De-brief on Lower Mekong Initiative - Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy Dialogue

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24 July, 2012
LMI initiative?

- Why LMI? Which countries represent LMI?
- Strategic interest/pillars in LMI?
- Gender equality and women’s empowerment dialogue - July 12-13, 2012?
- LEAF’s options from the LMI = opportunities for interventions
The Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI):

- Launched in July 2009
- Is a multinational effort intended to create integrated sub-regional cooperation between and among Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar (July 2012) and the U.S. in the areas of
  - education, health, environment, and infrastructure: The four pillars
- A primary objective of the initiative is to **build local capacity** to allow the sub-region to more effectively collaborate across borders and to overcome local obstacles in meeting **regional challenges and opportunities**.
Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment

- The first-ever Lower Mekong Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy Dialogue in Siem Reap, Cambodia on July 12 and 13
  - Convened by The U.S. government and the Royal Government of Cambodia
- Day One: Empowering Women in the Lower Mekong Region
  - 4 plenary sessions on cross-cutting issues that engage a broad range of LMI and regional issues concerning women.
  - Women’s Economic Empowerment, Expanding Leadership and Political Participation, Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Public-private partnerships
- Day Two: Workshops on LMI Pillar Issues
  - Four concurrent breakout sessions on
    - Education
    - Environment
    - Health
    - Infrastructure
  - Panel discussion, Identify priority issues/recommendations (5-6) in each pillar, Convey recommendation to the LMI ministers
Environment pillar- panel discussion

- Represented LEAF as a panel expert in the environment panel discussion
- 4 other panel experts representing: Vietnam’s Women’s Union, Mekong River Commission, JICA: moderated by PACT
- Panel discussion has about 50 participants: Cambodia’s Minister and Lao’s electorate assembly president (economics)
Key panel questions

– What are the key issues for women in your area of the environment/rural development sector? How do the issues differ among women – both within communities and between regions – and what are the most common issues among them?

– Women living in rural areas have a very deep reliance on the environment. What type of environmental effects can result from women’s increased control of land, water and other production resources? How are benefits shared differently?

– How are governments in the LMI working individually and together to promote sustainable natural resource management and climate change policies that are gender sensitive and ensuring women participate (including issues related to natural resources, with particular emphasis on forests, water, renewable energy, wetlands, watershed management, biodiversity, and rural development / food security)? Are there any legal frameworks in the region that can be used as positive models?

– Let’s talk about climate change. What is the current status of women’s empowerment in climate change mitigation efforts in South East Asia and what efforts are in place to improve it? What are the advantages of increasing women’s participation and leadership for both mitigation and adaptation?

– Is the ultimate goal equality of participation in environmental management, or something else? What should be the role of men in empowering women’s leadership in the environment sector?
Key reflections

How to develop gender-responsive policy in gender and environment in CC mitigation and adaptation? We have dearth of specialists knowing both gender and environment- H.E. Minister of Women’s Affairs, Dr.Ing Kantha Phavi, Cambodia

Environment resources has started to provide strong incentives for economic development in Lao. We need insights on how to link environmental resources to generate a fair economy that equitably provides opportunities to both men and women –LAO Assembly Member

Women has less & limited participation in REDD+ consultation and decision-making. Most of the CC projects bypass/ignore consultation with women ministries in the LMI countries

Capacity building through knowledge, training, policy and pilot support is urgently required. Gender mainstreaming is difficult to think of in climate change mitigation- all equate it to emission alone

Funding support to represent and advocate gender issues in global/regional forums is inadequate.

Knowledge on Gender &REDD+ and English language as a barrier-not all LMI countries have similar competency and representation (Vietnam, Thailand versus others) for regional level collaboration & networking.
1. Support the creation of a **regional network** on gender and the environment that can **influence and inform decision-making processes**.

2. Create **opportunities** at all levels, including high level of LMI, and other regional and global decision-making forums to **represent gender perspectives**.

3. Sponsor **capacity development** for women at all levels, on environment issues, **leadership and communication skills**, etc. (negotiation, facilitation and vocational training)

4. Commission **comparative and country-specific research** on gender and environment including trans-boundary issues at community, national and regional levels to **inform policy making and legal processes as well as program design and implementation**.

5. Commit **increased resources** to women and environment through implementation & monitoring of above items. Seek to generate additional resources through collaboration with the private sector.
What’s in for LEAF?

- LEAF is one of the major activity under Environment pillar for the LMI.
- Provide technical support to the identified recommendations
- **Cambodia** has huge interested to work in gender and REDD+: National workshop, assessment, policy options etc.
- **Laos**: Interest to do gender analysis of forestry laws, need support
- **Vietnam**: Capacity building in REDD+ for VWU
Useful contacts

- Laos: Ms. Souvanpheng Boupahanouvong, President, Economics, Planning and Finance Committee, National Assembly, Laos.

- Cambodia: Ms. Somaly Chan, Director of International Conventions & Biodiversity Department, Ministry of Environment, Email: somalzchan.ca@gmail.com, icbd@gdancp-moe.org, Tel: (855) 012457799.
Care to share & dare to dream for Gender Equality
Investment in women increases Country's GDP
Much more!
Thank you!