

Gender Mainstreaming and Fisheries in USAID: Barriers and Policy Recommendations

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Abstract

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Since the United Nations First World Conference on Women in 1985, the advancement of women's rights in international development has become increasingly recognized as critical for sustainable development. In order to address the advancement of women's rights, gender mainstreaming is used to integrate gender concerns through projects in natural resource management international development agencies. However, gender mainstreaming policies tend to evaporate within institutions leading to reduced implementation. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has upper-level policies to apply gender mainstreaming, though evidence of implementation remains limited. This paper reviews USAID gender mainstreaming policies using the USAID Sustainable Ecosystems Advanced (SEA) Project as a case study for examining complications and barriers to implementation. Interviews were conducted with all SEA Project staff and four implementing partners in Indonesia. Interviews were analyzed using a gender in the project life cycle framework to identify barriers and successes in implementing gender mainstreaming. Recommendations for strengthening gender mainstreaming policies within USAID at the project level are offered. These recommendations

seek to reverse the policy evaporation that is occurring and create conditions within the project level that enable and support gender mainstreaming, leading to advancements in gender equity as well as enhanced conservation project outcomes.

Introduction

i. Gender Mainstreaming in Fisheries and International Development

Since the United Nations (UN) Fourth World Conference on Women in 1985, the topic of advancing women's rights as a vital component of sustainable development has become increasingly important in natural resource management (NRM). The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include Goal 5 focused on gender equality. SDG 5 is a cross-cutting indicator to assess the advancement of women and girls throughout development actions. Gender mainstreaming has become increasingly discussed as a tool to advance the rights of women and girls (Calhoun *et al.* 2016; Harper 2013; Koralagama *et al.* 2017; Razavi and Miller 1995). The UN Economic and Social Council of the General Assembly defines gender mainstreaming as:

“The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.” (United Nations 1997, p. 28)

Gender mainstreaming can serve a dual purpose in development. First, it serves to systematically improve gender equality through strategic planning and action. Second, there is a growing body of evidence that gender mainstreaming improves project outcomes overall (Leisher *et al.* 2016). This is suspected to occur due to a variety of reasons. For example, mixed-gender governance groups tend to be more effective and women's presence in decision-making

bodies leads to increased collaboration and conflict-resolution (Agarwal 2009; Sun *et al.* 2011). Increased collaboration and conflict-resolution are particularly important in NRM due to persistent conflict amongst resource users and NRM governance regimes. Furthermore, excluding women in NRM development can lead to less successful outcomes by missing the unique knowledge and perspectives that they hold about the environment. This exclusion can limit project's planning and implementation of conservation activities (Senioli *et al.* 2002).

Despite evidence of the value in gender mainstreaming, implementation has remained inconsistent among international aid groups (Aror-Jonsson 2014; Kawarazuka *et al.* 2017). This inconsistency is often attributed to lack of technical guidance, limited global gender data for specific sectors, and low commitment to gender work by individual practitioners (Moser and Moser 2010). The lack of global gender data is particularly salient within fisheries, given that women's roles within the industry tend to be informal or unpaid and thereby go uncounted or underrepresented in national statistics (Harper *et al.* 2017). This informality can render women's activities invisible or underrepresented in assessments of fisheries participation and formal decision-making bodies. Given that gender mainstreaming is meant to be an adaptive process in which lessons learned feed back into policy design, implementation appears to be in a negative feedback loop (Fig. 1). The lack of global data leads to low prioritization of gender mainstreaming, which limits the quality of gender action plans. As a result, mechanisms to improve conservation outcomes through gender action remains unclear, further limiting global data on gender mainstreaming. This negative feedback loop is an alternative way to describe gender policies' tendency of "evaporation" (Longwe 1997; Moser and Moser 2010). Gender policy evaporation refers to the phenomenon in which strong institutional policies do not necessarily translate to implementation, rendering gender mainstreaming limited or absent in

community-level projects. Moser and Moser (2010) analyzed aid agencies around the globe to assess where and how policy evaporation was occurring within institutions, though the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) was not included in this assessment. As such, to date there has not been an analysis of gender policy evaporation within the USAID context.

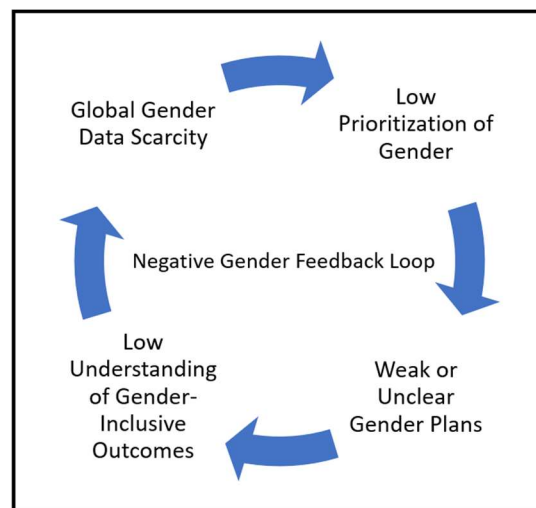


Figure 1. Gender implementation can be described as a negative feedback loop, driven by data scarcity and further perpetuated by unclear gender plans and a low understanding of gender-inclusivity on project outcomes.

Moser and Moser (2010) identified 22 activities necessary to form strong gender policies within aid agencies. This paper focuses on five key activities for successful policy implementation: gender analysis, gender training, the availability of a gender specialist on project staff, gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and evaluation, and gender theories of change for project planning. None of these activities create successful gender integration alone, but instead must work in tandem. The implementation of these actions are considered critical for

the successful integration of gender concerns and actions throughout the different stages of individual projects.

ii. *The United States Agency for International Development*

The United States as a nation is the largest single investor in foreign aid in the world with a fiscal year 2017 budget of nearly USD \$48 billion (Lawson and Morgenstern 2019). USAID is situated within this budget and in 2017 allocated USD \$19.3 billion for investment within 142 countries and 29 sectors. The goals of these investments through USAID are poverty reduction, strengthened democratic governance, and assistance with humanitarian crises, among others. USAID is uniquely positioned as a global leader due to its large monetary and social influence, and as such, has the potential to set global standards and best practices through its work and investments. With both global commitments and internal commitments to gender equity, USAID has invested \$65 million directly to support women's leadership over a four-year time period ("Office of Gender Equality" 2017). This value is likely representative of projects that are explicitly designed to address gender inequities. However, gender mainstreaming through projects in all sectors should enable and promote gender equity work throughout all USAID planned activities.

