

TERMS OF REFERENCE

In-depth Gender Study – Sectoral Analysis for Gender Mainstreaming

1 - CONTEXT

GRET in Việt Nam

Established in 1976, GRET is an international development non-governmental organization, governed by French law, whose activities range from field interventions to policy impacts, aiming to provide lasting and innovative solutions to the challenges of poverty and inequality. GRET operates in 28 countries, with its headquarters in France and 13 national offices worldwide. Present in Vietnam since 1988 with a representative office in Hanoi, GRET has developed diverse support and expertise in agriculture, social and democratic issues, natural resource management, energy and waste management, and more. Throughout its long history in Vietnam, GRET Vietnam's strengths lie in the expertise of its technical assistants, its in-depth knowledge of the socio-economic context and local regulations, its project coordination capabilities, and its experience in publishing reference materials. For more information, please visit www.gret.org

Project site

The buffer zone of the Pu Luong Nature Reserve (DP) is located in the mountainous and impoverished communes of Pu Luong, Co Lung, Hoi Xuan, Phu Xuan, and Phu Le in Thanh Hoa province, home to the majority of the Thai and Muong ethnic groups. Covering 17,662 hectares, the DP contains important protective forests undergoing ecological restoration and boasts rich biodiversity. It is one of the last three remaining areas of forest ecosystems in the northern limestone mountains of Vietnam, containing crucial protective forests for safeguarding the Ma River basin, one of Vietnam's three largest rivers. The DP is rich in biodiversity, housing 2,487 species belonging to 476 families and 1,329 genera, including 908 animal species and 1,579 plant species. Notably, 409 of these plant and animal species are listed in the Vietnam Red Book and the IUCN Red Book. The reserve is home to approximately 17,361 ethnic minority people (2023 figures) from 41 villages in the buffer zone, spread across several communes. However, the majority of communities in the buffer zone have high poverty rates, with little or no agricultural land. Income from forest products accounts for a significant portion of their total income (20% for the average household income compared to 60%-80% for poor households). The Pu Luong forest contributes to providing food, building materials, drinking water and water for agricultural use, handicrafts, medicinal plants, and cultural services for many poor households. While human resources for biodiversity conservation in the nature reserve are limited, support measures for livelihood development within the reserve are also insufficient due to budget constraints, low payments from environmental services, and limited income opportunities from adjacent production forests. This has hindered the strengthening of close alliances between communities and the Pu Luong Nature Reserve in conservation efforts. Biodiversity conservation in the reserve has become more challenging with the rapidly developing community-based tourism (CBT), which was launched in Pu Luong in 2016, offering opportunities for new income generation and improved living conditions for local people. However, limited capacity and resources have prevented local ethnic minorities from effectively competing with external service providers, benefiting from emerging economic opportunities, and actively participating

in local activities. Conservation risks associated with new tourism activities (waste pollution, loss of natural habitats, etc.) have hindered tourism development and its contribution to improving the sustainable living conditions of the local area.

EMPOWERING PROJECT

Empowering Ethnic Minority Women for Improved Management of Pu Luong Natural Reserve (EMPOWERING) project, funded by European Union and ALSTOM Foundation, aims to

- ✓ Improve conservation of Pu Luong Natural Reserve.
- ✓ Reduce poverty among ethnic minority women of Ba Thuoc and Quan Hoa districts have decreased.
- ✓ Increase women's influence, in all their diversity, in decision-making processes on environmental conservation and climate change policies and actions.

Through 4 component:

- Output 1- Biodiversity and climate change issues are mainstreamed in the local tourism strategies
- Output 2 - Women's economic activities related to sustainable development, are enhanced
- Output 3 - Ethnic minority women in the core and buffer zone are strengthened with capacities and confident to promote better environmental and gender-responsive practices to mitigate socio-economic impacts on biodiversity in the Natural Reserve.
- Output 4 - Green Label certification system is developed by the district authorities to promote responsible production and consumption in community-based tourism sector for improvement of competitiveness and sustainable enhancement of environmental values and biodiversity protection in the Natural Reserve

An environmental and socio-economic baseline study was recently conducted in the project area, including an initial analysis of gender issues. This study identified:

- deeply rooted gender social norms (female domestic roles, male leadership, etc.)
- a gendered division of labor in economic activities
- inequalities in access to resources, assets, and decision-making
- variations according to age and ethnicity

It also highlighted that, despite strong participation of women in productive activities, their decision-making power and control over resources remain limited.

However, these findings remain general and descriptive and do not directly inform targeted project actions.

2 - JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

In order to move from an ad hoc gender approach to a gender mainstreaming approach across all project activities, a more detailed and sector-specific analysis is required. This analysis should focus on concrete mechanisms of power, decision-making, and access to benefits, and provide actionable solutions.

