Women's participation in the forage seed market in Vietnam: Progress and barriers

Pazos Cárdenas, Mateo[1]; Giraldo Aguirre, Sebastián[2]; Bravo, Aura María[1]; Burkart, Stefan[1]; Le, Thi Thanh Huyen[3]; Dao, Thi Thu Hang[4]; Atieno, Mary[4]; Triana Ángel, Natalia[1]

[1]International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Colombia; [2]Independent consultant; [3]National Institute of Animal Science (NIAS), Hanoi, Vietnam; [4]International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Vietnam.

Contact: m.pazos@cgiar.org

Introduction

- Women play a central role in livestock and forage production in Vietnam, yet persistent gender norms and structural inequalities limit their access to land, finance, technologies, information, and formal markets, **constraining their participation and decision-making**.
- In forage seed systems, these barriers can **restrict women's access** to improved varieties and reduce their involvement in breeding, seed production, commercialization, and technology adoption.
- While previous research has largely focused on technical and market constraints—such as seed scarcity, weak value-chain coordination, and limited private-sector investment—**the gender dimensions of forage seed systems** remain underexplored.
- Understanding these dynamics is therefore essential not only for **advancing gender equity and women's empowerment**, but also for improving the availability, adoption, commercialization, and scaling of forage technologies.

Objective

To examine how gender norms shape women's participation, agency and market opportunities within Vietnam's forage seed system, and explore their implications for seed system performance.

Methodology

- Qualitative, multi-stakeholder study.
- Qualitative content analysis (NVivo).
- 21 key informant interviews (14 private sector; 7 research institutions). Purposive and quota sampling (33% women).

Study limitations

- Qualitative study based on stakeholder perceptions with a small sample (21 interviews). Results may be not statistically representative.
- The study did not systematically compare experiences by ethnicity, socioeconomic status or geographic subregion.
- The study cannot establish causal relationships between women's participation and seed-system performance.

Results

Women are essential actors...

- Participate throughout the seed system: research support, seed selection, production and packaging, forage management, training and technology dissemination. Also livestock feeding and daily animal care
- Stakeholders estimated that women perform around 60% of forage crop-care activities.

...but have limited decision-making power

- Women remain concentrated in labor-intensive and support roles.
- Men continue to dominate seed purchasing, breeding, commercialization and resource allocation.
- Participation does not necessarily translate into agency. Women participate in the system but often have limited influence over strategic, technical and commercial decisions.

Women's needs are not fully reflected in innovation

Women prefer forage varieties that are:

- Easier to cut and transport.
- Less labor-intensive and able to reduce time burdens.
- Better suited to cut-and-carry systems.

These preferences are rarely incorporated into breeding or seed marketing strategies. This exclusion may limit the incorporation of women users' needs into forage innovation and potentially reduce the relevance and adoption of improved varieties.