Gender mainstreaming in USAID projects is primarily guided by two main documents. The first is USAID's *Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy* (2012). This policy discusses the overarching goals of gender equity work in USAID which include to:

1. Reduce gender disparities in access to, control over and benefit from resources, wealth, opportunities and services- economic, social, political, and cultural;

2. Reduce gender-based violence and mitigate its harmful effects on individuals and communities and;
3. Increase the capability of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence their decision

The *Gender Equality and Female Empower Policy* primarily addresses the responsibilities of country-level missions, regional bureaus, and USAID staff in Washington D.C. There is little information on the role of projects in implementing the gender policy. The responsibilities of projects are described more fully within the second guiding document, Automated Directive Systems Chapter 205 (ADS-205) (USAID 2017). ADS-205 provides technical information pertaining to gender integration for USAID at the national, mission, and project levels (USAID 2017). However, this document largely discusses the responsibilities of mission offices to complete gender analyses that will hopefully trickle down to the project level. It is important to note that gender analyses remain internal and information is not shared to the public (pers. comm.), which can further limit gender data availability. In the event that a mission's gender analysis is not sufficient for a project's activities, projects are expected to perform their own to fill in relevant data gaps. Furthermore, under ADS-205 and Automated Directive System 201 (ADS-201), which pertains to project design, the only component consistently required for projects in their project activity design (PAD) regarding gender is reporting of sex-disaggregated person-level statistics. Otherwise, projects are only required to complete and report on gender integration if it is written into their contract. According to a Senior Gender Advisor at USAID, even if gender is originally written into an awarded project, gender components can be removed in the post-award negotiation process (pers. comm.).

Indonesia is an archipelagic nation composed of over 16,000 islands and has the second largest coastline in the world. Furthermore, Indonesia is the second largest fish producer globally, producing 5.4 million tons of fish in 2012, and has one of the highest dependences on fishery-resources for consumption (MMAF and USAID SEA Project 2018). As such, the conservation and biodiversity of marine resources is of concern for household food security as well as maintaining livelihoods. It is predicted that nearly 540,000 vessels engaged in capture harvest are small-scale, making up nearly 94 percent of the total engagement in capture fisheries.

Literature describing women's engagement in fisheries in Indonesia are present, though limited. A review of the available sources suggests that women's roles in Indonesian fisheries industry are similar to those of women across the globe, wherein women are primarily engaged in pre- and post-harvest sectors. Within pre-harvest, women typically prepare or collect live bait for fishing, prepare food for fishers, and repair gear (Fitriana and Stacey 2017). Within the harvest stage, women often glean in the nearshore environment for invertebrates and participate in seaweed farming, both of which often play a large role in food security and household nutrition in small-scale fishing households (Crawford 2002; Bjerregaard *et al.* 2016). Within post-harvest, women in Indonesia are the predominant actors in the processing and marketing of fish. Processing varies regionally and by the predominant fisheries harvest, however, within women's roles in marketing, they often control the local fisheries economy through determining price. Women also frequently play roles in the overall management of household finances and general management of family life. Furthermore, women are often engaged in capture harvest, though this is less common and varies greatly by region, religious affiliation, and cultural context.

Gender equity in general is of prioritized concern in Indonesia, as the nation is currently ranked 85th globally in terms of gender equality, falling far behind some neighboring nations (WEF 2018). It is impossible to separate overarching gender inequities that occur systematically within a nation state from the inequities experienced in fisheries. There are specific gender gaps that persist in the education system and religious affiliation practices that can further limit women's agency in society, especially in rural areas (WEF 2018; UNICEF 2003). As such, gender equity work can be made more complicated in the face of highly entrenched social norms that are continually reinforced throughout various aspects of Indonesian society.

Indonesia has made international and domestic commitments to gender equality, including ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and passing national Decree No. 15/2008 which recommends the use of gender mainstreaming in all areas of life and development. It should be recognized that the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF), which is the primary national governance body for fisheries management, attempted to adopt a gender mainstreaming approach in 2016 though has encountered difficulties with implementation, which include low capacity of provincial staff to carry out the work as well as a lack of formalized budget for gender mainstreaming (MMAF 2016).

iv. The USAID SEA Project

The USAID Sustainable Ecosystems Advanced (SEA) Project is a five-year project, taking place between 2016 and 2021 and is a partnership between the U.S. government and the Government of Indonesia to support and enhance fisheries management and biodiversity conservation in fisheries management area (FMA) 715. FMA-715 contains seven provinces, however the SEA Project is focused within three: North Maluku, Maluku, and West Papua. To support fisheries management, the SEA Project has two main objectives. The first is to improve

the sustainable use of marine resources through the enhancement and implementation of marine protected areas (MPAs) and fisheries management reform. The goal of this objective is to enhance fisheries production, improve food and nutrition security, and increase the number of sustainable livelihoods in FMA-715. The second objective is to strengthen the Ministry of Marine Affairs (MMAF), and provincial and local government's abilities to promote, implement, and enforce sustainable fishing practices and biodiversity conservation.

The SEA Project is highly cross-cutting and applies an integrated approach in which all strategic activities and technical approaches interact with each other and do not stand alone. The strategic approaches include to (i) create demand for conservation through awareness and advocacy, (ii) improve ecosystem management of FMA-715 and MPAs, (iii) increase incentives for marine stewardship, (iv) advance the development of marine and fisheries policies and regulations, and (v) institutionalize training and capacity building for fisheries management and marine conservation (USAID SEA 2017b). Embedded within the strategic approach of improving ecosystem management of FMA-715 are four technical approaches including applying an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, MPA management, inputs to marine spatial planning (MSP), and enhanced law enforcement practices.

In the 2016-2017 fiscal year, one of the USAID SEA Project implementing partners conducted a perception survey on program and conservation benefits. This report showed that women in project sites reported low knowledge on issues pertaining to climate change, fisheries practices, coral reef damage, illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, and regulations on shark and ray fishing, among other things (USAID SEA 2017a). This lower knowledge reported by women sparked the need for a gender assessment to find areas for improvement in their gender integration strategy, given women's large participation in fisheries in FMA-715. An

initial rapid gender analysis used in the SEA Project PAD found that women play large roles in processing, marketing, and valuation of fisheries harvest. It is important to note that no official report was written for this rapid analysis, and the project also has general gender statements written into their contract from USAID. Some components of the gender portion of the SEA Project contract are provided below.

“The Contractor must coordinate to ensure that all activities are responsive to gender considerations, and seek to ensure that the assistance provided and the results achieved are beneficial to both women and men. [...] Activities implemented under the SEA Project must appropriately integrate gender concerns into program implementation and seek to ensure that the assistance provided and the results achieved are beneficial to women and girls and reduce gender gaps identified during rapid assessments. [...] Gender considerations should also be examined through a Theory of Change-based approach. The gender-specific impacts of interventions, intermediate results, and ultimate results (both for ecosystems and for human systems) should be specified within the Development Hypotheses and linked to gender-specific indicators within the M&E Plan.”

