

# Rural masculinities in central Vietnam

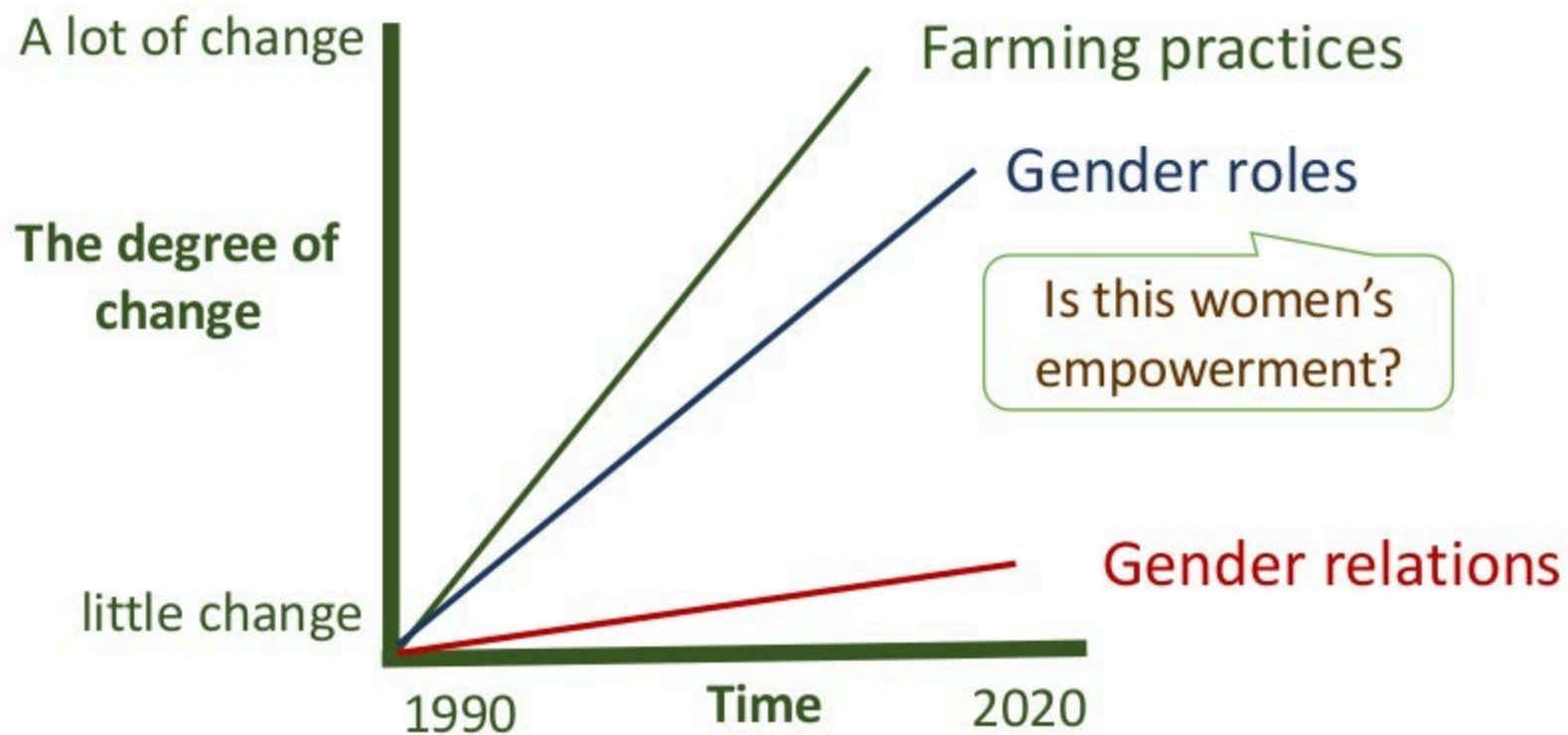


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## A key message

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## **Problem Statement: Gender and agriculture in Vietnam**

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Women's empowerment in Vietnam has been viewed from a perspective of access to production/economic activities.

Masculinities in agriculture in Vietnam are understudied.

### **What we looked at in this study was**

Understanding gender relations

Rural masculinities which shape women's agency and perceived power

## Concepts for exploring gender relations

Rural masculinities, hegemonic masculinity:  
(Connell, 1987; Campbell and Bell, 2000).

