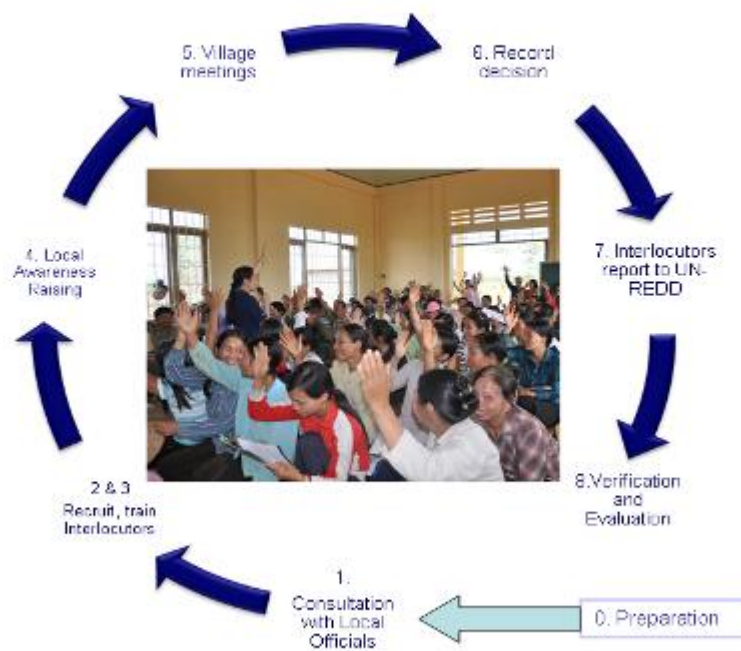
<sup>1</sup> UN-REDD Programme, 2010, pp. 39.

<b>Phase 2</b>								%				
<b>Lam Ha phase 3</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Ratio of Lam Ha phase 3</b>		63.9%	9.4%	51.1%	39.6%	52.0%	48.0%	73.0%	27.0%	93.3%	2.9%	3.8%
<b>Di Linh phase 1(*)</b>	811	454	46	149	132	132	322	60	394			
<b>Ratio of Di Linh đợt 1</b>		56%	14%	46%	40%	26.9%	73.1%	13.2%	86.8%	95%	2%	3%
<b>Di Linh phase 2</b>	1,605	1,014	165	523	326	538	476	31	981	902	41	71
<b>Ratio of Di Linh phase 2</b>		63.2%	16.3%	51.6%	32.1%	53.1%	46.9%	3.0%	97.0%	89.0%	4.0%	7.0%
<b>Di Linh phase 3</b>	<b>2,982</b>	<b>1,642</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>1,527</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Ratio of Di Linh phase 3</b>		55.1%	14.19%	51.64%	34.29%	46.41%	53.59%	23.6%	76.4%	93.0%	2.7%	4.3%
<b>Total 2 districts for 3 phases</b>	10,712	5,863	596	2,498	1,704	2,840	3,023	1,818	4,043	4,114	107	218
<b>Rate for 3 phases</b>		54.7%	10.2%	42.6%	29.1%	48.4%	51.6%	31.0%	69.0%	70.2%	1.8%	3.7%

Likewise, Gurung and Setyowati (2012) noted that the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme has addressed the gender issues by ensuring significant women participation and invited the members of Women's Union into awareness events but they also mentioned the programme reviewed is limited to the number of participation of men and women in the activities and also lacks in approaches to ensure the strategic needs and interests of women. It was also found that the level of understanding among participants (including women) was limited to the forest management and there was a lack of comprehensive understanding of issues like REDD and climate change. Depending upon Agarwal (2001) typology of participation, the participation of women in the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme seemed consultative as women asked their issues and concerns through small group discussions however, it did not influence the quality of consent given by them because FPIC was piloted for the first time in that province and the programme was conducted for a short duration of time. The lack of education, patriarchal culture and other religious practices limit the participation of

women and leave the narrow space for them to be outspoken in such types of programmes. Even, in the FPIC process, some women were found to be illiterate and were not able to communicate other than in their own language. Thus, it was hard for them to understand the issues like REDD+ framework, its risks and benefits which were considered as major barriers for their effective participation.

## 8 steps in line with FPIC principles



**Figure 3.1: 8 – Steps in line with FPIC principles (UN-REDD Programme, 2010)**

Since this paper basically looks upon the participation of women in village meetings and discussions, the special focus has been given to village meeting phase (step 5) as it is the critical phase of the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme. In other than this step, gender consideration has been generally discussed. In the preparatory step of applying FPIC process in Lam Dong Province, legal grounds for village level FPIC activities were gathered and communication materials were first prepared. The gender dimensions in Vietnam was also analyzed which carefully reviewed the Law on Gender Equality, 2006 and other existing legal structures to ensure the good practices and minimize the discrimination throughout the programme. Communication materials