The wording of this contract was perceived as vague, and at the time the SEA Project initiated, limited technical guidance was provided to fulfill the specific requirements described within the contract under USAID. Furthermore, the high complexity and cross-cutting nature of the SEA Project complicated the integration of gender mainstreaming, which is also highly cross-cutting. Given the SEA Project’s objective of improving their gender integration moving forward in compliance with their contractual obligations, the project serves as a good example for understanding barriers that have occurred in gender mainstreaming implementation thus far.

Objectives

This paper assesses to the extent gender policy evaporation is occurring within USAID fisheries projects within the context of the Sustainable Ecosystems Advanced (SEA) Project in Indonesia. Specifically, this article describes the effects of USAID's gender policy on the ability of individual actors to implement gender mainstreaming throughout a life of project (LOP). Additionally, this article describes policy evaporation within the context of a negative gender feedback loop and offers recommendations to reverse it into a positive feedback loop that better enables gender implementation through USAID projects moving forward.

Methods

The methods for this study included reviewing SEA Project and USAID documents pertaining to gender integration, as well as reviewing the broader literature surrounding gender and natural resources management. This work primarily relied on interviews with SEA Project staff and implementing partners.

i. Interviewing Methods

In all, fifteen interviews were conducted covering eleven SEA Project employees, and primarily the senior advisers. Four interviews were conducted with non-governmental organizations' representatives from SEA Project implementing partners. These interviews were administered with a semi-structured methodology, in which each interview was guided by a set of open-ended questions that allowed for elaboration or introduction of new topics by the interviewee (Appendix) (Dexter 2006). This ability to introduce new topics was vital for this study to elucidate challenges and barriers that were unforeseen previously by the researcher. Furthermore, the use of a semi-structured interview methodology allowed for probes, in which

follow-up questions were administered as relevant information was introduced. The length of interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 75 minutes.

Interviews were primarily conducted in-person and took place in Jakarta and Ambon. However, due to distance from the West Papua Regional SEA Project office, one interview was conducted over video call. All interviews were conducted in English, though some phrases and common words in Bahasa Indonesia were used to make describing the interviewees' experience simpler. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher and analyzed within ATLAS.ti software (Scientific Software Development, Berlin, www.atlasti.de). Within ATLAS.ti, codes were determined inductively in that they were chosen after all the interviews were conducted. The codes were chosen based on themes that were commonly discussed during the semi-structured interviews and included the following:

1. *Roles of Men and Roles of Women*: These two codes referred to any statement that pertained to the interviewees' perceptions of men and women in SEA Project work sites.
2. *Adaptive Capacity*: This code referred to any statement in which an interviewee identified an inability to change as new information regarding gender became available or an interviewee identified a time in which they successfully adapted to new information.
3. *Goal Alignment*: This code was applied to any statement that pertained to a misunderstanding of how the goals of gender equity related to the goals of the SEA Project or a statement that demonstrated the employees understanding of the relationship between gender equity and project outcomes.

4. *Institutional*: This code referred to any statement that was made regarding USAID's role in gender mainstreaming, including how the SEA Project was or was not well guided by USAID policies.
5. *Organizational Culture*: Lastly, this code was applied to statements pertaining to attitudes towards gender mainstreaming within the SEA Project, including, but not limited to, resistance or embracement of gender mainstreaming as an integral component of fisheries management.

ii. *Framework for Analysis*

After coding within ATLAS.ti was complete, interviews were analyzed within a gender-integrated project life cycle framework. This framework is most commonly used by gender consultants when assessing projects gender mainstreaming actions, however it lacks formal description in literature. A gender-integrated project life cycle framework was chosen due to its ability to describe the relative successes and challenges experienced by project staff at different stages of a LOP, as it places a gender lens within the project life cycle. Gender-integrated project life cycle frameworks are characterized by the following components:

1. *Diagnosis*: Identification of gender issues and establishing its relevance to the project
2. *Design*: Developing a project's vision and pathways to address gender issues
3. *Implementation*: Implementing actions to address gender issues
4. *Monitoring and Evaluation*: Measuring gender outcomes resulting from a project's activities

This analysis is further placed within the negative gender feedback loop representing gender policy evaporation (Fig. 1) to describe how challenges occurring within the stages of a project cycle are affected by and further solidify gender policy evaporation.

Results and Discussion

i. Diagnosis

a. Gender Analyses and the Perceptions of Men and Women

In order to properly diagnose gender issues, it is vital to have baseline data collected through a gender analysis. USAID ADS-205 articulates the requirement of country-level offices to conduct gender analyses with the expectation that this information will trickle down and be relevant for the project level. In the event that a project does not acquire all the necessary information to conduct gender planning through the country-level analysis, they are expected to conduct their own, given that gender work is written into the project contract. At the time of this study, the SEA Project had not yet conducted a thorough, project-specific gender analysis. There was a broad rapid gender analysis written into the SEA Project PAD, though no formal report was produced from this. As a result, it appears that SEA Project employees and implementing partners had a mixed understanding of the components typically included in a gender analysis regarding men and women. While describing the roles and responsibilities of men and women in FMA-715, men's roles remained consistent whereas women's roles varied between interviews. In fisheries, it was consistently articulated that men are highly active in capture fisheries.

“Husband[s] are doing the [fishing] and the female—I don't think they do anything regarding the fisheries... They only take care of the children.” (Implementing Partner 3)

“In local community and Indonesia, they divide the tasks for men to catch the fish and the wife—woman—processes the fish for salting.” (Implementing Partner 2)

Men were also consistently described as the breadwinners of households and the primary decision-makers in the public sphere and NRM regimes. This was in part attributed to *adat* and *sasi*, or customary law and management regimes, as well as local culture.

“From the cultural aspect in Buano, the men—the person to make decision is men. [...] From the Maluccas, cultural decision process I think mostly [includes] men. That’s why women in some areas [do] not have a big role in the decision process.” (Implementing Partner 2)

“Usually, in Maluku, they have traditional government. Like customary law and adat. [The roles in customary law] for managing the village and the members is actually 100% men. [They do not] yet involve the women for the issues I think.” (Implementing Partner 2)

Of the fifteen interviews conducted, thirteen individuals perceived women as highly influential in the household and pre- and post-harvest fisheries activities. The perceived roles of women in FMA-715 fisheries included processing of harvest, marketing and selling of catch, harvesting in the nearshore environment and out at sea, law enforcement, and preparing for men’s fishing.

