

Draft Concept - Fourth AMNEP Forum

5 May 2015

We are pleased to announce “Inclusive Business – Mekong Women in Agricultural Value Chains” as the topic of the fourth AMNEP Forum.

Background

Three policy dialogues between the Australian Government and civil society have been held since November 2013, under the banner of AMNEP Forums. The first, in Melbourne, was a high-level discussion which identified several areas for future exchange and discussions – prominently, women’s empowerment and the ASEAN Economic Community. The second Forum, in Hanoi in August 2014, brought together over 100 civil society, government and academic participants around this broad topic, for discussions over two days. The third in the series – in February 2015 – was deliberately more focused and involved a smaller group of participants, on the topic of ‘Women’s Labor Mobility’. Topics for follow-up forums were identified at each meeting, alongside research gaps and further opportunities for exchange. The proposed Fourth AMNEP Forum builds from these dialogues and represents a key strategic interest area of AMNEP and DFAT.

Inclusive Business - Mekong women in agricultural value chains

Women play an important role in food production and agriculture across the Mekong countries – as farmers, agricultural workers, employees, and entrepreneurs in agricultural enterprises. The ASEAN Economic Community and the expansion of national and regional value chains, among other factors, are increasing women’s labour mobility, through increased employment opportunities away from the farm. These dynamics provide both risk and new opportunities for women. Besides migration risks that were discussed at the Third AMNEP Forum, there are risks involved in the introduction of new crops, pressures on land and water, and social impacts of a large scale transition away from small farming. Yet there are also positive opportunities flowing from the improved access to markets for women farmers and from private sector businesses recognizing the benefits of inclusive business and shared valued approaches¹.

Gender analysis of agricultural value chains is clearly needed in order to understand the role of women in this dynamic context. It raises awareness and strengthens the evidence base to support efforts to improve inclusion and access, and to demonstrate potential for improved economic benefits to businesses, women, and households. This would lead to a policy discussion on how best to support women’s participation in agricultural value chains,

¹ Inclusive business: A commercially viable model that benefits low-income communities (those who live on less than \$8 a day) by including them in a company's value chain on the demand side as clients and consumers, and/or on the supply side as producers, entrepreneurs or employees (UNDP, *Creating Value for All*, 2008)

Shared value: a management strategy focused on companies creating measurable business value by identifying and addressing social problems that intersect with their business. The shared value framework creates new opportunities for companies, civil society organizations, and governments to leverage the power of market-based competition in addressing social problems (Porter and Kramer, ‘Creating Shared Value’, *Harvard Business Review*, Jan 2011)

including mitigating risks, based on current direct experience and practices from the Mekong region.

The private sector plays a particularly important role in the agriculture sector. This Forum will therefore invite participants from the private sector, working across agricultural value chains and with an interest in supporting women, into dialogue with the Australian government and NGO participants.

Outcomes

The proposed Forum is an important tool to inform Australian development policy, research and programming; and for CSO partners, is an opportunity to engage with decision makers and Australian expertise to inform their own programming and strategies. Outcomes will be focussed on:

1. Policy exchange on issues of inclusive business and Mekong women in agricultural value chains.
 - *Indicator: Discussion between DFAT, NGOs and selected individuals from the private sector leading to identification of opportunities for development, inclusive business and/or shared value partnerships*
2. Mutual learning on specific issues relating to inclusive business and women in agriculture, drawing on research and other forms of knowledge.
 - *Indicator: existing learning from DFAT and other donor initiatives effectively synthesised and communicated; NGOs use the Forum to showcase programs, emergent learning and identify areas for further work*

Themes

Theme I: Data, information, and gender analysis of agricultural value chains

Theme II: Grabbing opportunities from Inclusive Agricultural Business

Theme III: gender and sustainable business analysis of key agricultural commodities

Indicative Agenda

Day 1 – Training and Networking

Training on inclusive business, creating shared value and measuring impact (CSR Asia)

6:00: pre-dinner drinks and gallery walk session

7:30pm: Forum dinner

Day 2 - Forum

AM – opening session – welcome by chairs, report back on last forum, keynotes

10:30am – 12:30pm – Panel 1 – How can women grab opportunities in agriculture?

- Women accessing sustainable global markets
- Expansion of global supply chains into the Mekong

12:30 – 1:30 - Lunch

1:30 – 4:00

Panel sessions: women in value chains in detail – panels with a mix of private sector, NGOs working in the area

4:30 – 5:00pm - Closing session

Format

The Forum will be held over two days on 2-3 June 2015 (TBC), in Bangkok. This is to respond to feedback from the previous forum that one day did not leave sufficient time for discussion and exploration. There will be up to 50 participants from CSOs, DFAT and the private sector.

Chatham House rules will be observed during the Forum in order to create a good environment for policy dialogue. On format, there are a number of further options which are currently being considered:

- Commissioned research: DFAT could commission a synthesis 'think piece' prior to the Forum which will draw upon recent research and program work across the Mekong.
- Co-chairs: previous Forums have been co-chaired by DFAT and an Australian NGO CEO. NGOs interested in having their CEO co-chair should contact the AMNEP Coordinator.
- Emerging issues: to enable NGO participants to share emerging issues in the field of women's participation in agriculture a flexible format is being considered again for this Forum (e.g. a gallery walk, soapbox or marketplace session).
- Panel sessions: we will again open panel sessions to being organised by NGOs. NGOs interested in organising a sub-theme workshop based on their own work, or a collective effort, should contact the AMNEP Coordinator. Otherwise, panels will draw on participants from different sectors, speaking on the same theme.

