

## Gender Strategy for IFMC Next Phase

### Background

Equal rights for women and men are recognized in the Constitution of Bangladesh, international commitments of the Government of Bangladesh (for example to CEDAW and the SDGs) and the policies governing Danish development cooperation. The 7<sup>th</sup> 5 year plan of GoB lists empowerment of women and reducing gender inequality as one of the drivers for development. The 2016 gender strategy for the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) sets the goal to “achieve equality between women and men at all levels and in all aspects of agriculture sector.” The Strategic Framework for Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity in Danish Development Cooperation commits to support equal access for women to “land, water and ecosystems as well as to resources and jobs, including finance, training and equal opportunities in the labour market.” This legal and policy framework clearly establishes that, *at minimum*, development projects such as IFMC must provide equal opportunities *and benefit* to women and men.

The emphasis on equal benefits for women and men recognizes that equal opportunity is not enough to ensure gender equality. The human rights commitments referenced above confirm women’s rights to equal outcomes. These standards recognize that outcomes are affected by indirect as well as direct discrimination and that as a result ‘different treatment’ (rather than same treatment) may be required to achieve equality in practice. *The Progress of the World’s Women 2015-16* concluded that achieving equality of results for women requires ‘action on three interrelated fronts: redressing socio-economic disadvantage; addressing stereotyping, stigma and violence; and strengthening agency’ and voice as well as participation<sup>1</sup>.

Building on this, implementing the commitment of DAE and the Embassy of Denmark to equal benefit of development for women and men requires **recognizing and addressing the pervasive inequalities** that currently shape the lives of female and male farmers in Bangladesh. Key facts of gender inequality in agriculture in Bangladesh include:

- While 70% of economically active Bangladeshi women work in agriculture and recent labour force surveys found that women were 46% of skilled agricultural, fisheries and forestry occupations<sup>2</sup>, many of those women work as unpaid family workers. Women also carry the large majority of unpaid care and household work resulting in low income and significant time poverty.
- There are significant gender gaps in access to and control over resources. Improving women’s access to resources can enable livelihoods and support women to fulfil their

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women (2015). *The Progress of the World’s Women 2015-16. Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. Available at <http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/>

<sup>2</sup> Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2015-2016, Report Published in 2017, by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, page 123 [bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/.../QLFS\\_2015.pdf](https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/.../QLFS_2015.pdf)

household responsibilities, but ownership or decision-making control of assets is needed to improve women's bargaining power in the household and support their empowerment. There are also inequalities in the benefits earned from productive work: women farmers receive lower prices for their labour or produce and have much poorer access to markets.

- Surveys and research in Bangladesh regularly document that household decision-making is dominated by men. Women are generally also marginalized in decision making in community organizations (including farmer's groups), local governance and in management of development projects.
- Social beliefs and rules about what men and women should do, how, and with what resources have implications for women's mobility, public participation and how their labour is recognized and valued. The lower value generally given to women is a root cause of violence against women and other forms of discrimination that constrain women's participation in, and benefit from, livelihood activities. Gender norms operate in organizations as well as communities.

## Purpose and approach

The gender strategy takes a two-prong approach<sup>3</sup> which corresponds to **two objectives** for gender mainstreaming in IFMC:

1. Women farmers will benefit equally with men farmers from participation in IFMC activities because differences in the needs, opportunities and constraints of women compared to men will be taken into account in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the project.
2. In order to achieve the project goal of empowering women farmers as well as men, the project will reduce inequalities between women and men in IFMC communities in three specific realms: (1) decision-making; (2) control over resources and benefits; and (3) recognition as a farmer and/or farm leader. IFMC will aim to address these inequalities within participating households, in participating communities and within IFMC and partner organizations.

There are **six strategic elements** that are essential to mainstreaming gender equality in IFMC:

1. **Political will and accountability.** Managers and leaders within the programme must make their commitment to gender equality visible and follow up on the implementation of the gender equality strategy.
2. **Promoting gender equality within the organization.** This includes (1) promoting balanced representation of women and men at all levels of the implementing organizations; (2) ensuring that women and men within the project (whether as staff,

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<sup>3</sup> This is consistent with the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity in Danish Development Cooperation (2014) which identifies three complementary approaches, gender mainstreaming, targeted measures (which target specific issues of gender inequality) and policy dialogue which is not part of this project.

farmer facilitators, business focal points or FO leaders) are working on equal terms; and, (2) establishing patterns of behaviour and codes of conduct that prohibit discrimination and promote gender equality within the programme and implementing organizations.