“Usually if men want to go fishing, women prepare everything. Like sometimes, they buy petrol and they provide food, they go to the market to buy bait—buy everything, prepare everything. Women support and contribute and then [...] after catching, men give every responsibility to women to look after, or even decide the price.” (SEA Project 9)

“The men catch the fish, and then [they come] home and the wives process the fish for the salting and together with fire—smoked fish. In Buano Island, [...] usually the women dry the octopus and sell it to other islands. [...] Because in local community in Indonesia, they

divide the task for men to catch the fish and then the women, they are selling the fish. Here they're called mamalele. Mamalele is the person who is selling the fish." (Implementing Partner 2)

Two interviewees were unsure if women's participation was significant in the fisheries sector and instead described their roles as primarily in the household. These roles included taking care of children and household tasks. It is common for women's support in fishing households to be considered domestic work rather than work that is integral to capture harvest within Indonesian fishery household culture. Understanding and assessing the contributions of women beyond household work is made even more complicated as the national census classifications place the category of "fisherman's wife" as a domestic role (Fitriana and Stacey 2017). This categorization ultimately disregards the nuance of women's roles in fisheries and groups all activities together. Often this support category is solidified in cultural and religious practices common to the region.

"Women in our site are looked at as housewives, taking care of kids, making food for the husband. It's like that." (SEA Project 7)

"Mostly women now in Muslim project sites—they are just housewives. They help their husband on a daily basis by providing food, cooking, and taking care of kids." (SEA Project 10)

In addition to mixed-understanding of women's participation in fisheries among interviewees, perceptions of women's roles in the public sphere varied. Men were described as the predominant decision-makers, whereas women were described as either weak and shy or strong and vocal. This was often dependent on the local context and region within FMA-715.

“Women in Raja Ampat are strong and they have higher ownership than [in Maluku]. [In Maluku], women are shy, you know? Raja Ampat is different.” (SEA Project 7)

“I’m not saying that women in Eastern culture are not more open but traditionally, men take care of [public decision-making]. But now it’s improving in Maluku and also in West Papua. I mean, women in West Papua and especially in South Sorong, are more vocal and heavily active during consultation.” (Implementing Partner 1)

This difference in perception of women as well as the variation among worksite communities and provinces points to the need for a thorough gender analysis to clarify women’s roles within the context of the SEA Project. Some interviewees reported that they had limited information regarding women’s roles in communities which makes it difficult to understand how women’s involvement could be incorporated into the project.

“There’s limited information at the village level. Very, very limited everywhere. Not only for our site, all the [SEA Project] sites, and there’s limited information for women’s activities.”
(Implementing Partner 4)

Information regarding women’s activities is vital to understanding the local context in which a project is working, especially in Indonesia given the large variation in perception of women between provinces in FMA-715. It is difficult to adequately assess and measure impacts of a project’s activities on men and women without a clear understanding of fisheries participation, roles, and the relationship between men and women in project sites. This difficulty is compounded with gender in fisheries data scarcity which necessitates the collection of data by individual projects rather than accessing it through past reports or databases (Kleiber *et al.* 2015). Furthermore, for projects to comply with gender-integration requirements, projects are permitted

to conduct an “abbreviated” gender analysis which requires less in-depth assessment of gender roles, constraints and opportunities, and relative effects of a project’s activities on men and women (APC 2012). USAID should consider requiring projects to conduct a full gender analysis at the beginning of a LOP to enhance the quality of gender diagnosis and subsequent design in future projects.

b. Gender-Specific Training and Building Capacity

Gender training is a second vital component of diagnosis given that it enables and assists projects in thinking through gender issues within their context (Moser and Moser 2010). Under ADS-205, gender training is required for USAID staff in D.C. as well as USAID staff in mission offices, however this is not extended to the project level. Strategies for engaging women in capture fisheries and aquaculture projects differ from those in sectors such as health, infrastructure, or other NRM sectors because women’s roles and visibility vary greatly within them. At the time this research was conducted, the project was halfway through their five-year timeline and employees had not received gender training in their role with the SEA Project. Gender training is considered important because it enhances the capacity of individual employees to carry out gender work within their role and the specific context in which they are working. Interviewees from the SEA Project articulated that even with some gender-based information and experience conducting gender mainstreaming in other sectors, they were unsure of how to plan for gender integration in a fisheries project.

“This is a very new context for me, marine and fisheries. In my previous work background in [other social sectors] there are always gender components in that area. Like how women can raise their voice... We encourage women to collectively come together into a group but in marine fisheries I still don’t know how.” (SEA Project 6)

Moser and Moser (2010) discuss the need for gender training in international agencies to further understand basic gender concepts, the relevance of gender to their work, and how gender can be mainstreaming in their working roles. Even if employees and implementing partners have received gender training in the past, it is best to refresh their understanding and tailor trainings to the specific context of the project and sector they are working in to better comprehend relevance (Moser and Moser 2010).

“I think by not having a gender specialist in house for the SEA Project and not having gender-specific training talking about how gender can be incorporated was problematic from the beginning.” (SEA Project 6)

In order to assist in proper diagnosis of gender issues in projects, USAID should consider creating a policy that requires gender and sector-specific training for employees implementing partners that are involved in a project early on. In order to ensure cultural sensitivity, it is best for trainings to be conducted by an expert who is from the country or region in which the project is occurring (Wallace 1998). In the context of the SEA Project, this training could be conducted by a local women’s group, a gender specialist involved with an implementing partner, or a gender specialist employed by the project itself. With gender training and gender analyses conducted at the beginning of the LOP, projects can have more robust data and stronger capacity to meaningfully design gender plans from the onset of a fisheries project.

ii. Design

The design of gender mainstreaming is tightly linked to diagnosis, in that the design of mainstreaming gender issues is grounded in baseline data and a staff’s capacity to carry out gender work. The design of the SEA Project gender mainstreaming approach outlined in their

contract is to ensure that the assistance provided by and results of the project are beneficial to both women and men. The contract stated that the SEA Project must “integrate gender concerns into program implementation.” However, the gender strategy of the SEA Project was written after the fisheries-specific activities and approaches were written instead of being considered in tandem. This difference in timeline likely led to difficulty in designing a systematic approach to gender that fit into the sustainability and conservation goals due to the lack of robust gender baseline data in the diagnosis phase.

