

# Empowering Women through Sanitation at Household, Community and Institutional Levels

Lessons from Vietnam

Tara Hill

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**THRIVE**  
NETWORKS

**Australian  
Aid** 

  
**east meets west**  
A PROGRAM OF THRIVE NETWORKS



## Overview of EMW's Sanitation approach

- EMW has **pioneered output-based aid (OBA) in the rural sanitation sector for years**, first through The Community Hygiene Output-Based Aid (CHOBA) project, and later through our CS WASH Fund project, WASHOBA.
- EMW has implemented OBA in sanitation at scale in Vietnam, partnering with over **5,000 Vietnam Women's Union volunteers** to target the poorest 40% of households.
- In Vietnam, EMW has reached **over 150,000 households** using this approach.
- In Vietnam, open defecation rates are low, so the main challenge is incentivizing households to **"move up the sanitation ladder."**



## Rationale for EMW's Gender Study

- Inadequate sanitation facilities disproportionately affect women and girls.
- Relatively little research exists on whether sanitation programs can go further in empowering women's decision-making at the household, community, and institutional levels. Where such studies exist, they have generally been qualitative in nature.

**East Meets West (EMW) has undertaken two studies to understand whether and how a large scale rural sanitation program in Vietnam increased women's empowerment.**

# Overview of Analytical Framework

1

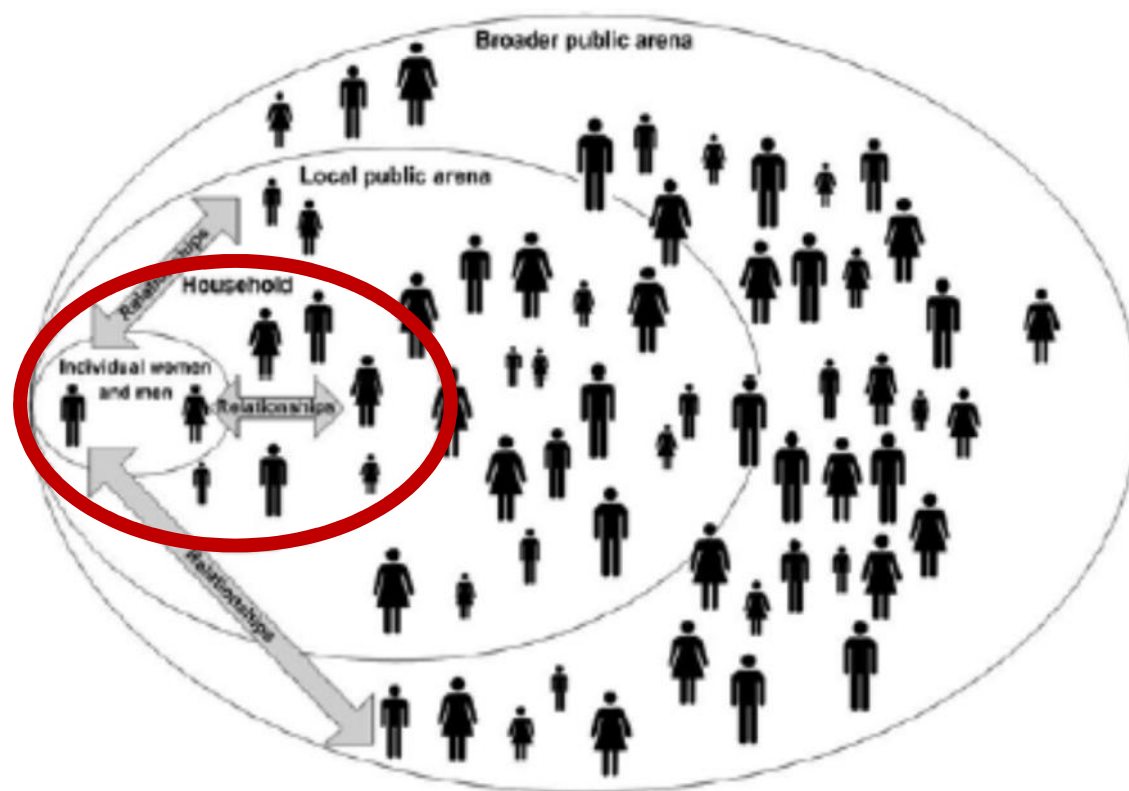
## Household

Understanding the impact of EMW's OBA approach at the **household level** (focus of today's presentation).

