



for resilience

Assessing impact and learning from the  
*Integrated Community Based Adaptation in the  
Mekong (ICAM) Project*

Lead author: Miguel Coulier

Co-authors: Nguyen Thi Yen, Ha Thi Kim Lien, Dang Tran Thi Trang Nha

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## Acronyms

CBA	Community Based Adaptation
CBDRM	Community Based Disaster Risk Management
CC	Climate change
CCCAG	Community based Climate Change Action Grants
CCRD	Centre for Rural Communities Research and Development
CRL	Climate Resilient Livelihoods
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVCA	Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EOP	End of Project
ICAM	Integrated Community Based Adaptation in the Mekong
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
NCE	No Cost Extension
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRD	New Rural Development Program
PAOT	Participatory Action Oriented Training
REMW	Remote Ethnic Minority Women
S-CCWG	Southern Climate Change Working Group
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan

## Executive summary

The Mekong Delta region, inhabited by 17.2 million people, has been undergoing rapid socio-economic change which is to continue at current trends for years to come. Development has brought remarkable benefits but also puts pressure on people and resources. The combination of a dense population, low elevation, and high dependency on natural resources renders the delta highly exposed and sensitive to climate change. Building community resilience to climate change, in particular for the ones most at-risk, is in this context ambitious and not an easy task. So was the CARE in Vietnam *Integrated Community Based Adaptation in the Mekong* (ICAM) Project, launched mid-2012 and finalized in December 2015.

Through interlinked interventions on climate risk analysis and planning, resilient livelihoods, disaster risk reduction and behavior change, the project directly benefited more than 8,066 beneficiaries (61% women) and indirectly reached 75% of the target communities. The backbone of the project was a remarkable investment in multi-level partnerships, institutional capacity strengthening, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management.

The ICAM project was most successful with regards to community based adaptation (CBA) planning, with the considerable effort in institutional capacity strengthening clearly having multiple benefits. Actual community resilience-building measures were supported based on the planning results and therefore started later than expected. This did not influence the impact of disaster risk reduction measures, but limited the full potential of interventions on livelihoods and behavior change. Still, even within this limited time, the project did increase incomes, influenced farmer livelihood decision-making processes, caused a shift in how local authorities carry out awareness raising and contributed significantly to learning on resilient livelihoods. Livelihood and behavior change methodologies are now being replicated by Government partners through their own programs, which is a commendable achievement of the project.

Recognizing that the project was not solely focused on or targeting ethnic minority women's empowerment, the efforts made by ICAM on integrating gender and ethnic minority issues into all project activities are significant, and noteworthy contributions have been made, specifically on access to information and flexible finance, participation in public decision-making, access to public spaces and voice in community planning.

The dynamic role of CARE in Vietnam at the national and Mekong Delta level contributed to promoting the role of civil society organizations in climate change adaptation work, and utilizing ICAM project learning and evidence for advocacy purpose. The project's systematic learning and reflection produced a rich set of lessons towards further advancing and enhancing CBA. More specifically materials, including videos, were published on gender and climate change, climate resilient livelihoods, planning for community based adaptation, voice of ethnic minorities in climate change adaptation through community photo storytelling, and microfinance for resilient livelihoods.

With much time and effort devoted to capacity-building and learning on what CBA means in a Mekong Delta context, the project created a basis whose long-term benefits are likely to emerge fully in months and years to come. While the ICAM project has built foundations, investment in community resilience for people most at risk of climate change deserves a long term commitment, by local authorities, donors and CARE. For the ICAM project to truly live up to its potential and sustain lasting impact at local and national level, the report concludes with a number of recommendations for follow-up programming.

## 1. Project background

The project ‘*Integrated Community-based adaptation in the Mekong*’ (ICAM) aimed to increase the resilience to climate change of the most at-risk communities in the Mekong Delta. It was implemented in three communes in An Giang province and two communes in Soc Trang province, in partnership with the Women’s Unions of An Giang and Soc Trang and the Vietnamese Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Centre for Rural Communities Research and Development (CCRD). The project was based on an indirect implementation approach: it facilitated a multi-level, multi-stakeholder planning and implementation process involving various government agencies in charge of agriculture and rural development, natural resources and environment, and disaster preparedness and response, which was to see enhanced household and community resilience as a process result.

The specific outcomes of the ICAM project were:

**Outcome 1:** Communities and local authorities have improved capacity to undertake gender-sensitive analysis and planning for community-based adaptation (CBA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

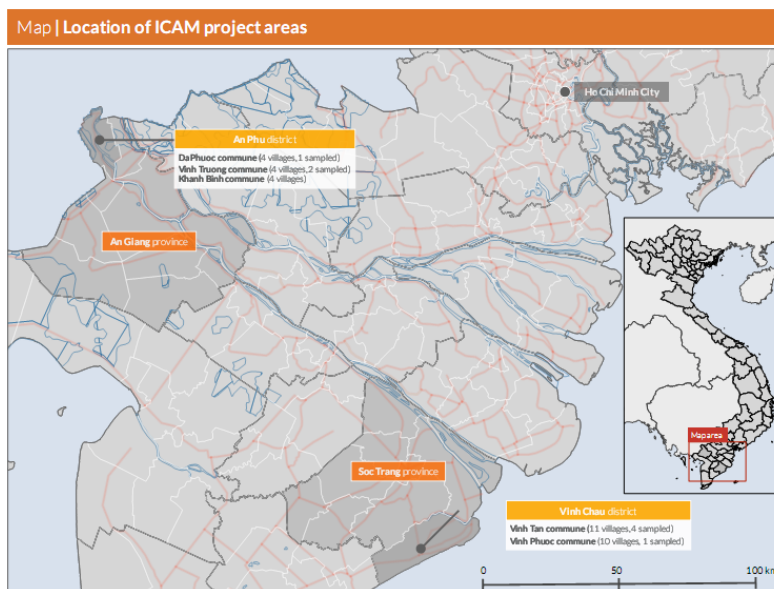
**Outcome 2:** Improved community resilience through the implementation of sustainable, community-level, integrated CBA and DRR interventions that benefit vulnerable people, particularly women.

**Outcome 3:** A strong evidence base and strengthened civil society provide a foundation for the scale up of community-based, equitable and gender-sensitive adaptation in the Mekong Delta region.

The ICAM project supported communities in two different geographical settings – upstream riverine and downstream coastal (*see map*). *An Phu district* in An Giang province borders Cambodia and is about 180 km upstream from the river mouth. In An Giang, ICAM focused its support on 12 villages across the three communes of Da Phuoc, Vinh Truong, and Khanh Binh. Meanwhile, *Vinh Chau district* in Soc Trang province is located on the coastline. Here, the ICAM project targeted 21 villages across the two communes of Vinh Tan and Vinh Phuoc.