“In terms of the gender strategy, of course that wasn’t even in our—Some of these activities weren’t even in our work plan and the gender strategy was written at the end of the first year when we didn’t know [where] the MPAs were. We didn’t even know we were going to be working in Mare where the women have a strong component. So I think now I could write a much better strategy than we did then.” (SEA Project 1)

Since the SEA Project is primarily focused on sustainable fisheries, the activities were designed to predominantly target men from the beginning since they are the primary actors in harvest within capture fisheries. This is apparent in the SEA Project’s activity of nominating “champions.” Champions are individuals from work site communities who are trained in promoting sustainable fishing and conservation practices. Despite some understanding of women’s significant roles in the fisheries supply chain and roles as harvest fishers in some regions, men were still predominantly targeted.

“So far, the champions are fishers. I think they have been targeted specifically. So when I went to a site a few months ago, [...] practically in all the activities, [there were] mostly all men.” (SEA Project 3)

This low involvement by women was true for both the champions program and for general trainings and workshops. The low targeting of women in project design and lack of capacity for engaging women led to low participation. Invitations to workshops were often extended by community leaders, who primarily offered invitations to men. This expectation of men's participation in workshops could relate back to the Indonesian education system in which men are encouraged to pursue technical education, whereas women are encouraged to pursue social sciences in line with their household roles in communities (UNICEF 2003).

“We have a small number of females for the champion as well, since I also included all the participation in [behavior change activities] and also the MPA and MSP. So the numbers come up as 94% [participation by men] and 6% [participation by women].”

(SEA Project 4)

In the SEA Project Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Report, gender project management indicators were provided for all strategic approaches addressed by the SEA Project. These included measurement indicators for gender action, including but not limited to the number of women with increased economic benefits, the number of women with more secure tenure or managed access, and the number of women that apply improved conservation law enforcement practices. These indicators did not have specific quantitative targets and the strategic activities to address these indicators were vague. For example, the project sought to achieve gender inclusion through measuring the number of women trained in sustainable natural resources management and/or biodiversity conservation. The mechanism to achieve this was to “include gender in marine and fishery resources training activities.” The direct activities through which this would occur were not specified within the SEA Project's work plans nor annual reports.

Well-designed gender-specific targets in project design are critical to successful gender outcomes. Projects tend to prioritize what they measure and having quantifiable measures for gender integration holds projects accountable for their actions (Moser 2007). By having specific indicators that reflect the gender goals of the project, employees are more likely to see the value in actions to meet those goals. Furthermore, it can enhance transparency and hold project's and institutions accountable for their actions. Within the SEA Project, it was believed that clarity in gender targets would likely lead to gender implementation.

“You have to make it clear in your plan. So your targets are women’s groups or female groups. If you want to have trainings you can ask when you send invitations to offices, we could ask, ‘We want you to send two participants, can you send one female?’ You can meet that [goal] but it’d have to be very clear. When you look at our overall work plan, it’s not mentioned there how many women you want to be participating in it.” (SEA Project 8)

There are gender-specific activities in the SEA Project work plan that seek to work with women’s groups. These include working with value-added products or enhancing the quality of post-harvest practices (e.g. salting or smoking of fish by women) to increase income to households, as well as working with women’s groups for education on marine resources. However, these activities were not connected to an overall gender plan or design, though they were connected to general conservation goals.

It is important to design a gender mainstreaming plan from the onset of a project to ensure work responsibilities for individual employees can meaningfully accommodate gender-specific work that is relevant for the conservation goals of the project as well as addressing gender equity issues. If an individual employee decides to add more gender-specific components into their work, the absence of a plan, gender analyses, or targets to work towards can create extra work.

One SEA Project employee discussed conducting their own rapid analyses. When asked if they felt like they had the information they needed to design gender into their work they said:

“If I do it longer, yes. But I think there’s a time constraint. I think the most fatal [mistake] is when [USAID] issued or when they announced the [request for proposal], because [gender] should be well-written in the [request for proposal], so when any project— any company participates in the bidding, if [gender] is well-written and it’s what is required, then that will be well-included.” (SEA Project 5)

If employees and implementing partners are not aware of their roles from the beginning for gender mainstreaming, it is very difficult to add them in later, given that their duties are already clearly outlined and taking up a large amount of their time. There were doubts by two interviewees that gender could be incorporated after the LOP was already halfway complete. When asked if the SEA Project had the capacity to include gender for the remainder of the project, one employee responded:

“Nope. Because basically all the partners know what they have to do for the whole project for the five years. They don’t have specifics, but they know the big umbrella of what activities they have to do. Only one or two of the partners mention actually training women’s groups and then that’s it.” (SEA Project 8)

With all duties and responsibilities outlined for the employees and implementing partners, it could be perceived as a strain in time and resources to add more gender-specific activities after the project design has already been solidified.

“Somehow, maybe some small practical things we can adopt. But part of the gender perspective for others thing—too much work maybe. [...] In USAID, they didn’t mention

about how many percent [of beneficiaries should be women]. But in my previous project, [we needed] 30%. It was [in agriculture]. It was probably UN. So hopefully [you don't] make heavy work for the USAID SEA Project if it's not yet in the contract, because it takes energy.” (SEA Project 9)

A tool to alleviate the burden of extra work and to assist in guiding design formulation is the construction of a gender-specific theory of change. The IUCN and USAID recently produced a technical guidance report of gender integration in fisheries projects (Silas *et al.* 2019). A large part of this guidance document discusses how to construct a gender theory of change that is consistent with the theory of change model that is used for biodiversity conservation projects in USAID (Fig. 2). The suggested theory of change model for gender integration is constructed by creating strategic approaches to advance gender equity that ultimately contribute to the biodiversity conservation goals of the larger project. Creating this model enables projects to strengthen gender integration and mainstreaming by clearly describing the strategic approaches and specific interventions, as well as guiding monitoring and evaluation efforts.

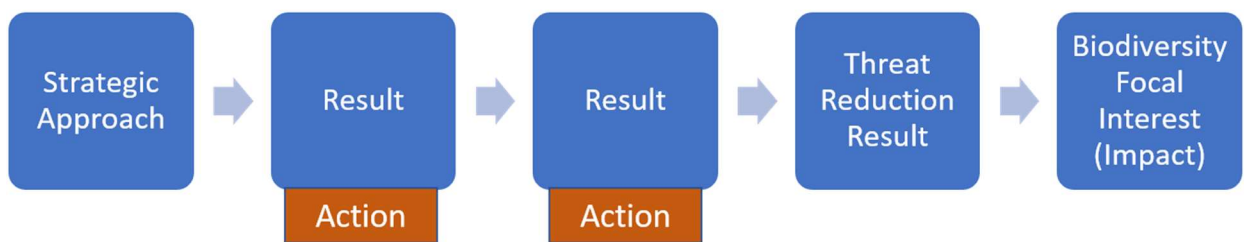


Figure 2. The general theory of change approach for biodiversity conservation projects in USAID. Integrating gender into a theory of change enables projects to think critically about how gender integration can benefit their biodiversity outcomes (USAID 2016).