Agency and power to change:  
(Butler, 1990; Kabeer, 1998, Jackson, 2007)

Innovation and social embeddedness:  
(Blake and Hanson 2005)

**Location:** Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình

**Table 1: The number of interviewees**

Methods		F	M
Key informants		4	4
FGDs	The poor	8x2	8x2
	Better-off	8x2	8x2
	Youth	8x2	8x2
In-depth interviews	The poor	4	4
	Innovators	4	4
Total		60	60

**Table 2: The degree of power and freedom**

Step 5	Power and freedom to make most major life decisions
Step 4	Power and freedom to make many major life decisions
Step 3	Power and freedom to make some major life decisions
Step 2	Only a small amount of power and freedom
Step 1	Almost no power or freedom to make decisions

## Research Context: Socialist Vietnam

- Agriculture is operated based on a communist party's policy and strategies.
- Poor households below the poverty line are well supported by the local government.
- Labour migration → investing in livestock → scaling up cash crops (cassava, pepper, rubber).
- Joint farming: women and men work together in the same field.



Men in this village generally have the right to decide on most things in the family, because he is the pillar of the house. Men are the ones who initiate new things and they make most of the decisions. The wife cannot decide on her own. (Man, Quang Binh)



Because men usually perceive things better than women do and men are more determined, the men usually decide most things in the family. (Man, Quang Binh)

I'm useful for the family, so I do have some rights. ..[however] I can't decide things by myself because my husband is at the pillar of the house (Woman, Quang Binh)

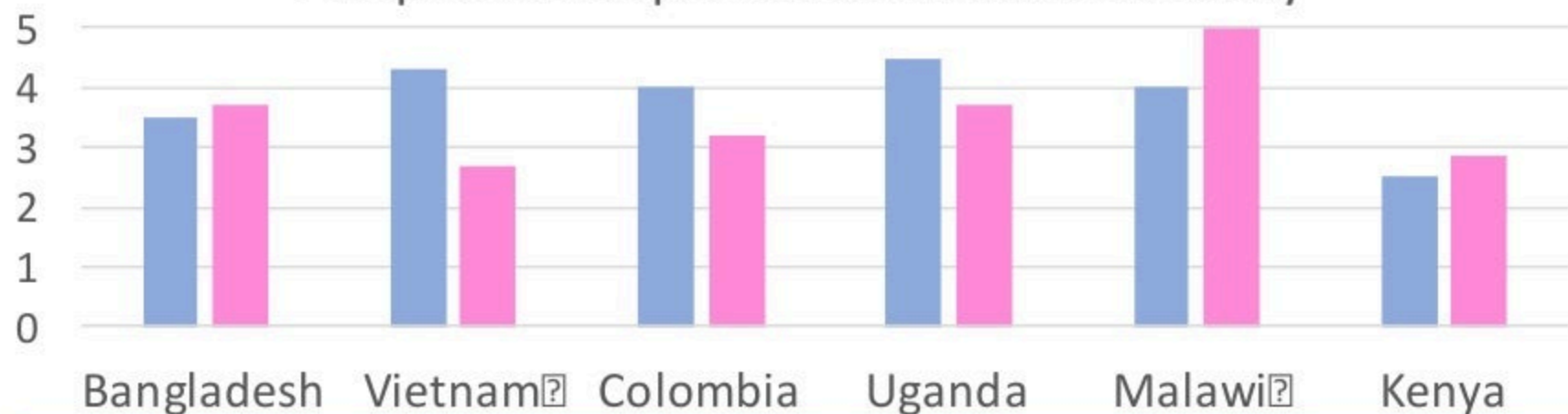


There are some smart women who are innovative but they gave honour to their husband. Some women have great ideas but they tell that their husband did it. (Man, Quang Binh)