2

## Community and Institutional

Understanding the impact of EMW's OBA approach at the **community and institutional level** (in partnership with UTS-ISF).



## Key question: Do Women Get a Greater Say in Family Decisions to Purchase a Latrine?

- Focus on the decision to install a latrine
- Use data from CHOBA endline survey (but program approach is similar to WASHOBA)
- Key question: “*Which member in your household made the decision to install this latrine?*”

Analysis uses data from subset of 517 households with:

- Data on both husband and wife (age, education, occupation, etc.)
- Decision was taken by husband, wife, or jointly

Understanding the  
impact of EMW’s  
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household level

## Overview of existing literature on WASH and gender

The literature broadly falls into three categories:

1

Studies of how  
WASH programs  
benefit women  
(and men)

2

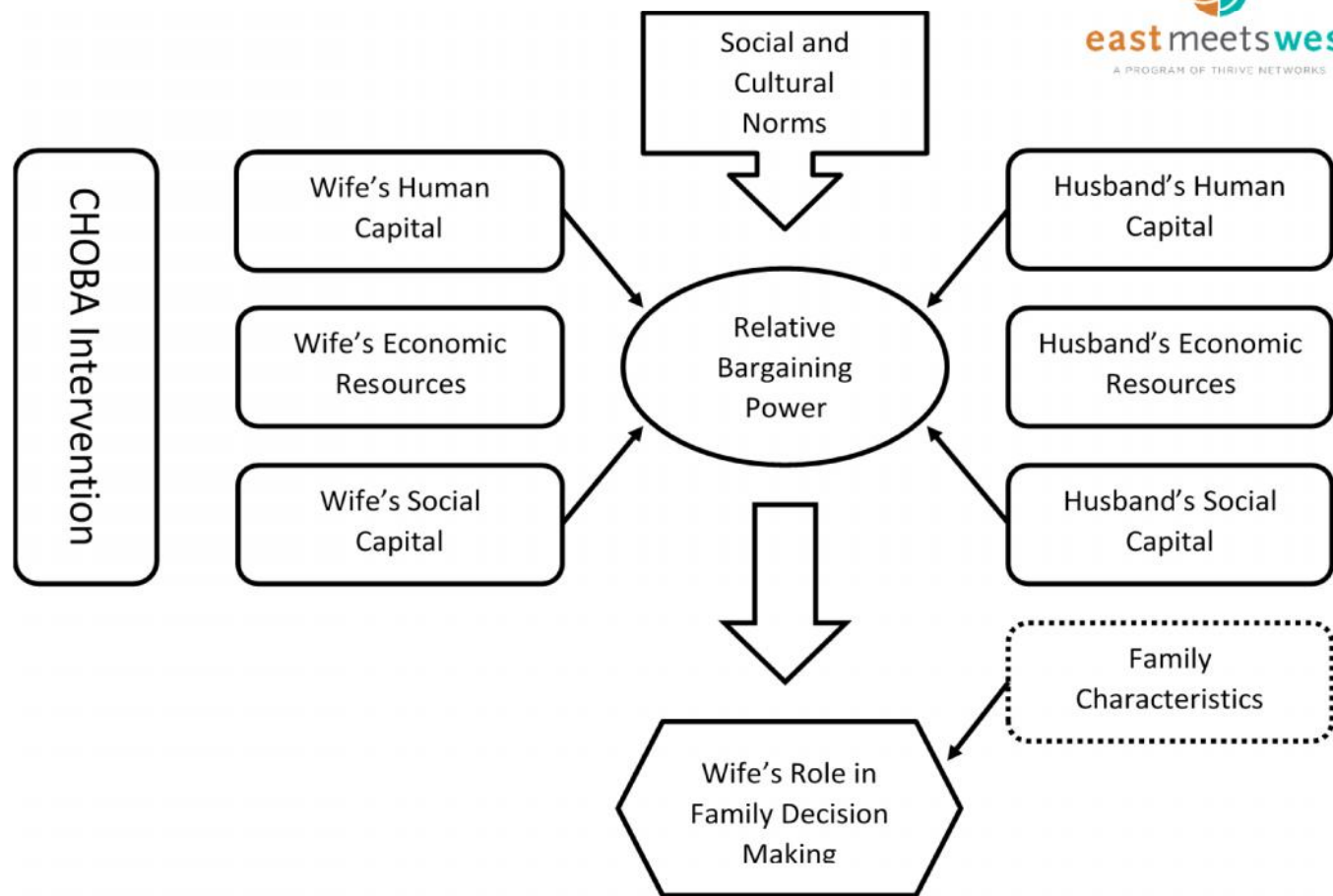
Analysis of  
programs that seek  
to empower  
women to improve  
WASH outcomes