3. **Gender equality competence.** Everyone involved in programme design and implementation needs the knowledge, skills and resources that will enable them to implement their roles and responsibilities in a way which contributes to gender equality. Resources include access to specialized expertise on gender equality in agriculture<sup>4</sup>.
4. **Gender analysis informs the design and implementation** of all aspects of the programme. Considering the two objectives of the strategy this means:
  - (i) Identifying context-specific factors that enable or constrain women's full participation **and equal benefit** from the project. Based on this analysis, the interventions should be planned and implemented with explicit intent to strengthen enabling factors and overcome barriers to equal outcomes for women.
  - (ii) Identifying opportunities for the project to reduce gendered inequalities and, based on that analysis, setting gender equality goals or targets, and planning interventions to reach those goals.
5. **Monitor** how the programme is affecting women, men, and gender relations, including unintended consequences, and adjust implementation as needed to achieve the gender equality objectives.
6. Make gender equality results and challenges visible in **reporting and communications**.

## Implementation of the gender strategy

### 1. Specific steps to be taken in the **organization and the operations** of the project:

- Set minimum acceptable standards for gender balance at each level of staffing, commit to plans to achieve those standards (including positive measures to overcome historic or existing barriers to equal representation of women), monitor consistently and report regularly on progress.
- Front line service providers – those working directly with farmers, such as Farmer Facilitators (FF) -- should be at least 50% women. Positions that act as role models for farmers and farm communities and that offer farmers access to decision-making, such as Business Focal Points (BFP), Farmer Organization (FO) Executive should be filled by at least 50% women. The project does not influence the selection of government officials and

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<sup>4</sup> This corresponds to the Strategic Framework (2014) focus on strengthening the capacity of duty bearers to fulfil their human rights obligations and put an end to discrimination based on sex and gender.'

therefore has no input into the the gender of officials such as the Sub-Assistant Agricultural Officers (SAAO). However, the IFMC will, in each Upazila, identify female SAAOs and the blocks in which they are posted. The project will prioritize blocks that have female SAAOs and aim to have as close to 50% female tag-SAAOs as possible, including if this means that there will be more FFS in the blocks with female SAAOs. Any other implementing partner staff that is working directly with programme communities to monitor the programme and further skill development should also comply with the aim to have a minimum of 50% women employees or representatives.

- Build competence of all project staff, FF and BFP to address gender within their roles and responsibilities. All training of front line service providers will include skills for inclusive and gender sensitive facilitation in (see capacity building recommendations below).
- Within the strategic objectives of this policy, all paid staff are responsible for removing gender discrimination and promoting gender equality within their specific role. Therefore all staff should have at least one performance indicator to measure their performance of these core responsibilities that is assessed in their performance appraisal.
- Ensure the project has sufficient internal expertise on gender equality to provide ongoing technical advice and oversight of how the gender strategy is implemented. Allocate resources for external expertise to: (1) address specific technical issues such as review of strategies or training curriculum, or to propose technologies to reduce women's work load; (2) provide external oversight such as through quality assurance missions, or; (3) support work load of internal gender equality specialist if needed.
- Establish clear codes of conduct for treating all women and men with respect and dignity, including non-discriminatory behaviour in meetings and in the field, acceptable communications, and explicitly prohibiting discriminatory speech or action and any form of harassment. Codes of conduct should be included in orientation for all staff and volunteers. Steps taken to implement and monitor implementation of the codes of conduct should be included in all reports.
- Project resources should be allocated in alignment with priorities, and the project should be able to demonstrate how budgetary resources have been applied to further the gender equality objectives of the project.

## 2. Specific steps to **strengthen project capacity for gender equality**:

- Initial training on gender analysis and gender-sensitive implementation of farmer empowerment programming **for all project employees**. The training should be minimum 3 days with content that covers gendered power relations (as a root cause of inequality), meanings of empowerment, gender analysis concepts for understanding the current situation and the likely impact of project actions, and how discriminatory stereotypes are created and maintained and the implications for project actions. The training should include opportunities and support for applying the knowledge and skills to specific responsibilities of participants.
- Annual refresher training of at least one day **for all project employees**. The content can be informed by monitoring of gender equality results and a training needs assessment of staff.

- Issues related to advancing gender equality within IFMC should be regularly included in staff meetings, internal communications and monitoring visits.
- Training for all **Farmer Facilitators** (men and women) should include: (1) understanding of power relations and how that affects women's and men's participation in FFS and the benefits they receive; (2) meanings of empowerment; (3) participating in a gender analysis of their communities to identify specific barriers to women's equal participation and benefit and steps to overcome obstacles; (4) gender-sensitive and inclusive facilitation skills; and (5) skills and practice for negotiating equal sharing of work in FF teams, in FFS sessions, and for promoting equitable sharing of work in households (their own and participating farm households).
- Refresher trainings for FF should also refresh skills for promoting gender equality.
- The one-day 'FFS Review and Planning Workshops' which are scheduled for SAAO every six months should include a mandatory session on gender.