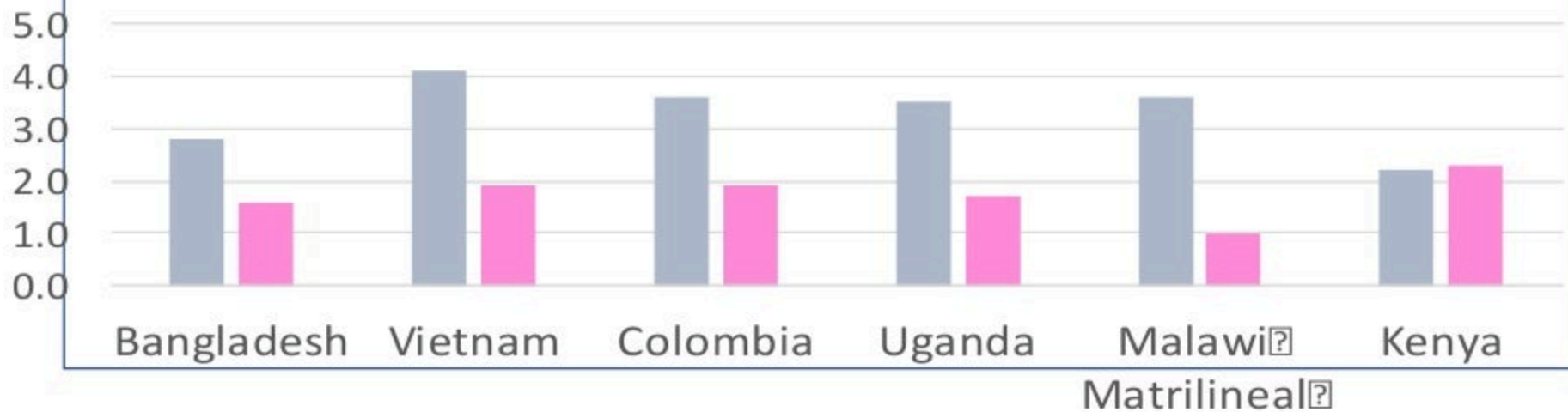


After my success in raising chicken, my husband's pressure as a household head reduced. No more quarrels at home. Our family became peaceful. Through chicken raising, I was able to support my husband to reduce his pressure, which I am proud of (Woman, Quang Binh)

## The perceived power and freedom Today

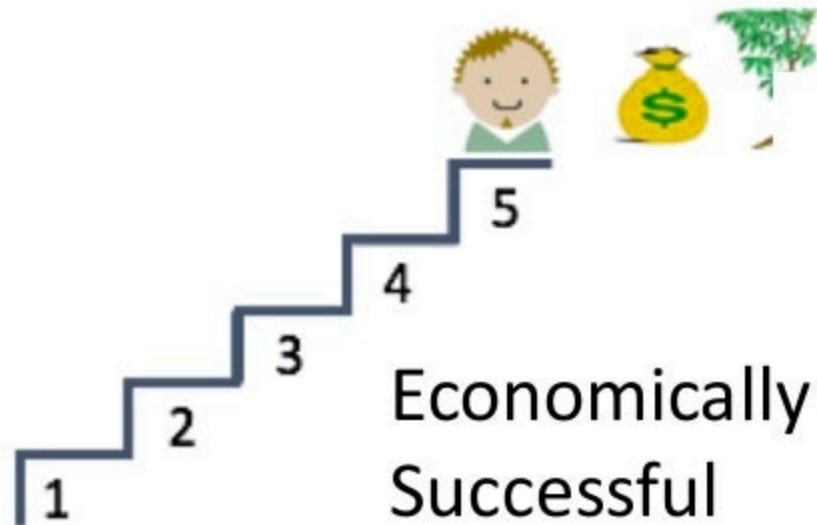


## The perceived power and freedom 10 years ago

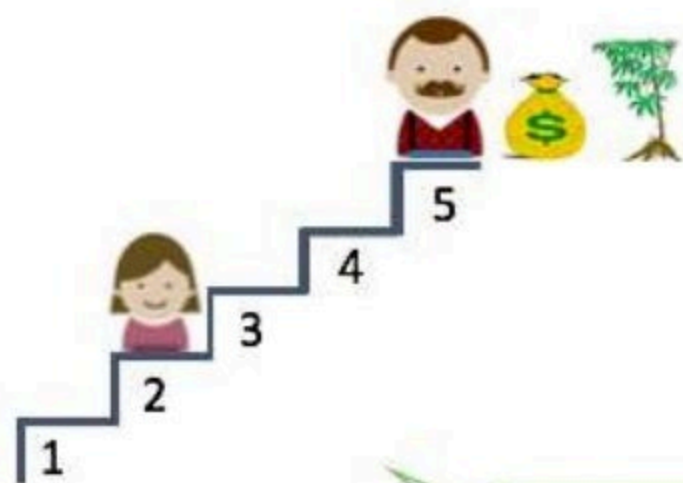




# Men



# Women



Contribution to their  
Husbands/families

No women are  
on step 5

## Rural masculinities in study sites

Being the pillar of the house

Sustaining the decision-making power

Material wealth (trucks, machines, housing)

Success in migration

## What a good wife (daughter-in-law) should be and should do

Maintain harmony in the family

Sacrifice for the family (for husband, in-laws, children)

Sustain agricultural activities while husband is absent

The concept of good wife is not linked with the scale of land, income or material wealth.

## Implications for agricultural interventions

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Current agricultural interventions often support men's power and contribute to sustaining the existing masculinities

Creating new gender models for men as well as women is essential

The conventional way of "women's empowerment" may increase women's labour burden and they remain as a labourer for their husband and family.

## Thank you

This study was conducted as part of a cross-CRP, global comparative research initiative, GENNOVATE. The case of central Vietnam was partly funded by RTB research program of CGIAR. The study was conducted by Institute of Social Development Studies (ISDS), Hanoi, Vietnam. I thank women and men farmers who participated in this study and ISDS researchers for sharing insights with me. Responsibility for the views expressed here and any errors therein remain mine.

The report on this case study is available at

<https://aciargenderlens.wordpress.com/gennovate/>