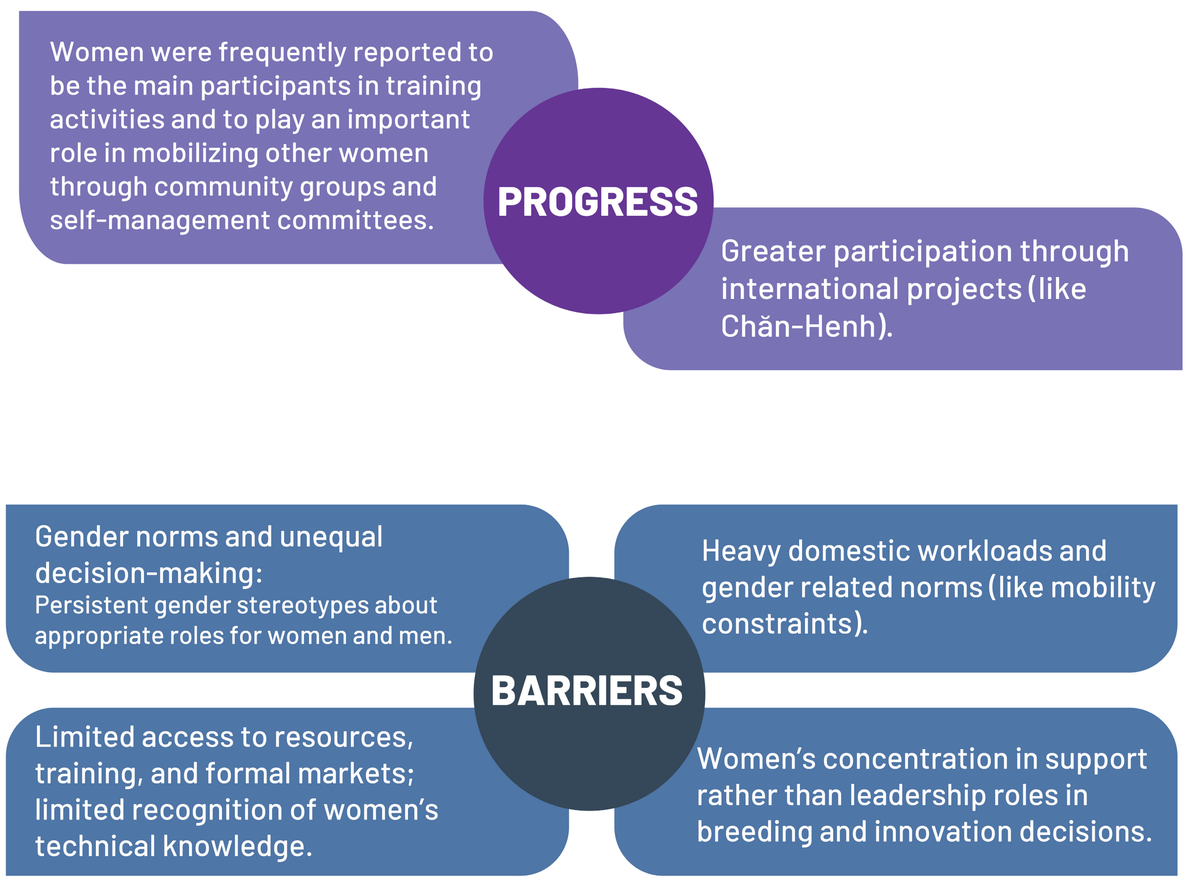

Figure 1. Progress, but persistent barriers.

Discussion and Conclusions

- **Women's participation does not necessarily translate into agency.** Women are highly involved in labor-intensive forage and seed activities, yet remain underrepresented in higher-value roles and key market and purchasing decisions.
- **Gender inequalities are not only an equity issue—they constrain forage seed system performance.** Limited access to land, capital, information, and formal seed markets, together with the insufficient integration of women's forage preferences, may restrict adoption,
- innovation, and scalability.
  Moving from participation to agency requires gender-transformative change. More inclusive forage seed systems should strengthen women's access to formal markets and productive resources, increase their influence in decision-making, and systematically integrate their preferences into breeding, seed delivery, and market strategies.

Acknowledgments

This work was carried out as part of the CGIAR Science Program on Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Foods (SAAF) and the CGIAR Initiative on Sustainable Animal Productivity (SAPLING). We thank all donors who globally support our work through their contributions to the CGIAR System. The views expressed in this document may not be taken as the official views of these organizations.

Related work

Pazos-Cardenas, M.; Giraldo Aguirre, S.; Bravo-Parra, A.M.; Burkart, S.; Le, T.T.H.; Dao Thu, H.T.; Atieno, M.; Triana-Angel, N. (2026) Gender dynamics in Vietnam's forage seed system: barriers, opportunities, and empowerment pathways. Development Studies Research 13(1):2678258. doi: 10.1080/21665095.2026.2678258

Poster prepared for :

Tropentag 2026
September 16 - 18, 2026
Göttingen (Germany)