This study therefore aims to:

- deepen existing findings without duplicating them
- explain observed gaps between women and men
- identify concrete and realistic leverage points
- propose recommendations that can be directly integrated into project activities

3 - OBJECTIVES

3.1 - General Objective

To deepen the understanding of gender dynamics in key project sectors in order to formulate operational recommendations to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment.

3.2 - Specific Objectives

- Analyze the gender division of labor in targeted sectors
- Examine power relations, decision-making processes, and control over resources
- Identify social norms and structural constraints limiting women's participation
- Study participation in governance mechanisms and benefit-sharing systems
- **Formulate concrete, applicable, and prioritized recommendations**

4 - SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study will focus on the following sectors:

4.1 - Agriculture and Livestock Activities

- Duck farming
- Sticky rice cultivation
- Shallot (kiệu) cultivation
- Under-forest crops (taro, medicinal plants, etc.)

4.2 - Tourism

- Accommodation (guesthouses, homestays)
- Guiding and tourism services

4.3 - Governance

- Participation in local decision-making bodies
- Development and implementation of benefit-sharing mechanisms

5 - RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The consultant will examine the following issues as they apply to the relevant sectors (where possible).

5.1 - Division of Labor and Social Roles

- Which activities are perceived as "male" or "female"? Why?
- What are the barriers to women's access to certain activities (e.g., tour guiding, forest governance)?
- How does domestic workload influence women's economic participation?

5.2 - Decision-Making Power and Control over Resources

- Who makes decisions regarding: production? investments? use of income?
- Are decisions truly joint or dominated by one gender?
- Who controls generated income?
- What negotiation mechanisms exist within households?

5.3 - Income and Value Chains

- Are male-dominated activities more profitable?
- Within the same value chain, who controls the most profitable segments?
- Who accesses high value-added markets (tourism, digital platforms, etc.)?

5.4 - Access to Resources and Opportunities

- What are the barriers to women's entrepreneurship?
- What differences exist in access to digital tools (marketing, bookings)?

5.5 - Working Conditions, Health and Safety

- Are there risks of violence (including sexual violence) or harassment?
- What protection mechanisms exist?

5.6 - Governance and Benefit Sharing

- Who participates in decision-making bodies?
- Do women have real influence?
- Who benefits from benefit-sharing mechanisms?
- What are the barriers to equitable participation?

6 - METHODOLOGY

The study will be based on a targeted and in-depth qualitative approach to explore gender dynamics in detail.

6.1 - Methodological Principles

The approach should prioritize:

- a detailed understanding of actual practices and power relations
- analysis of gaps between discourse and lived realities
- a sectoral and contextualized approach
- production of results directly usable by the project

6.2 - Data Collection

Given available resources, data collection will rely on a limited but strategic number of key stakeholders. Recommended methods include:

In-depth Individual Interviews

- women and men
- diversity in age, ethnicity, and economic situations
- stakeholders involved in targeted sectors

Targeted Focus Group Discussions

- ideally separated by gender when relevant
- to explore social norms and collective dynamics

Case Studies

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- selection of representative households or activities
- detailed analysis of practices, decisions, and constraints

Qualitative Observation (if possible)

- observation of activities (production, tourism, etc.)
- interactions between stakeholders

Analytical Approach

The analysis should be based on:

- analysis of roles, access to, and control over resources
- simplified value chain analysis highlighting positions of women and men
- analysis of social norms and mechanisms reproducing inequalities
- particular attention to intra-household decision-making processes

7 - EXPECTED RESULTS

The study should produce:

- a detailed analysis of gender dynamics by sector
- a clear identification of gaps between participation and actual power
- an understanding of mechanisms reproducing inequalities

8 - EXPECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are a key deliverable. They must be operational, sector-specific, structured, and transformative.

They should aim to:

- reduce structural inequalities
- strengthen women's agency
- engage men in the change process
- transform social norms

9 - DELIVERABLES

- Inception report (methodology, tools, work plan)
- Interim report
- Final report including: analysis, detailed operational recommendations, and presentation of findings.

10 - TIMELINE

- May 2026.

11 - REQUIREMENTS FOR CONSULTANT(S)

- Vietnamese consultants (individuals or a consulting team).

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- Consultants must have an advanced university degree in Gender Studies, Sociology, Law, or related social sciences and 5–10 years of practical experience in gender mainstreaming, research and analysis.
- Consultants must have thorough understanding of the gender context in Vietnam, and experience working with government institutions and international or non-governmental organizations supporting gender and development
- Fluency in written English is required.

Deadline for submitting consultant proposal (also stating expected budget) and CVs: 5 PM on April 27th 2026 to the following email addresses: huongtran.vietnam@gret.org and gret.vietnam@gret.org