were also prepared carefully in two languages, Vietnamese and K' ho and written in simple languages in order to avoid the difficulty in understanding the issues as most of the people were not much educated including women. Moreover, the experts consulted shared the similar opinion that the ethnic people in the pilot areas follow matrilineal practice and this point was taken into account at the design of FPIC process. In the first step, consultation took place with relevant authorities at provincial/district levels about FPIC implementation. Steps 2 and 3 mainly focused on the recruitment and training of interlocutors. Twenty four interlocutors were selected that consisted of eleven women, eight ethnic people who were basically the lecturers of Da Lat University and workers of Boudip National Park and provincial Silvicultural Research Experiment Centre for the facilitation of FPIC process implementation. In step 4, village heads and villagers were contacted for preparation of FPIC meetings through different awareness raising programs such as leaflets distribution, posters presentation and interaction with villagers. During the awareness raising step on climate change and REDD in the local communities, firstly interlocutors had set up meetings with local government of both the provinces (Di Linh and Lam Ha) and then to the communes including village heads for further activities. Interlocutors in consultation with village heads had conducted local awareness-raising activities and facilitate an agreed number of village meetings in each village, where the decision on whether or not to give consent was recorded. The significance of climate change (CC), Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and the expected UN-REDD activities were explained to the communes by interlocutors.

As FPIC has been undertaken to ensure the participation in decision making, the step 5 is the most important phase of the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme where village meetings had conducted and local people including indigenous people, other forest dependent groups, women had shown their participation. According to all four experts, the UN-REDD Programme had provided opportunity for indigenous peoples including women to participate in the FPIC process and understand the issues like climate change and REDD. They were free to participate in the meetings and other activities despite of their gender, age and social status. They also asserted that the participation in the FPIC process was not imposed to village people; they were free to give decision on what they agreed upon. Based on the desk research and

questionnaire survey with the experts, some preliminary findings on women participation (further study is needed) has been divided into three parts as presented below-:

### **3.2 Women participation in local awareness raising events and village meetings**

It was found that the participation of women in awareness raising events to village meetings was significant (51.6 % were women). However, the number of women participation and their command in household decisions should not be considered as the measures to see the accomplishment of the projects because even in such cases there could be the possibility of having passive participation where women just participate and do not show any influence in the decisions made. All the experts consulted shared more or less similar opinions that the UN-REDD Programme tried to best involve women in all activities from awareness raising events to village meetings however, women were hesitant to express their views in public and were comfortable to share their concerns through small group discussion. As women are mostly responsible to fulfill the subsistence need of their families, they are generally responsible to harvest forest products such as collection of fuel woods, fodder for livestock, livestock grazing, food products etc. So, it is also essential to pay specific attention on their specific roles, responsibilities, requirements and contributions especially in the FPIC process to facilitate the long term success of REDD+ projects. As the village meetings were conducted for all participants to attend, it might have been difficult for women to raise their issues and concerns in public due to several social and cultural aspects. As women are key players for effective forest management and their roles and contributions can be avoided, the Programme should have prepared alternative options for specific group discussions or meetings for men and women in case such meetings were needed. Also, approaches should be made that ensures the strategic needs and concerns of women into REDD+ projects or programmes.

### **3.3 Impediments for the Women Participation**

The areas where FPIC had been piloted basically follow matriarchy thus women have excessive workloads and are basically busy with household and other farm works. Thus, heavy workload was found as the major barrier for women participation. Though there was no reluctance to participate in the awareness raising events and village meetings, women were often late to the meetings due to household chores and other responsibilities. Especially in the high seasons, it is very hard for women to arrange time for other activities rather than being in farm. Keeping that fact in mind, the Programme had organized some of its meetings in the evening to facilitate more and more participation of women which sheds light on the fact that the Vietnam UN-REDD Programme was gender inclusive and participation of women was considered. Thus, it is very important to study the season where there is less workload for villagers including women and they don't have to spend much time in the fields so that they can easily devote their time for participation in such initiatives. Also, there is no information on how the REDD+ projects might impact their current workloads as these projects might increase the time and distance to collect fuel wood and fodder for women. Hence, it is also imperative to check the anticipated impacts of the REDD+ projects on livelihood of local people including women. As awareness on REDD and climate change is an important matter, meetings and awareness programmes should be organized the ways in which women can easily attend through reducing their workloads to meet their families subsistence as women's meaningful participation in awareness raising events and consultations develop their understanding on REDD+ related issues and enhance the decision making capabilities.

### **3.4 Awareness on CC and REDD**

As mentioned in RECOFTC's evaluation and verification report, 2011 and on the basis of views of consulted experts, it was obtained that the time allocated for the village meetings and discussion were too short and even the provided information was not enough for the communes to understand. Though several causes and consequences of climate change and REDD was briefly explained to the participants

including women through power point presentation, posters, documents etc, it was also found that most of people who gave their consent were not clear on what they were agreed upon. In line with this, several drawbacks of the Vietnam UN-REDD Programme such as the time allocated for the village meetings were too short (2 hours meeting for awareness raising and 45 minutes for question and answer session before making the decision) due to which it is hard to figure out whether the participants really understood the issues explained by the facilitation team. Also, lack of information flow regarding the risks and cost associated with their participation in the programme was not explained and enough time was not given to discuss the issues among them before making the decision or giving their consent.