A six months mobilization phase was followed in 2013 by a significant investment in climate resilient livelihoods action research, institutional capacity building on gender-sensitive CBA and the actual CBA planning. Livelihood and DRR implementation commenced in January 2014 concurrently with behavior change communication activities. Throughout the project timeframe on-going efforts focused on monitoring and evaluation (M&E), civil society strengthening and integration of gender.

The project was intended to be implemented over a period of 2.5 years (July 2012 till December 2014) but benefited from two six months no-cost extensions (NCE): the first NCE, from January till June 2015, to conclude implementation and safeguard sustainability of activities at local level, particularly on livelihoods, DRR and behavior change; a second NCE, from July 2015 till December 2015, to focus with other NGOs on national- and Community-Based Climate Change Action grant (CCCAG) program-level



documentation and advocacy.

## 2. Project evaluation

The ICAM project evaluation was twofold:

### End of Project Evaluation

CARE Australia commissioned an End-of-Project (EoP) evaluation of three projects in the Asia-Pacific region it implemented since 2012 with funding from the Australian Government's Community-Based Climate Change Action Grants.<sup>1</sup> The ICAM EoP evaluation, carried out in May 2015, was part of this multi-project evaluation process to collate and synthesize experiences in community-based adaptation across the region.

Based on a mixed-method design, the evaluation was carried out between May 7th and 23rd and involved visits to eight villages as well as workshops and interviews with the CARE project team and partners in both An Giang and Soc Trang. Village visits included: survey interviews with poor and non-poor household members<sup>2</sup> covering respondents' involvement in the project, risk exposure, climate-resilient practices, disaster risk reduction, gender, and sustainability; and focus group discussions with randomly selected poor villagers, using tools such as trend analysis, community mapping, livelihood analysis, Most Significant Change and hazard losses and coping strategy analysis. In addition, the evaluation also included an initial management workshop, interviews with local authorities, and a concluding reflection workshop with all partners, at which initial evaluation findings and recommendations were presented and discussed.<sup>3</sup>

While the EoP evaluation provided preliminary evidence and valuable insights, it was conducted within a limited timeframe and while project activities were still on-going, in particular on climate resilient livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, behavior change communication, knowledge management and advocacy. Gaps in this evaluation were identified by CARE in Vietnam as follows:

- Findings based on incomplete data on direct and indirect beneficiaries since activities were still on-going;
- Partial analysis of project interventions and potential impact on disaster risk reduction, behavior change communication, knowledge management and advocacy;
- Mismatch between indicators used as part of the project M&E and for the EoP evaluation;
- Limited time spent for discussions with local authorities and interviews with CARE staff, in particular to triangulate survey findings;
- Need for more comprehensive and evidence-based lessons learned and recommendations to inform CARE in Vietnam programming.

### Additional impact assessment

To fill these information gaps, cover all project interventions while also taking the opportunity to more in-depth assess impact and sustainability, CARE in Vietnam conducted an additional assessment in December 2015, when the project activities were all completed. This review focused on answering the following questions:

- What (potential) impacts did the project produce after three years of implementation, focusing on the areas of (i) local capacity in planning and implementing climate change adaptation; (ii) resilient livelihood strengthening; and (iii) climatic smart disaster risk management?

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<sup>1</sup> The three projects are; in Papua New Guinea: "Community-based adaptation to climate change in Nissan district" (CBA CC); in Timor-Leste: "Climate change in a secure environment" (MAKA'AS); and in Vietnam: "Integrated community-based adaptation in the Mekong" (ICAM).

<sup>2</sup> A total of 504 households were interviewed; of which 280 were poor and 224 non-poor. 177 or 35% of them were direct beneficiaries. Among the sample of poor respondents, 63.2% were direct beneficiaries.

<sup>3</sup> For further details on the methodology, see CBA Portfolio Evaluation, ICAM Evaluation Report, August 2015.

- What are the key lessons learned from the project implementation, including the extension period implemented at the national level, which should inform the work of CARE and others?
- What follow-up interventions should CARE in Vietnam make in the upcoming time to support community-based climate change adaptation in the Mekong delta area?
- To what extent, does the project contribute to CARE in Vietnam's strategic priorities in terms of gender equality and ethnic minority women empowerment in the project activities?

The impact assessment was carried out by CARE in Vietnam, with technical and consolidation support from a national and international consultant. The CARE team was comprised of the Senior M&E Specialist, National Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Advisor and Remote Ethnic Minority Women (REMW) Program Team Leader.

Firstly, after a desk review, in particular of the EoP report and project M&E, an information gap analysis and impact assessment framework was prepared by the international consultant. Based on this, open-ended questionnaires and other tools such as Most Significant Change, SWOT analysis and SPOKE were developed by CARE and the national consultant. After all this preparatory work, jointly with project partners, CARE carried out activity tracking, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with a sample of Government partners and direct beneficiaries in a number of ICAM project villages in An Giang and Soc Trang provinces. Field observations were also conducted to assess livelihood, DRR and behavior change interventions. Findings were consolidated into this report by the international consultant.

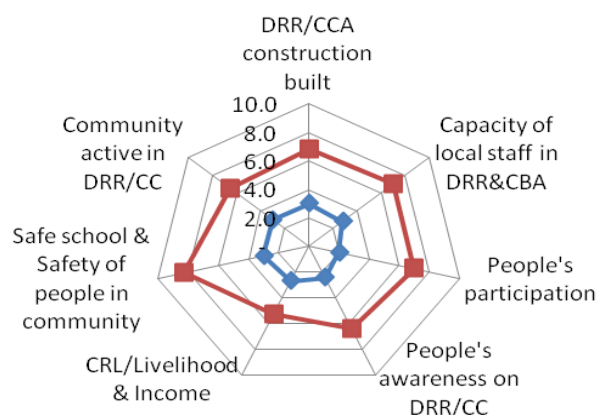
### 3. Project impact

In total, the project has directly benefited 8,066 beneficiaries (2,654 men and 3,363 women; communities and local authorities), with the division among outcomes as follows:

	TOTAL	WOMEN	MEN
<i>Outcome 1 – CBA planning</i>	2,016	851 (42%)	1,165 (58%)
CBA planning activities	1,639	690	949
Institutional capacity development	377	161	216
<i>Outcome 2 – community resilience</i>	5,465	3,748 (69%)	1,717 (31%)
Resilient livelihoods	2,732	1,645	1,087
Disaster risk reduction <sup>4</sup>	1,481	888	593
Awareness raising and behavior change	1,252	751	501
<i>Outcome 3 – replication, M&amp;E and civil society strengthening</i>	585	330 (56%)	255 (44%)
<b>Total direct beneficiaries</b>	<b>8,066</b> <b>(3,858 EM)</b>	<b>4,929</b> <b>(61%)</b>	<b>3,137</b> <b>(39%)</b>

Indirectly, the project has reached more than 56,628 people in both provinces or around 75% of the population living in the targeted communes.

