

FACT SHEET



Gender equality in Viet Nam

March 2010

Basic Capabilities

- Although Viet Nam has made significant strides towards achieving gender equality, gender gaps remain. Viet Nam's ranking on key gender measures remains similar to that of low income countries in the region. Viet Nam ranked 71 out of 134 countries on the 2009 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Indexⁱ; 94 out of 155 countries on the 2007 Gender Development Indexⁱⁱ and 62 out of 109 countries on the 2007 Gender Empowerment Measureⁱⁱⁱ.
- The normal sex ratio at birth is 104-106 boys to every 100 girls. In Viet Nam in 2008 the sex ratio at birth was 112 to 100, up from 110 to 100 in 2006^{iv}. If the current skewed sex ratio continues, Viet Nam will have a surplus male population from 2025.
- Viet Nam has seen significant improvement in the enrollment of girls in school. The rate of participation at primary and secondary levels is close to equal, and in tertiary education there are more girls than boys^v. Female literacy rates are close to that of men, at 91.3% for women compared to 95.8% for men^{vi}. However, among the poor, and in some specific regions of Viet Nam, a gender gap remains with girls less likely to be in school in the poorest 20% of all Vietnamese households and among northern mountain ethnic communities^{vii}.
- Small-scale studies have shown that parents are less likely to invest in health care for their girls. A 2008 study found that 61% of boys compared to 39% of girls under five years of age were admitted to three national hospitals in 2006-2007^{viii}.

Economic Power

- According to 2007 labour force data 65% of women aged 15 and over were active in the labour force, compared to 74% of men. Women make up 46.6% of the workforce^{ix}. Women are more likely to work in agriculture or services, while men predominate in industry. Men are also more likely to be in paid employment (23.6 % of men compared to 21.4 % of women)^x.
- Women are concentrated in vulnerable (or informal) employment: 78% of women are either self-employed or unpaid family workers. However, women are much more likely to be unpaid family workers, 53% of women compared to 32% of men fall into this category, while men are more likely to be self-employed (43% of men compared to 25% of women). Both self-employed and unpaid family work is vulnerable because workers typically do not receive any protection or benefits. In addition, as unpaid family workers receive no earnings for the work they perform more than half of working women in Viet Nam receive no direct income^{xi}.
- According to 2006 VHLSS data women manage or lead 22% of businesses, and are more likely to have leadership roles in non-state owned enterprises. However, women operated non-agricultural businesses are smaller in scale than those operated by men and more likely to be home-based, while those operated by men typically have much higher revenues^{xii}.
- The new Constitution, the Labour Code, and the Law on Gender Equality all state that women shall receive equal pay for equal work. However, women continue to be paid less than men for the work they do. Women in urban areas earn 87% of the hourly wage received by men, while in rural areas this is slightly higher at 88%, though rural men and women earn significantly less than those in urban areas do^{xiii}.
- Women typically have lower levels of ownership, and control over, key assets in Viet Nam. Women with their names on Land Tenure Certificates (LTCs) report having greater freedom to take and use loans, while women without LTCs in their name face greater difficulties accessing credit. Joint titling provides women with greater security in the event of divorce, protects women's rights in inheritance and old age and promotes more equal household decision-making^{xiv}.

- Currently, women do not have an equal say in decision-making at the household level. Men are seen as the head of the household, and key assets such as the house, agricultural land, business, vehicles such as cars and motorbikes, are more likely to be in men's names than held jointly or by women alone, in particular in rural areas. Men typically make the decisions about larger scale purchases, while women are responsible for small purchases and day to day spending^{xv}.
- Women tend to migrate at slightly earlier ages than men, and the number of internal female migrants is increasing. In particular the number of women moving to urban areas and industrial zones now exceeds the number of men. Women also count for the majority of overseas migrants from Viet Nam to receiving countries. Women send a higher proportion of their income home in the form of remittances than men do (17% percent compared to 10%)^{xvi}.

Political Voice^{xvii}

- 25.8% of deputies in the National Assembly are women in the XII term (2007-2012), down slightly from 27.3% in the XI term (2002-2007). However, women chair only two of nine Committees of the National Assembly (Judicial and Social Affairs Committees).
- While women make up 24.6% of members of the Communist Party, they are under-represented at all levels. There are no female members of the Politburo and in the Xth session only two members of the ten member Secretary Committee of the VCP are women, while only 13 of the 160 members of the Executive Committee are women.
- Women make up 23.9% of the members of provincial People's Councils, 23% of district level People's Councils and 19.5% of commune People's Councils. In terms of leadership there are more women to be found at the Vice-Chair level, with less than two percent of provincial Councils, and 4 percent of district and commune People's Councils, chaired by women.
- There is only one female Minister in the current term, and only 7.8 % of Vice-Ministers are women.

