

# Exploring gender within the smallholder pork value chain in Southeast Asia through a symposium

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Cover photo—Group discussion at the gender session of the regional symposium into smallholder pig production, health and pork safety, 27-29 March 2019 in Hanoi, Vietnam (photo credit: ILRI/Chi Nguyen).

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## Introduction and background

In addition to being sources of nutrients and income, pigs and pig production play an important role in cultural events and supporting livelihoods (Huynh et al. 2007). Gender and gender relations influence the dynamics and interactions women and men engage in within the pig value chain. Gendered social and cultural norms, as well as government rules and regulations further influence the roles, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women within the pork value chain.

As per capita income rises and traditional diets change, the demand for animal source foods, particularly pork and poultry meat, are increasing across Southeast Asia. The majority of producers in the region are small scale and keep exotic and indigenous pigs. Asia accounts for over 54% of the world pig production; Southeast Asia alone produced over 123 million pigs for slaughter in 2017 (FAO 2019). In Vietnam, women are primarily responsible for selling pork meat and men are responsible for slaughtering. Although both women and men may be involved in the management and production of pigs, women report spending a larger amount of time in pig production compared to men (Grace et al. 2015; Nguyen et al. 2017). The gendered divisions of labour in pig production exposes men and women to different food borne pathogens and occupational health risks (Grace et al. 2015).

Compared to some other developing countries, women in Southeast Asia are perceived to be more empowered as they have higher decision-making power in the household and have control over their earnings (Mason and Smith 2003; IFAD 2013; Akter et al. 2017). Earlier research by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) found that women who produce pigs in Vietnam face considerable challenges in reaching optimal production. Among these challenges are low access to land ownership and credit, limiting resources for pig production (Nguyen et al. 2017). For example, unequal control of land among women and men leads to inequitable access to credit in the rural financial market in Vietnam (Nguyen et al. 2017). In the attempt to increase women's formal land rights, the Vietnamese government has implemented the Land Law of 2013. However, it has been argued that higher quality land is largely allocated to men rather than women.

Gender mainstreaming and including gender as a key objective in livestock development projects is increasingly recognised as a critical component to achieve optimal and sustainable project outcomes.

## Regional symposium on research into smallholder pig production, health and pork safety

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) funded the regional symposium on research into smallholder pig production, health and pork safety which was held in Hanoi in March 2019 and jointly led by ILRI and the University of Queensland.

Oral and poster presentations and discussions on gender and equity in the pig value chain were key topics in the symposium. A specific session was held on gender and pig production, where the overall objective was to stimulate discussions, raise the visibility of gender issues in pig value chains and gain a better understanding of it.

Presentations were provided on projects from the Philippines, Bangladesh and Vietnam. Gender issues were found to be similar across South and Southeast

### Summary of findings

- Gender gaps should be identified in the early phase of projects.
- Gender related activities must be budgeted for in the project.
- Gender issues are culturally specific and should be considered before implementing interventions.
- Interventions should consider gender needs and gender responsive technologies to narrow gender gaps.

Asia. The presentations highlighted the gendered roles in the pig value chain and the dominant role women have in managing pigs in the production system, how they are influenced by interventions and how medical providers can navigate gendered roles.

An additional objective was to gather information from participants about their experiences and understanding of gender and how they have incorporated gender into their projects.

To gain these insights, we primarily focused on two questions:

1. What are the gaps in data and/or knowledge about gender issues in livestock value chains that you are aware/concerned about?
2. What are some examples of how you have incorporated gender considerations in your projects or dealt with gender issues in the field?

The theme on gender and equity within the pig value chain was developed in consultation with gender experts, including Nicoline De Haan (ILRI), Gomathy Palaniappan (UQ), Vanya Slavchevska (CIAT), Negin Khaleghi (HUPH), Marisa Mitchell (ILRI) Tamsin Barnes (UQ) and Fred Unger (ILRI).

The pre-symposium questionnaire was completed by 23 participants [56% men, 44% women]. The data gathered from the survey was utilised to develop the questions for the gender and equity group discussion.

A Vietnamese woman who participated in the symposium defined gender as the 'unequal conditions that lead to inequitable opportunities for development of men and women such as labour arrangement between men and women in daily activities or decision-making power of men over women in family.'

Some facilitators shared that members of their groups had varied understandings and ideas of what gender research meant in their programs. Most participants were from technical and biophysical disciplines and many spoke of their lack of experience of integrating gender into their research projects. A view shared by some participants was that gender aspects within livestock development projects was critical to achieve project outcomes; many were looking forward to learning more about gender during the pig symposium. Some participants noted that it was important to include both women and men in their projects, as well as to have diversity in their research teams to ensure successful and sustainable intervention outcomes.

During the session, some participants mentioned that in addition to gender, livestock development projects needed to incorporate other socioeconomic, cultural and biological factors that may influence project outcomes. A discussion arose on a paper titled 'How gender matters in antimicrobial resistance' that was presented on the symposium. One participant noted that the age and education level of participants in this particular study could have greatly affected the project's findings; however, they did not feel that it was as addressed clearly in the study. Many participants also said during the group discussions that they felt focus groups or community consultations in general didn't include low income or uneducated women. These examples were voiced as a gap within current literature.

Presentations in the symposium included sex disaggregated data and women's roles in pig value chains across Southeast and South Asia, including veterinary services. However, one facilitator noted gender is not often incorporated at the design stage of livestock research projects and may be a last minute add on. Lack of gender experts and expertise in research groups was highlighted by participants as a difficulty when incorporating gender within their projects.

## Key reflections from the symposium

- There is a desire to learn and understand more about what gender is and how it impacts livestock development projects. It was also found that participants had very different ideas of what gender meant in their programs.

- Experiences of incorporating gender in livestock projects varied amongst participants with many feeling they had minimal experience. However, some participants shared that they witnessed gendered divisions of labour in taking care of different domestic animals and the disproportionate levels of decision-making power between men and women.
- There was shared understanding among participants of the importance to include gender at the design stage of livestock research projects. Researchers from the symposium highlighted the need to ensure diversity among research teams and the difficulty of adequately supporting gender related work within their projects with the available human and financial resources.

## Incorporating gender in livestock research: recommendations for researchers

- Consider gender at the design stage of research projects. Because understanding on gender is not aligned, it is advised to train research teams on basic concepts of what gender in research is, how to incorporate and mainstream it and research methodologies that take gender into account. Taking this further into specifics of how to do this in the smallholder pig value chains would be beneficial.
- Women were found to play a major role in pig production. When designing and implementing a new intervention, include women to participate and reduce the barriers to their participation.
- Include a broad discussion of women in academia and in research, as well as women in pig value chains.
- Show the added value of including gender considerations in research in terms of improved outcomes.

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