Related initiatives

Gender Transformative and Responsible Agribusiness in South East Asia

http://growsellthrive.org/profiles/blogs/graisea-launch?xg_source=activity

GROW Asia

<http://www.weforum.org/search/google/grow%20asia?query=grow%20asia&cx=005374784487575532108%3Azwr8u4lxoba&cof=FORID%3A11&sitesearch=>

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Third AMNEP Forum – 5 February 2015 – Bangkok
'Women's Labour Mobility in the Mekong'

Objectives: Policy exchange between the Australian Government and regional and Australian NGOs on issues of women's migration in the context of ASEAN integration; Mutual learning on specific issues relating to women's migration in the AEC, drawing on research and other forms of knowledge.



Number of participants: 60 (~65% female)

Targeted participant groups: AMNEP Partner NGOs (local and international); specialist NGOs working on migration issues; partner UN agencies including ILO, UNCDF, and UN Women; DFAT Canberra, ASEAN Mission and South East Asia Regional Hub

Summary of major issues emerging:

- Women's labour mobility is a huge issue; and there are too many different factors to tackle for one organisation alone. Need a partnership of many actors to engage government on women's labour mobility. Difficulties in the civil society environment, and with freedom of association and communication can hamper efforts to find better solutions for women.
- There is a need for social change to challenge stigma and negative stereotypes that harm women. Women's work, involving migration or not, is not valued or the attention that it should in policy and research.
- The relationship between the AEC, gender equality and worsening inequality is complex but an important step is ensuring that these issues are discussed and on the agenda.
- There is a need to be able to engage with the economic discussion but without compromising a rights based approach. For example, it could be clearer to establish what exactly we want to achieve in the framework of "women's economic empowerment"? Is women's labour mobility a net positive for development, or not?

DFAT's response: policy recommendations related to migration have been incorporated into design work for a new regional migration program. Recommendations relating to the importance of understanding and considering impacts on women in AEC planning (particularly new blueprints) are part of planning for Australian support to ASEC on gender. Economic empowerment and rights issues are being translated into planning for a new regional Investing in Women Initiative.

Second AMNEP Forum – 27/28 August 2014 - Hanoi
'ASEAN Integration and Womens Economic Empowerment in the Mekong'

Objectives: Knowledge on the impact and opportunities of ASEAN integration on women's empowerment in CLMV increased, research gaps identified, and opportunities for further engagement ascertained; and validation and consultation on DFAT's research on women's economic empowerment and the development of ASEAN.



Number of participants: 110 (61% female)

Targeted participant groups: broad spectrum of civil society groups from the Mekong region and beyond. Invitations were sent based on expressions of interest received through a call sent out to existing NGO networks. An overwhelming response led to a revision of original participant limitation of 50 people.

Summary of major issues emerging:

- Identifying points of access to the ASEAN economic integration process: civil society engagement with these issues is not easy for a number of reasons – including that it is not clear where effort is best concentrated in engaging with ASEAN. Country-level engagement is important as government representatives ultimately decide what is on the ASEAN agenda. But opportunities need to be found to access national level representatives
- Vulnerability and social protection need to be part of the discussion in women's economic empowerment as economic growth is not enough by itself to empower women or reach the poorest. The AEC risks more inequality and vulnerability for women if gender analysis is not part of planning. Social safety nets need to be in place in a context of so much potential change.
- There is a lot of scope to engage with the private sector on shaping inclusive business practices and policy and attract capital for socially-oriented businesses

DFAT's response: Participants suggested that DFAT use its position to leverage relationships with organisations that track integration and are in a position to include gender sensitive analysis such as the World Bank and ADB. The third Forum was planned around a major opportunity to influence regional programs that would work in this space – and to engage with institutions such as the ILO and UNCDF to bring analysis of their areas of expertise.

First AMNEP Forum – 28 November 2013 – Melbourne
'Mekong Policy Dialogue'

Objectives: This first AMNEP dialogue launched the platform and opened a conversation which identified broad issues of mutual interest to Australian NGOs present in the Mekong, and the Australian Government.



Number of participants: 18 (40% female)

Targeted participant groups: Australian NGO CEOs or senior staff; DFAT East Asia Development Division and Mekong senior managers.

Summary of major issues emerging:

- Human resources, labour and migration
- Understanding post-2015 – ASEAN integration and the SDGs
- Mekong shared environmental concerns
- Is the status of women in the Mekong improving alongside economic indicators?
- Civil society and democratisation within ASEAN

DFAT's response: issues around women's empowerment and ASEAN integration have been taken as the main theme for ongoing policy discussions. Migration and labour within this context were discussed in detail in the Third AMNEP Forum in Bangkok. The role of (international and local) civil society has been the focus of AMNEP analysis over 2014-15.

Summary of participant evaluations: NA