3

Assessments  
of how and to what  
extent WASH  
programs empower  
women

↓  
**Where our study seeks to  
contribute**

## Conceptual Model

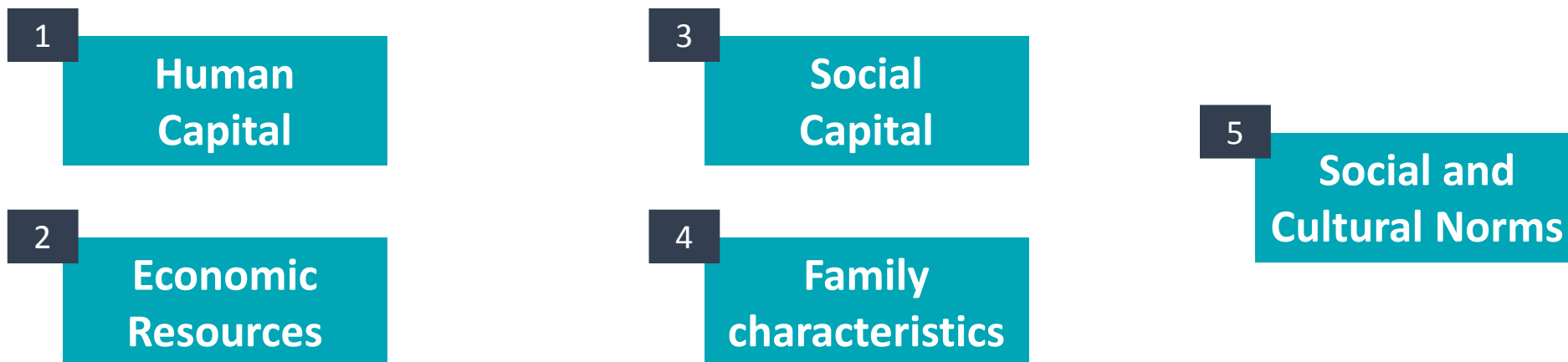


We conducted a **literature review** on factors influencing women's decision-making and bargaining power at the household level to develop the above conceptual model.

## The Econometric Model

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 * X_1 + \alpha_2 * X_2 + \dots + \alpha_n * X_n$$

Where x are a number of explanatory variables grouped into five categories (taken from conceptual model):





## The Results

1

### Human Capital

The probability that the wife participated in the latrine decision **increases with her level of education, age, and knowledge about what type of latrine is hygienic.** Knowledge about the linkages between contact with human feces and diseases has no significant impact on the wife's role in the latrine decision.

2

### Economic Resources

The wife's decision-making role was increased if she earned outside cash income, and **if the Women's Union helped the wife to obtain and process a loan.**

3

### Social Capital

No significance.

## The Results

4

### Family characteristics

Like most studies, we found that the effect of total family income was insignificant. Similarly, family size had negligible impact of decision making roles in the household.

