

INTEGRATING GENDER & DISABILITY INCLUSIVENESS



Like many other countries, Cambodia still has a long way to go to achieve gender equality, especially in areas of equal representation, voice and domestic violence. The Australian Government highlights gender equality and disability inclusiveness as essential to reducing poverty. As an AusAID-funded agricultural development program, CAVAC contributes to these goals. CAVAC's Gender and Disability Strategy details how the Program's activities support the achievement of the commitments by both AusAID and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to gender and disability integration.

GENDER ROLES IN CAMBODIAN AGRICULTURE

The roles of men and women in rural Cambodian society vary and have changed significantly in recent decades. Today men and women share many agricultural tasks, though some distinct divisions of labour and decision-making responsibility exist.

CAVAC research done in 2011 showed that farming decisions are often taken jointly by men and women in the household. Women often play a dominant role in trading and wet season rice farming activities, whilst men are more influential when it comes to irrigation, the use of pesticides and plowing.

One stand out result from this research was that the concept of a stereotypical role for male farmers or female farmers does not capture the reality properly. In fact, farming in Cambodia is considered a household activity. It is the household as a collective group that undertake not only the activities around farming, but also the reasoning and decision-making which informs these activities. Understanding these dynamics was crucial for designing initiatives to improve farmers' effectiveness. Rather than simply looking at the roles of male farmers or female farmers, it is the different type of households within Cambodian farming communities that form the basis of CAVAC's gender analysis.

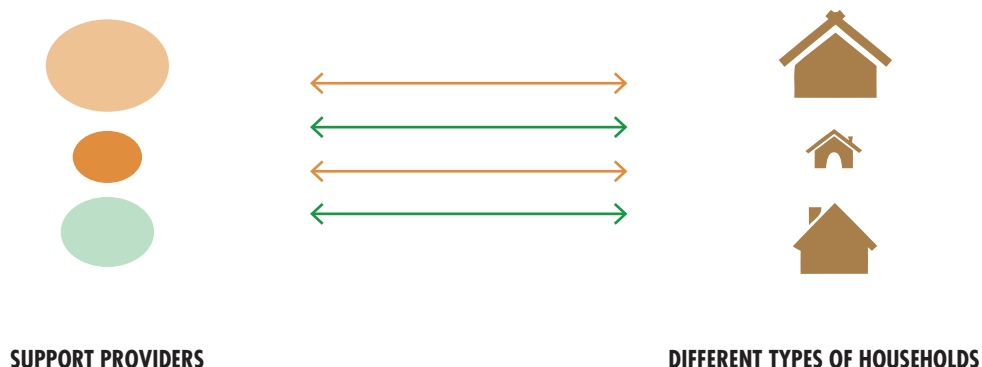
CAVAC has developed a system that classifies households based on who takes which decisions and who performs different agricultural activities. In some households, for example, everything is done jointly. Whilst in others, men work away from the fields and women do the farming. This has important consequences for adoption of new practices. These categories also incorporate people living with a disability.

After testing several approaches, CAVAC concluded that the Program can improve gender equality best by using the results of its gender analyses to inform interventions. This information can also improve the effectiveness of the relationship between public and private organisations and farming households.



CAVAC works to increase rural household incomes by improving access to better inputs, information and markets so that farmers can grow more rice and vegetables. CAVAC does not support farmers directly but works through a variety of public and private organisations that farmers rely on to produce more and better.

FIGURE 1: SUPPORT PROVIDERS INTERACTING WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDS.



For each intervention CAVAC examines who in the household interacts with support providers (such as retailers, traders, government etc.), who makes decisions and who implements them. CAVAC then examines if this is effective and efficient. For example, if a woman buys pesticides and her husband applies it, the advice from retailers on how to apply safely and correctly may be lost if it isn't conveyed correctly to both users.

THE CAVAC APPROACH

Taking such realities into account CAVAC pursues a three-point approach to gender equality:

1. CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Basing interventions on anecdotal evidence and common prejudices may not be most effective given the diverse and ever-changing nature of gender relations in Cambodia. Existing research and studies helped to understand parts of the puzzle but some key gaps remained. To solve this CAVAC conducted its own Gender Study in 2011 and has since conducted more detailed surveys examining different roles and responsibilities within farming households. The surveys also map decision-making to identify who takes specific farming decisions: for example, what seeds to buy or what fertilisers and pesticides to apply. An analysis of how such decisions are communicated within the household is also a focus of the studies as this has great impact on gender equity and effective farming practices. CAVAC also collects gender disaggregated data for all the initiatives it supports and captures how different types of households with different gender roles benefit.

2. IMPROVE WHERE POSSIBLE

Where gender analyses has shown that the agricultural services could improve if providers were to change the way they interact with men and women, CAVAC has an opportunity to intervene by engaging with these providers. For example, CAVAC promotes balanced gender representation in Farmer Water User Committees (FWUCs), the groups responsible for managing the canals which CAVAC helps to construct. CAVAC has also modified training programs and materials for vegetable seed retailers to encourage more female retailers to participate and adopt the proposed practices.

3. AVOID DIRECT NEGATIVE EFFECTS

To increase yields and therefore incomes farming households need to innovate, to do things differently and better. However, some innovations may impact men and women members of the household differently. For example, changing from manual to mechanical harvesting normally reduces the time spent by women on farming responsibilities but it also could make female-headed households more dependent on outside help which they must pay for. CAVAC is careful not to judge which changes are 'good' and which are not. Instead CAVAC takes advice from all concerned and then either includes remedial action in its design of activities or declines to support certain innovations.

To ensure that program initiatives do not overlook gender issues CAVAC has developed a gender and disability checklist that is part of every intervention design.

DISABILITY INCLUSIVENESS

As with gender equality, the Australian Government is committed to proactively improve the social and economic inclusion of persons living with a disability. The policy of the Royal Cambodian Government supports similar goals. This is especially relevant in Cambodia where recent history has left many people physically and mentally injured. Even today landmines remain a threat in many agricultural areas.

CAVAC has conducted studies and checked interventions for impact on people with a disability but this has not yet led to specific interventions. CAVAC has also sought to engage with organisations that represent people living with a disability, however, most organisations found were actually inactive. CAVAC will continue to seek engagement and will remain committed to include considerations of people living with a disability in its research and program activities.



SUMMARY

CAVAC recognises that its nature and mandate mean that the Program’s capacity to influence gender equality and disability inclusiveness is somewhat limited since CAVAC does not work with farmers directly. Its success depends largely on how successfully it can influence the market players with whom it works directly.

Gender and disability indicators are incorporated into CAVAC’s monitoring system and promoting gender equality and disability inclusiveness is part of the learning process. CAVAC is continually adjusting its practices to improve its effectiveness.



The Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain Program (CAVAC) is an initiative funded by AusAID and jointly implemented by the Royal Government of Cambodia and Cardno Emerging Markets. For more information about CAVAC please visit our webpage www.cavac.kh.org