The impact assessment conducted at the end of the project (December 2015) delivered the following combined community and project partners' observations (*on the right*); the diagram indicates on a score from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest), the project baseline situation (blue line), and the results at the end of the project (red line). It shows most perceived impact on: improved safety of schools and communities; increased community participation; capacity of local authorities on climate change adaptation; and people's awareness. It shows impact but to a lesser extent on climate resilient livelihoods (CRL) and related income.



More specifically, under each outcome the project has achieved the following:<sup>5</sup>

#### Outcome 1 – Community and Government capacity in gender sensitive assessment and planning of climate change risks and adaptation actions

The ICAM project was most successful with regard to outcome 1, with the considerable effort in institutional capacity strengthening clearly having multiple benefits. With much time and effort devoted to capacity-building and practice-based CBA planning, the project created a basis whose long-term benefits are likely to emerge fully in months and years to come.

<sup>4</sup> Direct beneficiaries of DRR measures such as green dykes, early warning station refurbishment etc. are likely higher, but have been included under the indirect beneficiaries.

<sup>5</sup> Achievements mentioned in this section are for both provinces. Disaggregation per province can be gathered from the project M&E reports

M&E indicators	Baseline	Achievements		
	2012	2013	2014	2015
% of trained partners with improved knowledge and skills in gender analysis, CBA and DRR planning	Limited trainings provided so far, and for provincial level only	80% of partners state to have improved knowledge and skills	84% of partners state to have improved knowledge and skills	Not assessed during EoP evaluation
% of trained partners that are able to undertake gendered CBA-DRR planning	Limited trainings provided so far, and for provincial level only	92.5% of partners state to be able to conduct CBA planning	89% of partners state to be able to conduct CBA planning	Not assessed during EoP evaluation
# of gender-sensitive assessments and adaptation plans at village/commune level developed	No plans	33 village CBA plans and 5 commune developed	Village and commune CBA plans updated, and feedback provided to communities	CBA planning replicated in 5 additional communes
# of local people involved in CBA plans	12% of poor households participates in disaster preparedness and response planning	975 people involved in CBA planning (561 men, 414 women)	664 people involved in update of the plans (388 men, 276 women)	34.8% of poor households participate in community planning
% of vulnerable people reporting their needs and aspirations are reflected in the CBA plans	60.5% of households want to be more involved in DRR planning	70% of people reporting their needs and aspirations are reflected in the CBA plans	86% of participants are satisfied with the CBA planning process	92.4% of participants are satisfied with the CBA planning process

Community climate risk analysis and prioritized adaptation plans have decisively – and in many cases for the first time<sup>6</sup> - informed Government socio-economic development and sectoral planning (such as the New Rural Development (NRD) Program) in 2 districts during the project, for 2016 and potentially beyond. The resulting plans also signify a clear shift from a sole focus on infrastructure as adaptation towards a more integrated, multi-sector but practical approach to adaptation, reflecting community needs and aspirations.

CBA planning also showed the value of collaborative planning and face-to-face dialogue between communities, Government and experts as a way to communicate and discuss climate information and increase awareness. *“Before the project, we heard about climate change through radio and TV but did not understand about it and assumed it is long-term and not a local issue. (...) We can now understand climate change and the solutions much more easily with CBA planning and awareness raising approach compared with Government usual training or awareness raising campaigns,”* (focus group discussion, An Giang, December 2015).

Aside from building skills, capacities and confidence amongst partners, it also facilitated a change of mindsets towards more collaborative and bottom-up planning. As expressed by the partners, the CBA planning was a significant addition and even change to the way Government planning is usually carried out; through desk-based reviews by technical staff, top down, formal one-way communication and with very limited or no community consultation; *“This process is quite different from the normal Government top down planning or formal consultation. It really reflects the voice and the ownership of local people of the plan. Before, the commune and village heads read the plan and villagers listened. Nowadays farmers provide a lot of feedback,”* (CBA trainer, Soc Trang, December

<sup>6</sup> For example, during the impact assessment in December 2015, authorities in Vinh Tan (Soc Trang) and Khanh Binh (An Giang) communes confirmed that before the ICAM project, climate change was not considered or integrated into the commune SEDP: *“my commune officers are now watching the climate information and climate change more strictly and consider climate change risks in 2016 SEDP planning.”*



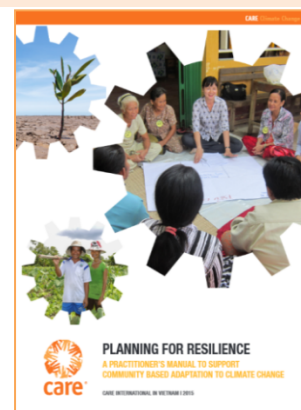
2015). The multi-level planning process also created a platform for inter-sectoral collaboration and more holistic policy development.

In terms of sustainability and replication, the CBA planning process is highly likely to be sustained, albeit more indirectly and integrated under existing regular planning processes (SEDP, NRD, agriculture), through changed mindsets on community engagement in planning, improved inter-departmental collaboration, increased confidence of Women’s Union, and applying the skills and tools used (facilitation, risk analysis, gender, scoring and ranking etc.) rather than as a standalone process. For the CBA planning to be replicated in its entirety, Governments at national and provincial level (potentially with donor and NGO support) have to commit and decentralize the required resources for CBA or integration of climate change and community consultations into SEDPs.

**ICAM project knowledge management:**

*Planning for Resilience: A practitioner’s guide to support community based adaptation to climate change*, CARE International in Vietnam, December 2015. (soon to be uploaded on the CARE climate change website)

This how-to manual on CBA planning is based on two years of testing and revision in ICAM and is therefore an evidence-based tool to use for replication or scaling. It is adapted to the Government of Vietnam planning systems, including on Community-Based Disaster Risk Management and comprises of two main sections: one explains the 10 step process in detail, and another provides all the resources, formats and tools needed to conduct the actual planning. It is therefore a one-stop-shop material useful for Government and practitioners across Vietnam and beyond.