5

### Social and Cultural Norms

Our results suggest that **women in Hai Duong (northern province, more traditional Confucian values) had less influence in decision-making than in Tien Giang (southern Mekong Delta)** (after adjustments for educational achievements).

## 1) How much is the wife's decision making power changed by CHOBA?

We look specifically at 3 CHOBA-related variables and their impact on women's decision-making:

1. VWU informed about hygienic latrine
2. The family obtained a loan from VBSP
3. VWU assisted in preparation of loan application

**Without CHOBA, the husband would be the main decision maker in 55% of the households. CHOBA reduced this to 31%.**

Thus, key elements of CHOBA gave the wives a greater say in latrine decision.

## 2) Does the empowerment result in any practical consequences in terms of latrine choice?

### Three Main Reasons for Installing a New Latrine

	Husband Decided	Wife or Joint Decision
<i>Reason for New Latrine</i>		
Convenience, Comfort, Cleanliness	73.7%	82.8%
Improve family health	31.7%	42.0%
Reasonable cost	18.5%	14.2%
<i>Outcome</i>		
Septic Tank	64.6%	76.6%
Construction Cost (Median)	5.9 M	7.6 M

- Promoting hygienic latrines and education on health benefits did not influence the “balance of power,” while **practical information** regarding latrine options, costs, and masons did increase the wife’s bargaining power.
- Men gave greater weight to costs while women emphasized health. When the wife decided, the latrines were more hygienic.

1. In the case of our program, the key CHOBA elements that increased women's decision-making in the household were delivered through the Women's Union. However, these same elements could be delivered through other mechanisms:

- **Loans targeting women**
- **Information campaigns targeting women**

2. Our results suggest that **information campaigns targeting women should focus on providing practical information** regarding options, costs, masons, etc.

3. Further study is needed to validate these findings in other contexts.

## Research on Gender in CHOBA – Women’s Union as an Institution

1. To determine the extent to which Vietnam Women’s Union volunteers have been empowered through their involvement with CHOBA.
2. To determine the impact of CHOBA on the stature and level of influence of the VWU as an institution and the country’s premier organization for women
3. To examine if CHOBA has influenced the Government of Vietnam’s sanitation program to be more responsive to the needs of women and children (especially girls) by enhancing the role of the VWU, and their involvement in CHOBA.

Understanding  
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## Women's Union Volunteer Empowerment through CHOBA

Women's Union volunteers at the  
village level

Structured in-depth interviews with  
20 randomly selected volunteers from  
four communes of two provinces

Results will be finalized in September. Here  
are some individual stories that have emerged  
so far from the consultant's interviews. These  
are not necessarily representative of the  
whole sample.





## Story 1: Village volunteer from Hoa Binh province

*“I feel more mature. In terms of society, my prestige is improved compared with before. For example, I am a regular person in a big community. I am just a small head of a hamlet Women’s Union. But I won the vote to become a delegate of the People’s Council which was very surprising to me. I think my participation in CHOBA somehow contributed to that.*”

*I think the fact that I visit people – and that I am the direct bridge between CHOBA and people make them see the benefits. They think that I can help them, then they trust me and support me. So I think this new position is partly thanks to CHOBA.”*



## Story 2: Village volunteer from Tra Vinh province

*“I am also selling social insurance for Bao Viet. I attended the insurance training and began the job in 2015. Initially, I thought that I would just attend to learn skills for CHOBA. Under CHOBA I need to persuade and mobilize, so when the insurance company came to the commune, I thought this might be useful. But then, I saw that I should join to work as insurance dealer.*”

*Now I am working to mobilize people and additionally, I have second job as an insurance dealer/agent. That generates more income. I feel very happy.”*

Thank you!

For more information:

Tara Hill: [tara.hill@eastmeetswest.org](mailto:tara.hill@eastmeetswest.org)

Per Ljung: [per.ljung@eastmeetswest.org](mailto:per.ljung@eastmeetswest.org)