The SEA Project contract stated that gender issues should be examined through a Theory of Change Approach and linked to gender-specific indicators. However, at the beginning of the SEA Project, there were no technical guidance documents from USAID on how to do this. With the document provided by Silas *et al.* (2019), the process of developing gender theory of changes for projects should be clearer moving forward. These strategies should be required to be submitted with the project's larger theories of change for conservation and biodiversity from the onset of projects to ensure employees can allocate time and resources to the activities.

iii. Implementation

Implementation of gender mainstreaming is inconsistent throughout international development agencies (Aror-Jonsson 2014; Kawarazuka *et al.* 2017). Implementation is heavily reliant on gender planning at the beginning of a project. Despite the fact that the SEA Project did not have a specific gender plan or approach that was integrating in all of the activities, many employees and implementing partners were attempting to incorporate a gender perspective into their individual work. The only consistent requirement for gender mainstreaming in projects under USAID is the collection of sex-disaggregated data. This limited requirement was viewed as problematic because the collection of exclusively quantitative data may not capture nuances of gender inequality and empowerment results, especially considering the collection of sex-disaggregated data was not connected to a larger goal or strategy. It is not uncommon for gender priorities to disappear, or evaporate, from projects. One interviewee described how gender components were systematically deprioritized within official reports for USAID.

“I think this is an institutional failure [...] that there are some things which are implied, or they hope that just by showing gender disaggregation they account for it, but it's not the same. And that's a weakness in program design and institutionality from USAID [...].”

I mean, I don't think anyone would deny that. [...] And so the point is, 'Well, just make sure you have gender.' So, we have to put the gender. We should be writing more gender into our things, but again, everything says, 'Cut it down, cut it down' because our project is far more complex than other projects." (SEA Project 1)

The limited information in official reports and the absence of clear gender plans and targets can limit implementation and further deprioritize gender actions.

"If we look at what the partners say or mention to us, some of their reports have a really small section about gender inclusion, usually in their quarterly or annual report. There's not a lot of information in there, which means that, 'Okay, the roles of the women in this site are probably pretty much the same.'" (SEA Project 8)

In the case of encouraging women's participation in trainings and workshops, at least two SEA Project Employees created gender-sensitive guidelines for invitations. For example, the SEA Project sent two community members from each of the three work site provinces to the United States to do a rotation with the National Park Service to learn about MPA management. Five individuals were nominated, and this employee ensured women had access to the program.

"I got approval for five candidates which I interviewed with other counterparts inside of SEA and from that we would select two per province. In that criteria, I made sure that [...] of the five candidates nominated, at least two were women. Two of the three provinces did that. So [...] three of the six who are going will be women... So I'm very excited about that." (SEA Project 1)

NGO implementing partners did have some mechanisms to increase women's participation in meetings and trainings. Implementing partners had the ability to schedule

activities at a time that accommodated women's availability and to go directly to women to understand their perspective on MPAs.

"We have a series of socialization on Lease Island and [...] it's about 200 or more people because it's more than 30 villages. So we're happy that may more than 25% [of the participants are] women. So we are quite happy. But in other places like Buano, it's very hard to ask women to formal meetings [...]. So we need different strategies, so we need to come directly to the [woman's] house, not through someone else."

(Implementing Partner 3)

These implemented actions yielded success in increasing women's engagement with the SEA Project, but there was no formal statement of this occurring within reports. This lack of available information underlines the importance of reporting for the purpose of sharing successes and actions that worked.

It was often discussed that implementing partners played a larger role in worksite communities and that they were responsible for finding entry points for the implementation of gender work. However, one implementing partner articulated that they did not have adequate guidance in gender mainstreaming and that they were waiting for orders from the SEA Project. Meanwhile, SEA Project employees were waiting to hear ideas for gender work from implementing partners.

"We are not implementing. I am not the person implementing, but I listen to our implementing partners. Sometimes they come, they talk with me, 'Hey we have this and this.' And then I ask them, [...] I read the report—but then I give an idea. Do this, do this, do this—follow these steps." (SEA Project 7)

“But [the gender component] is a little bit fake, right? [...] Because the SEA Project does not have the specific guidelines on how to ensure [the] gender approach is [in] cooperation with our field activities—the steps or specific indicators—aside from numbers. [...] We will do that if there are guidelines provided for us.” (Implementing Partner 1)

In the SEA Project, it appears implementing gender activities was made more challenging by limited information flow and understanding of responsibilities between the SEA Project employees and implementing partners. SEA Project employees understood that implementing partners had a greater ability to identify opportunities at the community level, but implementing partners were waiting for guidance from the SEA Project. This slowed implementation of gender action and would be corrected by a more detailed gender design and outlining of responsibilities for gender mainstreaming at the onset of the project.

The SEA Project has been attempting to implement gender mainstreaming through a combined approach. A combined approach to gender mainstreaming is one in which the responsibility for implementing mainstreaming is shared amongst staff (Moser and Moser 2010). However, typically a combined approach is characterized by support from a gender specialist on staff. The implementation of gender mainstreaming is more successful with an internal gender specialist who is available to assist employees and partners, and gender equity results are typically improved (Wallace 1998). A review of development projects within the Asian Development Bank found that even if projects had weak gender plans, implementation and gender equity results were significantly better than those that did not have a gender specialist on staff (Hunt *et al.* 2010). This is due to their ability to build capacity and ensure monitoring of gender equality results.

The SEA Project staff did not have a gender specialist, and though employees were implementing actions where they were able, a gender specialist on staff could be able to assist in clarifying plans, actions, and points of entry for gender parity. In the context of the SEA Project, employees and implementing partners were more than willing to integrate gender more into their work given guidance and clear outlining of responsibilities. Oftentimes, when gender specialists are not integrated into the project staff or are contracted as outside consultants, their power to advise or influence project decisions can be limited (Schalkwyk 1998). USAID currently does not require gender specialists at the project level and should consider making their presence compulsory. Furthermore, evidence suggests that gender specialists should be culturally sensitive and from the area in which they are working (Wallace 1998). Having a full-time gender specialist on staff would support effective implementation and the gender specialist would have the time and capacity to explore challenges and opportunities for the project.

iv. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are critical for maintaining transparency and accountability for commitment to gender mainstreaming outcomes in development projects (World Bank 2009). Currently, USAID guidance for gender compliance only requires that one gender-specific indicator be reported throughout a LOP (APC 2012). The critical first step towards more robust gender M&E is the collection of sex-disaggregated data, which USAID projects, including the SEA Project, are already doing. The next step would be comparing these data against specific indicators to measure progress and assess room for improvement. Though required, M&E in general can be perceived as an expensive and time-consuming process and the monitoring of additional gender indicator data can be viewed as burdensome (World Bank 2009). In the SEA Project, there was concern that setting too detailed of an M&E plan would lead to an

inability to achieve target goals, especially given the complicated cultural context that they are working within.