**Outcome 2 – Community resilience through strengthening and diversifying livelihoods, protection of assets and increased awareness**

To advocate for community-driven interventions, support to building resilience through livelihoods, DRR and behavior change communication was made conditional to the results of the CBA planning. However, since the first CBA planning results only came out towards the end of 2013, this conscious choice to link outcome 2 to outcome 1 led to a delayed implementation of resilience-building interventions. This did not influence the impact of the DRR measures, but limited the full potential of interventions on livelihoods and behavior change. Still, even within this limited time, ICAM did increase incomes, influenced farmer livelihood decision-making processes, caused a shift in how local authorities carry out awareness raising and contributed significantly to learning on resilient livelihoods.

M&E indicators	Baseline	Achievements		
	2012	2013	2014	2015
# of agricultural and non agricultural climate resilient livelihood models implemented	Existing adaptive livelihood practices: diversification into non-farm, livestock, shifting rice into vegetables, shift from shrimp mono to combined shrimp-rice or shrimp-fish	Action research identified 10 options. Microfinance initiated	7 models implemented (6 agri, 1 non-agri): sprout vegetables, bio bedding chicken/pig, bio-fertilizer, chili, indoor mushroom, microfinance for small businesses	9 models implemented (8 agri, 1 non-agri): sprout vegetables, bio bedding chicken/pig, bio-fertilizer, chili, indoor mushroom, duck raising, goat raising, microfinance for small businesses
% of households with income from	Not measured at this stage	Livelihoods not yet implemented	No data collected yet as livelihoods in	50 to 80% income increase, mostly for bio

M&E indicators	Baseline	Achievements		
	2012	2013	2014	2015
agricultural/non-agricultural climate resilient models			demonstration stage	bedding, livestock, microfinance <sup>7</sup> and indoor mushrooms
% of local people (men/women) having benefited from climate resilient DRR interventions	Limited activities on disaster preparedness	DRR not yet implemented	25% of people have benefited from climate resilient DRR interventions	75% of people have benefited from climate resilient DRR interventions
# of participants in awareness raising campaigns	Provincial Government staff received some training, but limited and no activities conducted	100 participants in event on disability-inclusive DRR	827 participants in awareness raising activities	1,252 participants in PAOT and other awareness raising activities
% of households reflects that information provided in awareness raising campaigns is useful	Not measured at this stage, but clear inadequate understanding of disaster and climate change risks and impacts, including on livelihoods	Awareness raising not yet implemented	87.5% of participants reflect that information provided is useful	May 2015, while PAOT was still on-going; 44.3% poor and 45.7% non-poor say they have better CC knowledge. 58% of households attributes this to the project

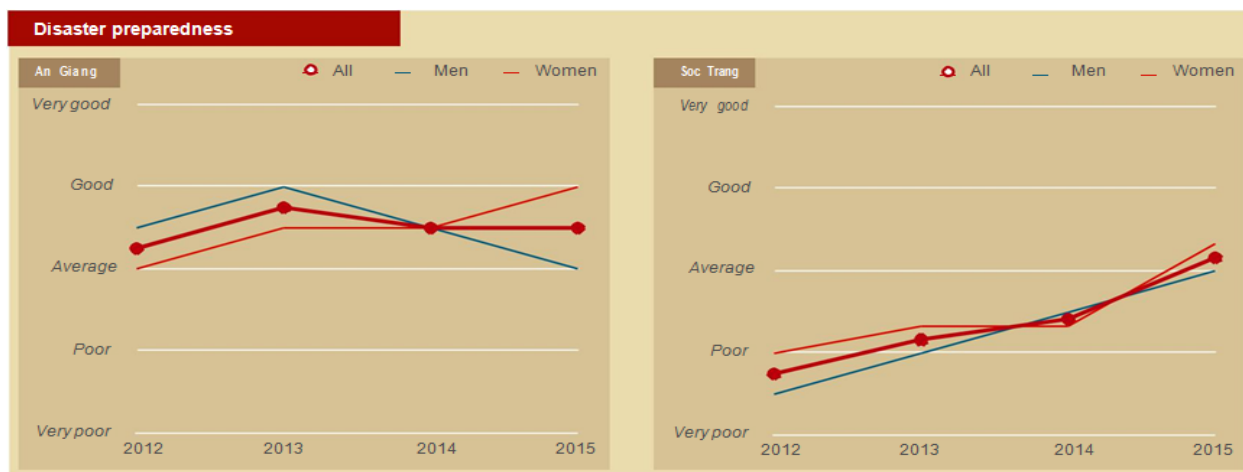
Community resilience to disasters and extreme weather events has been noticeably increased through ‘*climate smart*’ DRR measures<sup>8</sup>, with increased protection of people and assets, including livelihoods, as a consequence: “*Before, our fields flooded and crops were damaged or even lost but now, the dyke and improved drainage protects them. It increases our yields and income; we feel safe and are not worried much when the river or sea water increases,*” and “*we are less worried about our children’s safety when the rainy season comes, as they are now better protected at school. They can go to school and attend classes more frequently,*” (focus group discussions, Soc Trang, December 2015).

At the time of the EoP, while large scale DRR measures such as the ‘green dyke’ construction<sup>9</sup>, refurbishment of schools and further trainings were still on-going (including the Participatory Action Oriented Training or PAOT campaign), an increase in disaster preparedness, particularly in Soc Trang, was emerging:

<sup>7</sup> In terms of benefits of the loan, preliminary numbers indicate that: 61% of direct beneficiaries of a loan say this enabled them to earn more money. 32% has used the loan to invest in climate-smart agriculture, 32% in other agriculture, 21% in off-farm activities and 10% used it to strengthen their house

<sup>8</sup> These include: swimming classes for girls and boys, tree planting, delivery of boats and search and rescue equipment, expansion of early warning systems, climate proofing of primary schools and kindergarten to protect against floods and prevent drowning, erosion warning signs, ‘green dyke’ construction to protect communities and fields from erosion and floods; and training on first aid and house strengthening for male and especially female search and rescue team members.