### 3. Specific steps to be taken in project formulation:

- The formulation of the project overall and specific aspects of the programme (for example the FFS curriculum or standards for supporting Farmer Organizations) must be based on a gender analysis that addresses the issues summarized in the Background above as well as: the gender division of labour in IFMC households and communities and the impact of IFMC on women's work load; gender differences in access to, and control over, productive resources and benefits; the needs of women and men as learners, farmers, household and community members; current participation and influence of women and men in household and community decision-making, and; social norms that affect roles, responsibilities and privileges of women and men in IFMC communities.
- Plans for each activity must explicitly address existing gender relations and specify steps and targets to promote greater equality between women and men farmers in participating households and communities<sup>5</sup>.
- Along with overall steps to be taken, each aspect of the project must spell out how the design of those activities will address issues already known to be significant causes and consequences of inequality in IFMC communities:
  - Prevent discrimination within the household from being repeated or reinforced in IFMC activities (given the integrated household approach of IFMC).
  - Help to reduce the work burden of women farmers
  - Promote equal valuing of women as farmers (including through how they are seen and portrayed, the resources made available to them, and the benefits they receive including promoting equal pay)

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<sup>5</sup> IFMC's scope, and obligation under the human rights commitments of the Governments of Bangladesh and Denmark, is to design and implement all programme activities so that women participants will benefit equally as men participants and so that IFMC contribute to empowerment of women farmers as much as for men farmers. To do that IFMC must identify household and community dynamics and discrimination that prevent women from benefitting equally from farming, and take explicit steps to overcome these discriminatory patterns in all aspects of IFMC activities.

- The project design should include affirmative actions as needed to promote equal opportunity and benefit for women. Affirmative action refers to ‘measures targeted at a particular group and intended to eliminate and prevent discrimination, or to prevent existing disadvantages.’<sup>6</sup> Examples of affirmative action could be special measures to enable women farmers to lead and benefit from farm trials, or measures to overcome conditions which prevent women from participating in commercial crops.

4. In order to support project planning, monitor progress, allow programme adjustments. and enable reporting of results for women and in relation to gender equality, **baseline and monitoring frameworks** will include:

- Women and men farmers’ time use, including unpaid reproductive work and paid or unpaid productive work. Mid project monitoring can capture how participation in IFMC is affecting time use.
- Decision-making. For example, gather qualitative accounts of decisions women made in the previous week or month, decisions men made in that time period, and decisions men and women (separately) describe as jointly made
- What income women hold and control (e.g. in the last week or month) and what they used it for; What income men hold and control (in the last week or month) and what they used it for.
- Changes in farmer income needs to be monitored on a disaggregated basis (meaning collected separately for women and men, not only by household). If the emphasis is on gender mainstreaming, women should gain equally with men. If the emphasis is on closing the gender pay gap, women’s income should increase more than men’s to achieve the objective of reducing inequalities.
- Women’s recognition as farmers – in their household and in the community – including how they describe their occupation (when not participating in a project activity).
- Women’s engagement with market or market actors: how many times in the last month (or year) she bought or sold items at market and which market; last time she spoke to a market vendor by phone to arrange purchase or sale
- Women’s and men’s access and use of mobile phones; frequency of use, for what, whether phone is consistently within control of person
- Years of formal schooling and comfort reading letters and numbers is important baseline information to shape the learning strategies (FFS and FO curriculum) but is not necessary to monitor over the life of the project (as IFMC objective is not to change literacy but to strengthen capacities of women and men farmers regardless of their literacy.)
- Disaggregation of all data by sex, meaning that data will be collected for both men and women participants (this can mean collecting data from men and women in the same households, or ensuring 50% of responding households are represented by men and 50% by women). Male and female headed households will be noted as household types but not considered as disaggregation by sex.

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<sup>6</sup> From the Danida Gender Equality Toolbox: <http://www.netpublikationer.dk/um/10982/index.htm>

5. To ensure that regular and periodic **monitoring and quality assurance** gives priority to gender equality:

- All monitoring checklists should include a few key questions on what steps have been taken to address gender equality (process) and how that is affecting women and men (progress).
- Regular reports from all staff and units should include a section on steps taken to promote gender equality in relation to their responsibilities, progress, challenges, and needs for capacity development or technical assistance.
- Given that IFMC employees are primarily experts in agriculture and farmer learning, not gender equality, periodic (six-monthly or annual) external monitoring missions to assess progress on gender equality and make recommendations would be very helpful in quality assurance and continual improvement.

6. **Reporting**

- Given the persistence of gender inequality and the challenge of promoting sustainable change in gender relations, it is just as important to reflect and report on challenges and areas on which progress is slow as it is to recognize signs of positive change.
- Narrative project reporting should address gender issues (positive change, challenges and gaps) in each section and also include a section reporting on progress against the gender equality strategy.
- Reports should use a combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence to substantiate progress reporting.