“In the M&E plan, it is mentioned that, for this indicator, it is segregated between male and female. But that’s it. There’re no specific targets, no. I mean, it’d probably be kind of difficult to achieve if you set it very detailed like that, and with the culture here, they’re probably afraid that if you put it too detailed that we’re not going to achieve it.” (SEA Project 8)

There was also an articulated concern that monitoring quantitative measures of women’s participation would not adequately capture more nuanced qualitative factors of women’s empowerment.

“The numbers are important. But that is not the most important. There are other factors to consider. What if we have one meeting, the ratio between male and female—there’s more women than men? But male is dominant. Female, although they have numbers, they lose the grip of the meeting.” (Implementing Partner 1)

The prioritization of quantitative measurements is an often-discussed weakness of gender monitoring in projects. Many practitioners believe that reducing women’s empowerment and participation to numbers allows organizations to subvert greater systemic change (Rao and Kelleher 2005). This concern relates back to diagnosis and design of projects in that the diagnosis should identify qualitative gender issues, such as agency in public-decision making spheres, and the design should include indicators to capture qualitative as well as quantitative measurements of women’s empowerment. Best practices for qualitative measurements include the conducting of focus group discussions, perception surveys, and social mapping tools (Barker

et al. 2004). Furthermore, within the project design, gender trainings need to equip employees with the capacity to measure these outcomes and adequate financial resources need to be allocated to complete this type of detailed data collection.

Only requiring the use of one gender-specific indicator throughout projects under USAID may be insufficient to accurately and effectively assess the outcomes of gender components within projects (APC 2012). USAID should consider instituting a requirement for more detailed M&E plans that capture both qualitative and quantitative measurements of gender outcomes in projects to ensure transparency and commitment to gender mainstreaming. The collection of these data should be written in a formal report that is available to the public and other projects to further combat data scarcity.

Gender mainstreaming is also meant to be an adaptive process in which strategies and plans can be altered given new information. Adaptation and adjustments are an essential component after M&E is has been conducted. M&E can reveal which indicators require more attention or strategic action. This may necessitate the returning to the diagnosis phase of gender planning in the project cycle. Institutional culture should affirm that shortcomings in achieving targets do not indicate failure but rather a learning experience to build upon.

v. From Evaporation to Implementation throughout the Project Life Cycle

The USAID SEA Project is a highly cross-cutting endeavor with multiple moving parts across multiple levels of Indonesian government. It was not necessarily an unwillingness to incorporate gender that led to complications of implementation within the SEA Project, but rather a lack of support and institutional policies from USAID that keep gender as a lower priority within conservation projects. This reduced prioritization is a symptom of a negative

feedback loop (Fig. 3). This low prioritization within contractual agreements between USAID and implementors limits the strength of gender plans from the beginning of a project life cycle.

Within these contracts, unclear gender plans can include limited gender-specific indicators and unclear connections between gender equity work and conservation project objectives. Further difficulties occur when projects are not required to have a gender specialist on staff to aid in implementation as well as administer gender training to staff, which would enable an integrated approach to gender mainstreaming. As such, implementation remains inconsistent, which can limit the broader international development community's understanding of gender-inclusive outcomes. The absence of an understanding of outcomes and formalized, public reporting further contributes to global gender scarcity which is so often considered a barrier to gender mainstreaming work.

To combat this negative feedback loop and policy evaporation, the following recommendations are made to be incorporated into USAID gender mainstreaming policies:

1. *Gender analysis required at the project level:* Though a rapid analysis is acceptable for projects to complete, requiring a full, detailed gender analysis requirement will serve to prioritize gender concerns from the onset of a LOP. More robust baseline data can further enable design by elucidating gender issues and priorities that, when addressed, can both work towards gender equity as well as the overarching conservation goals of a project.
2. *Gender theory of change to guide gender strategy:* Completing a gender theory of change is not required, however, a technical guidance document has been created to aid fisheries and aquaculture projects in constructing them for the sector. Gender-specific theories of change can aid in the design of projects by providing a roadmap connecting gender equity work with the goals of a project. Through this, the connection between gender equity and

conservation can become clearer and enhance commitment to gender mainstreaming actions.

3. *Gender specialist required at the project level:* Gender specialists are only required under USAID at the institutional, regional, and mission level currently. There is evidence that gender specialists greatly improve the success of gender implementation which can then improve social, economic, and environmental outcomes at the project level. Gender specialists can also be responsible for administering trainings as well as assist in the diagnosis and design of gender-sensitive planning.
4. *Gender training required for staff at the project level:* Evidence suggests that a combined approach to gender mainstreaming is most effective in which means that each individual employee in a project carries out gender activities with the support and guidance of a gender specialist. In order to understand how to carry out gender mainstreaming activities, a gender training to build capacity is highly recommended. Furthermore, gender training should not be a one-off event but is best repeated throughout a project to reinforce understanding and build upon new information.
5. *Gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) reporting represents qualitative and quantitative measures for gender empowerment and equity:* There is a common saying “what gets measured, gets managed”. Having more than a single gender-specific indicator holds projects accountable for gender mainstreaming. Reporting of gender-specific information is necessary to increase transparency and provide relevant data to the global community to reduce data scarcity. Lastly, these indicators should reflect both qualitative and quantitative measures for women’s empowerment and participation to better monitor the nuances of gender mainstreaming work over time.