<sup>9</sup> A ‘green dyke’ is a combination of limited concrete foundation with indigenous trees, Vetiver grasses and other vegetation on top. It has been tested over the last ten years and more recently been supported by GIZ and IUCN in other locations in the Mekong Delta such as Ben Tre province. It has been proven as effective against river bank erosion and provides a worthy alternative to the usual ‘grey’ infrastructure promoted by the Government. For an example of a similar Vetiver grass based system applied in the Mekong Delta that has informed the ICAM project, see: [http://www.vetiver.org/VVN\\_wave%20and%20current.pdf](http://www.vetiver.org/VVN_wave%20and%20current.pdf)



Livelihood resilience and diversification was promoted through in-kind and microfinance support. In terms of productivity as well as income, at the time of the EoP evaluation 51% of women beneficiaries in both provinces see an improvement compared to before the project; 37% of them attribute this to an extent or fully to the project. Project M&E indicates a 50 to 80% income increase, mostly for bio bedding, livestock, microfinance and indoor mushrooms. In a context where weather and market volatility has a continuous detrimental impact on livelihoods and with a lower than expected reach of the project livelihood support, this can be considered as a positive contribution to improved livelihood security of women.

None of the livelihoods had a negative impact on the local natural resources or ecosystem and in the large majority of cases livelihoods could be practiced with locally available materials. An exception is rice husks for bio-bedding in Soc Trang where farmers have to travel further to buy this material, although it only has to be replenished once a year.

Regardless of the actual livelihood option, farmers confirm that the project positively influenced livelihood decision-making processes in terms of; the use of climate information, the importance of vaccination, proactively adjusting techniques etc. Livelihoods have been most successful and cycles repeated when technical guidelines are applied carefully, expert support is continuous, vaccination schedules are followed and farmers remain committed (even after one cycle of success or failure). Flexible financing as part of livelihood interventions has also showcased its merits.

On behavior change, the checklist-based PAOT has proven to be an effective way for attitude and behavior change; mid-May 2015, 44.3% of poor and 45.7% of non-poor households say they have better knowledge of climate change; 58% or a majority of households attributes this to an extent or completely to the project. Importantly, PAOT also instigated a change in the way Government approaches awareness raising. For example, the An Giang Women's Union already integrated the methodology into their usual communication activities and is using it for the NRD Program: "we are now very confident to use this approach and will apply it in any future awareness raising activities."

In terms of replication and sustainability, during the 2015 disaster season (July till November) local authorities saw that communities showed an increased level of preparedness: "people are more proactive compared to before; they listen to weather forecasts, strengthen houses and roofs with ropes, elevate the house foundation, cut down tree branches, grow more trees around the house and report illegal cutting of mangrove and other protective forests. (...) Search and rescue teams are better equipped and motivated to handle the issues, particularly for the most vulnerable."

In terms of climate resilient livelihoods, the outlook is mixed and depends very much on the households and market volatility for the specific livelihood output. Livelihoods promoted by the project are still practiced – or have even been

improved – by a considerable number of farmers: “the techniques I learned from the project on bio-bedding with chicken and vaccinating my livestock helped me to apply the same for ducks. I’m confident to share this skill with other farmers now,” (farmer in An Giang, December 2015). Models such as bio-bedding have also been integrated into SEDPs, while options that were proposed by the project but never implemented due to limited time for testing, e.g. drip irrigation for onions, will now be carried out as part of a Government NRD program in Soc Trang. The conditional microfinance scheme has been integrated into the Women’s Union credit system and is still delivering loans to communities through microfinance groups. Building on ICAM good practice on linking microfinance or loans to livelihood training, the Women’s Union will need continuous technical back-up, including training support for farmers, from MARD and MoNRE officers to ensure a comprehensive loan-for-resilient-livelihoods scheme.<sup>10</sup>

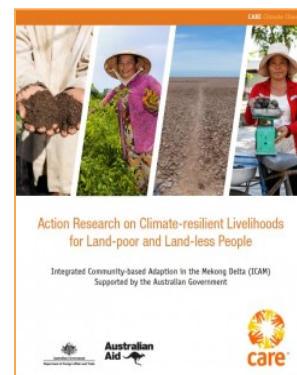
The PAOT campaign is still running, independently from the project with groups still regularly meeting and self-monitoring each other’s behavioral changes, actively mentored by the Women’s Union. This is a clear sign of communities’ and Government’s interest and commitment and showcases a need and interest for innovative behavior change communication compared to traditional awareness raising.

Overall, while the reach of livelihoods and behavior change did not cover all households in the project communes, approaches or methodologies are now being replicated or scaled out by Government partners through their own programs, which is a commendable achievement of the project.<sup>11</sup>

**ICAM project knowledge management:**

*Action Research on Climate-resilient Livelihoods for land-poor and land-less people*, CARE International in Vietnam, August 2013.  
<http://careclimatechange.org/publications/action-research-climate-resilient-livelihoods/>

This piece of research showcases the considerable investment of the ICAM project in research and learning, focused on livelihoods and their resilience. It aims to provide a framework to analyze or filter various aspects of resilience. Based on an in-depth assessment of existing livelihood practices and climate risk analysis, the research highlights a menu of livelihood options that can be supported in the Mekong Delta when targeting the landless and land-poor. This research was used in the project as a basis for livelihood support and has been disseminated widely to benefit other actors.



**Outcome 3 – Strengthened civil society and evidence for scaling CBA**

Achievements on outcome 3, a rather diverse set of intended outputs being the backbone of the project, are very positive, with the exception of building community based organizations in the provinces itself. Networking and collaboration among civil society in the South of Vietnam has clearly increased, knowledge management efforts were extensive, and evidence has been gathered to inform replication and scaling of CBA. Initial replication has been seen, in particular of the CBA planning and some of the livelihoods.

M&E indicators	Baseline	Achievements		
	2012	2013	2014	2015
# of regular climate change adaptation	No mechanism	Southern Climate Change Working Group	3 S-CCWG meetings organized (Mekong Delta)	5 S-CCWG meetings organized (ecosystem)

<sup>10</sup> In Soc Trang, when hearing about a training provided by the MARD agricultural extension centre on integrated pest management for chili, the Women’s Union asked MARD to also include the microfinance groups as beneficiaries of this training. The groups were hereafter included in the training, actively applied the techniques and discuss it in the microfinance group meetings.