The dissemination of relevant information on risks and costs might help the participants including women to understand the UN-REDD Programme's activities better on the ground. In the context for long term success of REDD+ mechanisms, women need to be aware of REDD+ benefits distribution. It was also reported that the most of the participant were only aware to the issues related to forest management they lacked the understanding on REDD+ and its implications in different contexts. Even the question asked for the consent was very general 'do you want to protect your forest?' which shows that most of the people were unaware of the complex issues like REDD and CC. Unless, these missing information are not provided to the villagers in all villages covered by FPIC process, it is difficult to say whether they understood the complex issues and have the comprehensive knowledge on the given matters within that short time frame. Furthermore, it was also obtained that women's union leaders were contacted for the facilitation of FPIC implementation but there is no mention on how they were engaged in the programme and how their participation influence the decision making processes. As women's groups can play an efficient role in convincing the local women to influence their participation, they role and contribution should be acknowledged for the valuable inputs they have given so as to develop participatory REDD+ frameworks.

Another important pitfall of the FPIC process in Vietnam is the lack of grievance and review mechanism. In the country like Vietnam, it is not a common practice to file a complaint using grievance and review mechanism on the ground however, the establishment of such mechanisms give confidence to all stakeholders

including women at the local level to make their voices heard if incase any negative consequences of the proposed projects or programmes occur.

### **3.5 Livelihood Improvement**

FPIC is an on-going process which tries to mitigate the unforeseen risks through thorough information sharing, consultation and decision making, improvement in livelihood standard of people might seen in the latter phases. It is the first stepping stone to engage local people in REDD+ activities in order to generate awareness among them and achieve higher level of participation before making the decision on consent or non-consent. The UN-REDD Vietnam Programme have reported the considerable participation of women (more than 50 %) however, information beyond that phase are still lacking. There is no evidence on how gender has been addressed in latter phases such as in capacity building, benefit distribution system and improved livelihood standards of women through the engagement in the process.

In step 6, recording of decision took place where the interlocutors used different colored ballot papers for male and women and two ballot boxes to drop their decision on consent or non- consent. It allowed the participants to drop their decision in desired box and maintained the confidentiality of the decision made. Since, the time frame given for the question and answer sessions to make the decision was very limited (45 minutes) and there was no time given for internal discussion among villagers regarding the issue definitely affects the quality of decision thus made. Sufficient time should be provided for the internal discussion so that participants could be able to dwell into the issues and identify what could be good for them and their community as a whole. In step 7, documentation and reporting was done where the interlocutors documented all the voting results from all the villages and finally sent it to the UN-REDD Programme office. In the final step, verification and evaluation was carried out by the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC) which has identified several drawbacks including the incorporation of gender component within the programme activities. Thus, the lesson learned from the pilot FPIC process in

Vietnam, the UN-REDD Programme could refine its plans in implementing the same process in Vietnam itself and in other countries as well.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme has addressed the gender issues by ensuring higher level of participation of women in FPIC process however, the quality of the participation remained questionable. Due to the matriarchal practice in Lam Dong province, women were bound to perform several duties and responsibilities to run the family that was found as one of the major constraints for their participation in different awareness raising events and village meetings. Also, illiteracy and little knowledge about the UN-REDD Programme activities were found as other stumbling blocks for them to understand the complex and broad issues like CC and REDD within that short period of time. Likewise, lack of relevant information flow, lack of review and grievance mechanisms and lack of information on risks and costs of participation in the programme were some of the other impediments to obtain the quality participation of women.

As REDD+ projects are expected to have impacts on men and women, an adequate time should be given to engage all the relevant stakeholders for the awareness raising, knowledge sharing and discussion of the issues as early as possible when the UN-REDD Programme begins considering their participation. But the gender component of REDD may differ from country to country depending upon the various social structures. In countries where patriarchal practice exists, even to achieve the quantitative participation of women could be harder. Thus, REDD+ activities should be designed in ways that enable the incorporation of gender dimensions in all its policies, plans and activities at local and national levels.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Consultations with local women including women's union leaders before designing and implementing the process
- Ample time frame for the village meetings and discussion should be given so that participants can understand the issues well
- Time for internal discussion should be provided
- Gender analysis of the whole FPIC process is highly recommended

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Questionnaire for the Informants**

1. How did the UN-REDD Programme employ the role of men and women while designing FPIC process for Vietnam?
2. How was the participation of women from the local awareness raising events to village meetings?
3. Did you see the reluctance of women to come to the village meetings? If yes why do you think women were hesitant to participate?
4. Do you think the FPIC process has raised the awareness among local women on climate change and REDD mechanism? If yes, did women freely express their views before giving the consent?
5. Do you think the participation in FPIC process has improved the livelihood of women? If yes how?
6. Do you want to share anything relating to FPIC and participation of women?

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