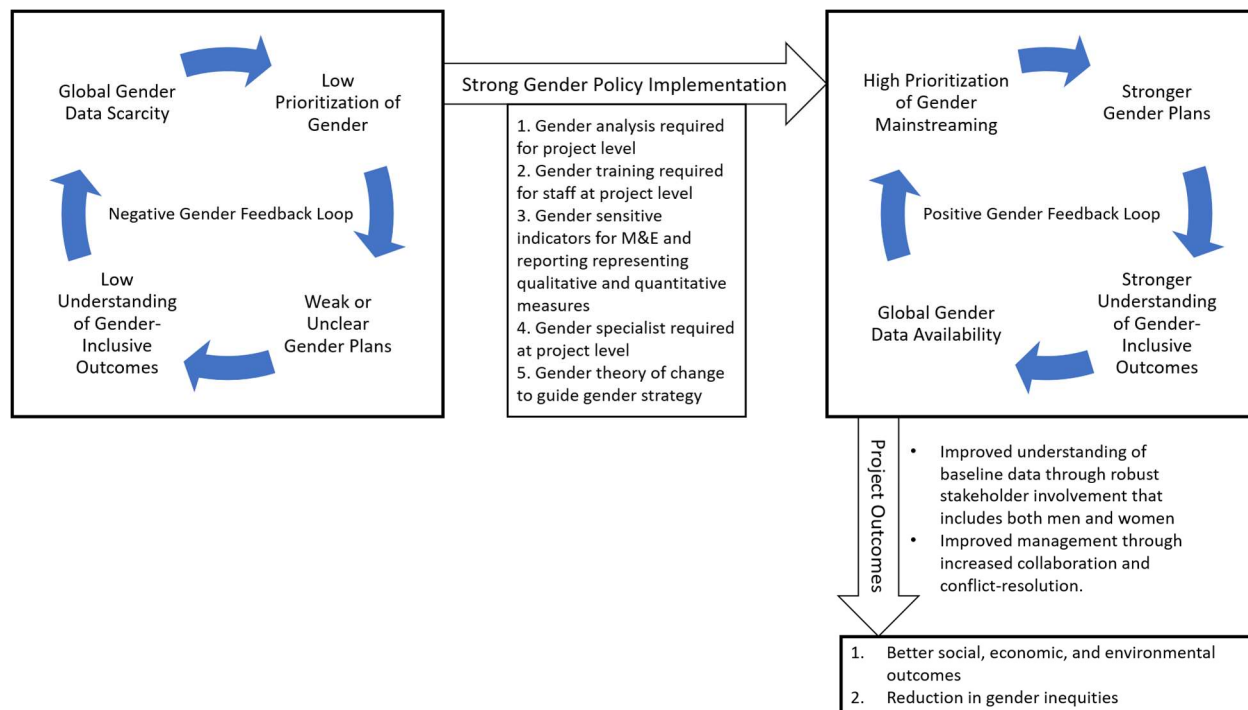


Figure 3. The negative gender feedback loop may keep persisting, serving to deprioritize gender within NRM projects. With the implementation of policies that enable strong gender planning, the negative feedback loop may be reversed into a positive feedback loop in which gender mainstreaming is consistently implemented. This could lead to enhanced project as well as gender equity outcomes.

The implementation of stronger gender policies could reverse the negative gender feedback loop into a positive one (Fig. 3). Through stronger policies, gender mainstreaming will be more highly prioritized within projects throughout USAID. As such, stronger gender plans can be written which would lead to a better understanding of gender-inclusive outcomes in NRM projects. With a better understanding of outcomes and more reporting of results, there would be reduced gender data scarcity in the fisheries sector. As gender data in fisheries becomes more widely available, new opportunities and room for improvement can be identified which may

feedback and translate into higher prioritization of gender mainstreaming moving forward. When the recommended policy components listed above are not implemented, projects may miss the potential benefits that are frequently observed associated with gender mainstreaming within NRM projects.

Conclusion

It is clear that USAID is currently experiencing a case of gender policy evaporation at the project level. The SEA Project demonstrates that despite having strong upper-level institutional policies regarding gender, it is still difficult and often confusing to implement gender mainstreaming at the project level. This policy evaporation has led to a negative feedback loop which ultimately serves to perpetuate gender data scarcity and the low prioritization of gender mainstreaming. Promisingly, the often-cited low commitment to gender work by individual actors was not found within the SEA Project. Individuals were willing to integrate gender equity into their work given guidance and structure within their roles. As such, with the implementation of stronger gender policies, including required gender specialists, gender training, gender theories of change, and M&E practices, USAID could create the conditions for more detailed gender components of NRM projects. These meaningful incorporations could lead to better social, economic, and environmental outcomes while also contributing to global indicators, including the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5.

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Appendix

Interview Guide for USAID SEA Gender Assessment – Version 8/23/18

1. Background on Interviewee

What is your name and job title? Do you give me permission to record this interview?

Tell me about your position with USAID SEA Project.

What organization do you work for? How long have you been working with the organization?

Could you very briefly describe what “gender in development” means to you?

Do gender considerations enter into your planning for activities in the field site work?

2. Strategic Activities, Tasks and Gender

What activities/technical approaches do you focus on for your work sites (i.e. MPAs, MSP, law enforcement, or sustainable fisheries)? In what region(s)?

What are the different “tasks”/strategic approaches within these activities (for example: vessel registration within sustainable fisheries) that you work on?

Follow-up: What are the different roles of men and women in these tasks?

Follow-up: What are the social/cultural reasons behind female participation or lack of participation in these tasks?

3. Interventions at Field Sites

In general, what are the different roles of men and women in the regions/field sites you work in? (May be answered in previous question)

At the Province level, what activities/interventions are being implemented in relation to the tasks/strategic approaches you have mentioned?

Follow-up: Is gender incorporated into the planning of these activities? How? or Why not?

Are any gender specific activities/interventions occurring in the field sites/technical approaches you work with?

Follow-up: How were these activities chosen? What is the desired outcome?

Follow-up: How are these activities expected to contribute to the overall goals of the SEA Project?

Follow-up: How are these activities expected to contribute to women's empowerment in the field sites/communities?

Follow-up: Could there potentially be any negative effects for women? What are they? Were these mitigated for by the SEA Project?

or

Follow-up: Why not?

4. Future Plans

Is there any plan to further engage women in SEA Project activities/interventions in the future?

Follow-up: What is the expected benefit to the SEA Project by engaging women in this way?

or

Follow-up: Why are there are no plans currently in place?

Have you had any ideas in ways to engage women in the SEA Project in the future? What are they?

Follow-up: What would the outcome of these activities be in your opinion? How would you suggest measuring the outcomes?

Follow-up: What would you or the SEA Project need to make these plans happen? What are the barriers to these activities occurring?

5. Thoughts on gender and fisheries

How do you see gender integration/interventions contributing to the goals and objectives of the SEA Project?

or

Do you think gender integration/interventions are important for the SEA Project?

Follow-up: Why or why not?

Follow-up: In your opinion, how can gender integration contribute to communities/field sites? How can gender integration help the SEA Project meet their goals?

Do you feel well-informed on gender/the roles of men and women at the field sites?

Follow-up: Are you interested in learning more or engaging more with gender integration? Why or why not?

Follow-up: What would be the best to further your understanding?

or

Follow-up: How did you build your understanding of gender and fisheries at the field sites?

Do you have any questions for me or other suggestions to make?