<sup>11</sup> Also see section below on advocacy.

network meeting organized in Mekong	exists for civil society networking in the Mekong Delta	established, after series of consultation meetings	Plan, Gender and CC-DRR, capacity building CSOs); 1 workshop on SEDP; 1 workshop on VNGO capacity needs assessment (average 20 to 30 participants)	based adaptation, Mekong Delta plan, green energy, mangroves, gender and climate change) and 1 S-CCWG core group meeting (average 20 to 25 participants)
District SEDP plans replicate project activities/models. SEDP planning processes replicate CVCA and visioning approaches	Not measured at this stage	No project interventions in 2014 yet	Commune and district SEDPs of 2014 have integrated results from the CBA planning (risk analysis and CBA actions)	Commune and district SEDPs of 2015 have integrated results from the CBA planning (risk analysis and CBA actions)
# of community-based organizations and/ or farmer groups established	Only disaster response groups identified	-	Farmer groups for potential support identified	23 microfinance groups and 38 PAOT groups established and supported
# of documents summarizing project lessons learnt shared at different levels	Not measured at this stage	Lessons on mainstreaming CBA into SEDP documented and shared with MoNRE; CBA planning manual drafted and regularly updated	3 documents: livelihood actions research, CBA planning case study <sup>12</sup> and CBA planning sharing and learning report. Others in draft	18 pieces of documentation (research, learning series, films, manuals, etc.) produced showcasing ICAM learning

At the regional level, the ICAM project contributed to a strengthening of civil society networking, collaboration and information-sharing in the Mekong Delta. In particular, it supported the Southern Climate Change Working Group (S-CCWG), led several debates on climate change and DRR, and held regular meetings on the issues of the Mekong Delta to share experiences and collaborate in advocacy efforts.

At the local level however, investment in nurturing social capital was limited to the establishment of groups for specific activities such as microfinance and behavior change and supporting community involvement through CBA planning. Due to time limits and the complexity of climate resilient livelihoods, very limited investment was done in establishing farmer groups. ICAM did however encourage farmer-to-farmer exchange on livelihoods through a round of Farmer Field Schools, but only towards the end of the project. However, more than two-thirds of EoP evaluation survey respondents say that collective engagement had improved over the past three years. While this is not all attributable to the project, it is reasonable to assume that the collective engagement launched in CBA planning (driven both by communities and government partners) is likely to endure, particularly as more tangible benefits emerge from these processes. *“In some communes, the commune and village Government officers are now better listening to us while we are more active and make more practical proposals to them for community support,”* (focus group discussion, An Giang, December 2015).

The project’s systematic learning and reflection produced a rich set of lessons towards further advancing and enhancing CBA. More specifically materials, including videos, were published on gender and climate change, climate resilient livelihoods, planning for community based adaptation, voice of ethnic minorities in climate change adaptation through community photo storytelling, and adaptive social protection. Some of these have been highlighted in this report, others can be consulted on the CARE climate change website or through contacting CARE in Vietnam.

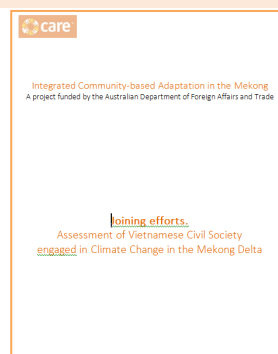
<sup>12</sup> <http://careclimatechange.org/publications/community-based-adaptation-in-practice>

In terms of sustainability and replication, throughout 2015 CARE in Vietnam has gradually handed over its leading role of the S-CCWG to a more rotating chairmanship. As part of this hand-over, an additional assessment of civil society in the South was conducted providing clear recommendations to donors and practitioners on a way forward. At the end of 2015, the group is still meeting but sustainability will depend on continuous commitment of resources from members, including CARE. In the last six months of the project, documentation efforts have been maximized and focused on national level (see under advocacy), while also handing over a set of manuals, films and other materials to the local partner.

**ICAM project knowledge management:**

*Joining efforts. Assessment of Vietnamese Civil Society engaged in Climate Change in the Mekong Delta.* CARE International in Vietnam, June 2015. (not yet published)

After two years of efforts to strengthen civil society in the Mekong Delta, CARE commissioned this report to evaluate current strengths, weakness, threats and opportunities and provide a way forward to continue these efforts. The assessment analyses three scenarios for civil society to engage more effectively in climate change in the Mekong Delta for the next 5 years and suggests different actions required within the different scenarios.



**Empowerment of ethnic minority women**

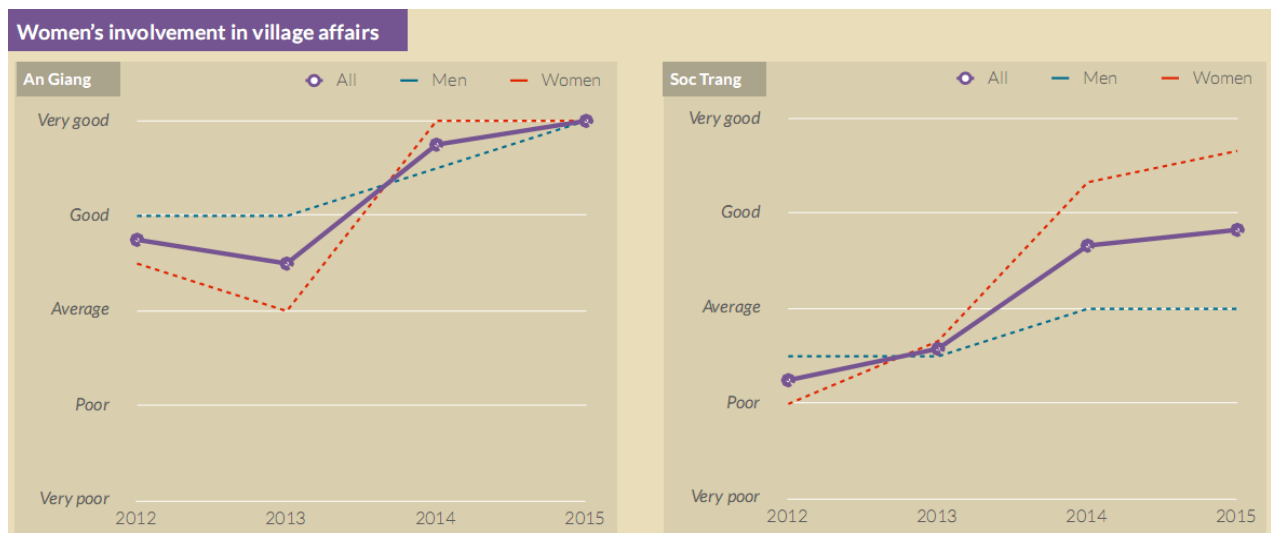
Recognizing that the project was not solely focused on or targeting women’s empowerment, the efforts made by ICAM on integrating gender into all project activities are significant, and noteworthy contributions have been made towards women’s empowerment, specifically on access to information and flexible finance, participation in public decision-making, access to public spaces and voice in community planning.