Legal Rights

- Viet Nam ratified the Convention for Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1982. Gender equality is enshrined in the new Constitution which states (Article 63) that: *“Male and female citizens have equal rights in all respects, including political, economic, cultural, social and the family. All acts of discrimination against women and all acts damaging women’s dignity are strictly banned. Men and women shall receive equal pay for equal work. Women workers shall enjoy a regime related to maternity. Women who are state employees and wage-earners shall enjoy paid prenatal and post-natal leave during which they shall receive all their wages and allowances as determined by law.”*
- Vietnam passed the Law on Gender Equality in 2006 and the Law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence in 2007. Equal rights for men and women including the right to work, to equal wages, property rights, inheritance and the right to choose a marriage partner or divorce are guaranteed under various laws including the Labour Code, the Land Law, and the Marriage and Family Law. However, discriminatory provisions do exist in some laws, such as prohibition of women working in dangerous conditions under the Labour Code, which restricts women's opportunities. Some rights are not yet protected. For example, some forms of violence against women, such as sexual harassment and stalking, are not currently prohibited by law^{xviii}.
- Under the Labour Code, the retirement age in Viet Nam is 55 years for women and 60 years for men. While this provision was introduced to recognise women's contribution to work and family life by rewarding women with early retirement, in practice there are many negative impacts. Early retirement limits women's chances for promotion and access to training and development, and may also discourage employers from hiring women, especially older women workers^{xix}.
- While national data on incidence of all forms of violence against women in Viet Nam is not yet available, a recent study suggests that 21 percent of couples experience domestic violence. Women and children were most often the victims of serious violence^{xx}. Almost two-thirds of women believe it is acceptable for men to beat their wives^{xxi}. Domestic violence is a major factor in divorce, which is usually initiated by women^{xxii}.
- Women face specific barriers to accessing the justice system in Viet Nam. Almost all domestic violence survivors report that they do not seek support from police or the court system. Usually survivors only access legal or court services when the abuse is very serious or they are seeking a divorce. Other crimes of violence, such as rape, also remain under-reported^{xxiii}. In addition, the Penal Code considers whether the victim was able to defend her/himself rather than whether s/he was able to give valid consent^{xxiv}.

- Although the 2003 Land Law provides that Land Tenure Certificates (LTCs) should be in the name of both men and women, and a reported 90 % of new certificates are in both names^{xxv}, around two-thirds of existing LTCs are still in men's names only^{xxvi}.

Annex: GDI and GEM in selected Asian countries 2007

HDI Rank		GDI rank 2007	GDI value 2007	Gender empowerment measure (GEM) rank 2007	Gender empowerment measure (GEM) value 2006
Very High Human Development					
10	Japan	14	0.945	57	0.567
23	Singapore	16	0.786
24	Hong Kong, China (SAR)	22	0.934
26	Korea (Republic of)	25	0.926	61	0.554
High Human Development					
66	Malaysia	58	0.823	68	0.542
Medium Human Development					
87	Thailand	72	0.782	76	0.514
92	China	75	0.77	72	0.533
105	Philippines	86	0.748	59	0.56
111	Indonesia	93	0.726	96	0.408
116	Viet Nam	94	0.723	62	0.554
133	Lao People's Democratic Republic	112	0.614
137	Cambodia	116	0.588	91	0.427

Source: Human Development Report 2009

ⁱ The Global Gender Gap Index is based on the following sub-indices: economic participation, educational attainment and opportunity, health and survival, political empowerment. Source: World Economic Forum 2009 The Global Gender Gap Report, Geneva Switzerland

ⁱⁱ The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a combined index measuring the gender gap between men and women on the following indicators: life expectancy at birth; adult literacy rate; combined gross enrollment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary education; and estimated earned income. Source: UNDP 2009 Human Development Report.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) measures political participation and decision making power, economic participation and command over resources. Source: UNDP 2009 Human Development Report

^{iv} UNFPA, 2009. Viet Nam Population 2008- Update Information: Fertility, Mortality, Sex Ratio at Birth

^v MPI 2008 Viet Nam Continues to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals, Hanoi Viet Nam

^{vi} Central Steering Committee for Population and Housing Census, 2009, Report on Sample Results for the 2009 Census on Population and Housing.

^{vii} World Bank 2008 How do women fare in education, employment and health? Gender Analysis of the 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey.

^{viii} Ministry of Health and UNICEF 2008, The Difference in Utilization of Pediatric Health Services between Boys and Girls at the Hospital Level.

^{ix} Central Steering Committee for Population and Housing Census, 2009, Report on Sample Results for the 2009 Census on Population and Housing.

^x MOLISA and ILO 2009 Vietnam Employment Trends 2009, Hanoi

^{xi} Ibid

^{xii} World Bank 2008 How do women fare in education, employment and health? Gender Analysis of the 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey.

^{xiii} World Bank 2008 How do women fare in education, employment and health? Gender Analysis of the 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey.

^{xiv} World Bank 2008 Analysis of the Impact of land Tenure Certificates with both the names of wife and husband in Viet Nam, Hanoi, World Bank

^{xv} UNICEF 2009 Results of the First Nationwide Family Survey

^{xvi} MPI 2008 Viet Nam Continues to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals, Hanoi Viet Nam

^{xvii} Source: VASS forthcoming: Empowerment of Women in Public Sector Project (EOWP): Quantitative Research On Women's Leadership In Viet Nam's Public Sector

^{xviii} UNIFEM 2009 CEDAW and the Law: A Gendered and Rights-Based Review of Vietnamese Legal Documents through the Lens of CEDAW, Hanoi, UNIFEM

^{xix} UNIFEM 2009 CEDAW and the Law: A Gendered and Rights-Based Review of Vietnamese Legal Documents through the Lens of CEDAW, Hanoi, UNIFEM

^{xx} UNICEF 2009 Results of the First Nationwide Family Survey

^{xxi} GSO (2006), Viet Nam Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006, Final Report Hanoi, General Statistics Office

^{xxii} People's Supreme Court (2006), Report on Reviewing Legal Documents Concerning Domestic Violence by People's Court and Assessment of Domestic Violence Through Court Cases of Criminal, Civil, Marriage and Family Cases, 25 September 2006, Hanoi

^{xxiii} UN in Viet Nam forthcoming: Gender based violence issues paper.

^{xxiv} UNIFEM 2009 CEDAW and the Law: A Gendered and Rights-Based Review of Vietnamese Legal Documents through the Lens of CEDAW, Hanoi, UNIFEM

^{xxv} MPI 2008 Viet Nam Continues to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals, Hanoi Viet Nam

^{xxvi} Ibid; UNICEF 2009 Results of the First Nationwide Family Survey