In addition to the systematic collection of gender and ethnic minority disaggregated data, ICAM has invested commendable efforts to mainstream gender in all its activities through the development of a Gender Action Plan and traffic-light-based progress tracker. This reveals the following achievements in terms of gender integration into project activities, demonstrating a satisfactory level of integration:

Project outcomes and outputs:	Progress on gender integration: good (green), medium (orange), low (red)		
	2013	2014	2015
<b>Outcome 1</b>			
- Government capacity building	Green	Green	Green
- CBA assessment	Yellow	Green	Green
- CBA planning	Yellow	Yellow	Green
- Integration into SEDPs	Yellow	Yellow	Green
<b>Outcome 2</b>			
- Climate Resilient Livelihoods	Red	Yellow	Green
- Disaster risk reduction	Red	Yellow	Green
- Capacity building on awareness raising and BCC	Yellow	Green	Green
- Awareness raising and behavior change communication	Red	Yellow	Green
<b>Outcome 3</b>			
- M&E and documentation	Yellow	Green	Green
- Mekong Delta civil society networking	Yellow	Green	Green
- Replication of project approaches	Red	Yellow	Green
- Strengthened CBOs	Red	Yellow	Green
Project management (recruitment, staff training etc.)	Yellow	Green	Green

In terms of gender equality outcomes, the EoP evaluation and impact evaluation reveal that;

- CBA planning (including photo storytelling, see box below) has led to a greater role of women in village affairs and community-level decision-making (see graph), including for ethnic minorities: *“Before, women, particularly Khmer or Cham, rarely participated in village meetings or public meetings. Nowadays, women are more actively involved in public meetings and voice up. (...) More Khmer men now support their wives to join the village or Women’s Union meetings. Before they did not allow,”* (key information interviews, An Giang and Soc Trang, December 2015). In a strongly male-dominated society and for a project not solely focused on women’s empowerment, this is a significant achievement;
- An understanding of climate risks and impacts has increased for 85% of women in the project locations. 75% attributes this to some or full extent to the project activities. Among women direct beneficiaries this number is even higher (96.5% and 91%). Improved awareness and access to information led in some cases to increased confidence and involvement of women: *“women realized that men were not saying what women wanted to say, so women decided to join the meetings themselves instead. Men also agreed that women are more informed and discuss more in detail,”* (commune staff, An Giang, December 2015);
- Overall, 67% of women direct beneficiaries (compared to 23% of the overall population) says to be better adapted and more prepared for climate change. A majority of 55% contributes this solely to the project, while 45% sees a positive role of the project among others (compared to 31/45% of the overall population);
- 60% of women direct beneficiaries (compared to 28% of the overall population) says to be better able to deal with disasters. 35% contributes this solely to the project, while 65% sees a positive role of the project among others (compared to 40/24% of the overall population);
- Attitudes have shifted in terms of roles and responsibilities of men and women in DRR and climate change adaptation: *“Before DRR and CC was assumed to be men’s work. Now we see that the Women’s Union can take charge of technical tasks and that women can be active search and rescue team members,”* (district and commune staff, Soc Trang, December 2015);
- The project demonstrated that the in-depth involvement of the Women’s Union in all aspects of CBA (through an expanded role or mandate) is feasible, desirable and valued by the local authorities



### ICAM project knowledge management:

*Our Valuable Voices. Community Digital Storytelling for Good Programming and Policy Engagement.* CARE International in Vietnam, February 2015.  
<http://careclimatechange.org/publications/cdst-in-vietnam/>

The publication highlights the experience and lessons learned from ICAM, exploring ways Community Digital photo Storytelling can be used to strengthen people's capacity and resolve as equal participants in CBA decision-making spaces, in this case Cham women and men living on boats or alongside the river. Community Digital Storytelling is a participatory development process where community members develop and share photo-video stories as a means to raise awareness, stimulate dialog and influence policy.



### Advocacy

The dynamic role of CARE in Vietnam at the national level contributed to promoting the role of civil society organizations in climate change adaptation work, also strengthening the partnership dialogues between CSOs and the government on climate change and DRR. A lot of these efforts were undertaken under the CCCAG umbrella while others – more successfully - done through CARE's partnerships with ministries and role as chair of the Climate Change Working Group network, at national level and in the Mekong Delta.

Advocacy under the CCCAG mechanism was guided by a joint advocacy plan, which took a lot of time and efforts to materialize. A lack of integration into project designs, limited resources at national level, combined with a diversity of issues selected by the different NGOs hampered effectiveness of these efforts. Still, a second NCE allowed CCCAG partners to most effectively advocate on resilient livelihoods and gender and climate change;

- Development of a film and accompanying policy brief on how to address gender into policy and programming at national, local and community level (see box below), for a national and international audience, with screening of film for international audience at Paris Climate Change conference COP21;
- A Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) – NGO joint guideline on how to identify and implement resilient livelihoods, incorporating good practice and livelihood models from all CCCAG projects. This guide is will be printed and disseminated by MARD to all agricultural extension centres in all provinces across the country.

Through CARE's partnerships with ministries and development organizations at national level;

- Incorporation of ICAM's CBA planning model, in particular on integration into SEDPs, in national guidelines on effective CC adaptation models, to be promoted among sub national authorities across Vietnam;
- MARD, South West Steering Committee and CARE consultation workshop, with participation of 13 Mekong Delta provinces, on the currently drafted MARD climate change action plan for 2016-2020, jointly with sharing of ICAM learning on how to work on resilient livelihoods with landless and land poor;
- Joint development with UN Women and GIZ of how-to manual '*Making It Count*' on practically integrating gender into climate change and DRR activities, with book being distributed to 800 local authorities in CARE and UN Women project locations as well as ten provinces in the North;<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Manual <http://careclimatechange.org/tool-kits/making-it-count-integrating-gender/> and accompanying video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gztM2zA3kM>



### ICAM project knowledge management:

*Leading By Example: Women taking action for climate change in Vietnam*, CARE in Vietnam, SNV, Oxfam, Australian /German Red Cross, EDF, Plan International, Save the Children, December 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-F61NnGc5TyIUFr7ltKhsQ> - and accompanying policy brief: <http://careclimatechange.org/publications/beyond-words/>

Under CARE's leadership, NGOs under the CCCAG Program, promoted women's leadership within CC and DRR, at community and government level, in decision-making, planning, and economic. This video showcases this experience and presents recommendations for further practical action. It is combined with a policy brief '*Beyond Words*' which formulates recommendations for specific action at national level.



## 4. Key lessons learned

- **Indicators and targets** should be jointly set and agreed with the partners to increase their understanding of M&E, accountability towards the project outcomes and activities and ensure their commitment to the project. The **M&E system** should not be too ambitious, and be realistic and straightforward to ensure effective implementation, reflection and learning. Communities should be involved (for example through logbooks) as long as there is clear value for them;
- CARE staff can initially take lead in most of the activities, workshops and meetings but over the project timeframe need to gradually and case by case **hand-over the ownership** of these **to the partners** while CARE provides technical advice. A roadmap for this should be identified and agreed with the partners at the beginning of the project;
- **Motivation and commitment of Government staff** to certain activities is higher when they align with Government systems, guidelines and regulations, such as M&E, criteria for SEDP mainstreaming, microfinance, CBDRM. The project allows them to further test Government approaches and tools and collectively with CARE gather evidence and make sound recommendations for improvement. It also increases the level of buy-in of more project specific requirements, such as gender and women's empowerment, ethnic minorities and disability-inclusion;
- **Government approval processes**, for example, for village CBA plans, mainstreaming, microfinance, photo stories, in Vietnam are very time consuming and require sufficient time and effort. This should be factored in when designing programs and forward planning of activities;
- **CBA planning** and implementation needs to align with existing SEDP, CBDRM and other government planning processes and systems and build on existing human and other resources within the government. In the process of integrating CBA actions into SEDP, it is crucial to select and engage the right Government staff, representing key CBA decision-makers, political bodies, planning and finance departments in the province besides technical staff. Bringing them together with village leaders in one forum also provides an opportunity for political dialogue and strengthening accountability to local communities.
- **Translating climate science into information** comprehensible for local communities remains a challenge for local authorities, and requires continuing efforts, creative trial-and-error and investment in appropriate information, education and communication (IEC) materials, particularly for ethnic minorities;

- **Livelihoods** improvement and/or diversification needs cross-learning and significant time and at least 2 to 3 cycles to research and identify sound climate resilient strategies, select beneficiaries, design community-driven management models, full start-up and to see sustainable results. Livelihood support should involve a combination of promoting existing climate resilient livelihood approaches through microfinance support and skills training to improve techniques, and demonstration of new livelihood options on a small-scale through direct inputs and training support;
- For **replication of climate resilient livelihood models**, projects need to also invest in gathering evidence on the economic viability and effectiveness besides climate resilient aspects for Governments to be convinced that it is worth investing time and funding;
- When implementing **integrated resilience interventions**, it is crucial to take every opportunity when engaging with communities to explain the rationale behind every activity, how they link to each other and how it supports community and household resilience to climate change;
- Specific tailored approaches need to be developed to **reach the most at risk of climate change**, as they are very mobile, dynamic, hard-to-reach and not always the focus of Government development programs. Traditional tools and approaches, even proven, are not always the most appropriate so should be continuously trialed and tested combined with targeted advocacy efforts;
- When targeting the poorest communities with livelihood and DRR support, efforts should be undertaken to positively influence **mindsets and attitudes within Government partners** towards the poorest, including through joint activities and gathering evidence that it is an effective investment;
- A detailed **replication and sustainability plan** should be considered as part of the project design to properly and timely plan and implement activities;
- To sustain efforts on civil society strengthening and networking, support from senior management in INGOs is crucial as well as a mutually agreed and resourced **joint CSO development strategy**. The potential for sustainability also increases if ownership shifts from solely International NGOs to shared ownership by both International and Vietnamese CSOs;
- **Joint advocacy and collaboration between CCCAG partners** should be agreed earlier in the program, should be more systematic through strategic one-issue focused coalitions between a limited number of partners and should be a combination of national and sub-national level efforts. Rather than a specific output, advocacy should be an approach to reach other outcomes;

## 5. Recommended follow-up interventions

While ICAM has built foundations, investment in community resilience for people most at risk of climate change deserves a long term commitment, by local authorities, donors and CARE. For the ICAM project to truly live up to its potential and sustain lasting impact at local and national level, the following recommendations for future programming are formulated:

- 1 Support gender-transformative resilience processes by **concurrently addressing gender inequality and climate change adaptation, in particular for ethnic minorities**. Building on ICAM experience, CARE has developed a draft framework on how to achieve resilience and gender equality simultaneously. It is hoped that this will contribute to the debate on resilience and gender in and outside Vietnam;
- 2 Focus considerably more on regular and systemized **access to integrated weather forecasts, climate change scenarios and agricultural advice**, customized through different formats and channels for ethnic minority and women farmers. At the same time improve the understanding of how farmers (and agricultural planners) use this and other information for calculating risk and probabilities, and planning and implementing their livelihood strategies;
- 3 Ensure that technical expertise is sufficient to guide climate-resilient practices. As adaptation requires continuous learning and trial-and-error, consider **partnering with a research institute** or university who is familiar with local conditions and who can easily provide regular support and coaching;
- 4 Work on livelihoods that already have a considerable integration into local, national or international **markets**. Conduct a rapid value chain analysis, directly engaging farmers, to inform the best entry points for project support;
- 5 **Integrate support to safe migration** as part of a more comprehensive approach to working with landless and land poor on their livelihoods;
- 6 In Vietnam **social protection mechanisms**, including microfinance, vocational training, micro-insurance, have great potential to be utilized at scale for **enhanced livelihood resilience** and natural resources management but require focused project interventions and gathering of more systematic evidence, on their effectiveness, scalability and how they achieve multiple benefits on resilience and poverty reduction;
- 7 Invest in organizational as well as technical **capacity development of Vietnamese civil society in Southern Vietnam** as one of the sole objectives of a project rather than as a means to implement a complex multi-level project with a short timeframe. This should be guided by a long term investment strategy jointly agreed among NGOs and the main development partners.
- 8 Utilize ICAM project learning and documentation for **targeted advocacy** at national, regional and international level, on gender, livelihoods, CBA planning and climate finance for CBA, engaging local staff. Integrate and institutionalize ICAM project methodologies and training materials in Government systems and other CARE projects in Vietnam and the larger Asia-Pacific region;
- 9 Build **expertise on community cost-benefit analysis, social-return-on-investment** etc. and other ways to better measure the effectiveness of CBA interventions and provide adequate and comprehensive evidence of climate change adaptation and mitigation interventions for advocacy towards Governments, donors and private sector

**Annexes:**

- a. Impact assessment framework
- b. Field reports on CBA planning, livelihoods, DRR, behavior change, gender and advocacy
- c. ICAM project updated M&E plan

(Please contact the Country Programs Team at CARE Australia if you would like to view the Annexes)