**WOMEN DELEGATES
IN THE VIET NAM
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY:**
FROM PARTICIPATION
TO REPRESENTATION

UNDP

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Ha Noi, April 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Viet Nam has made efforts to increase representation for women, particularly in the National Assembly (VNA). Prior to the 2007 and 2011 elections, the Fatherland Front and the Central Election Council sought 30 percent female representation.[1] While only 28 percent of the assembly elected in 2007 and 24 percent in 2011 were women, female representation nonetheless remains a concern for the party and government. The National Strategy on Gender Equality establishes gender equality targets in the fields of employment, education, health and public participation. For the VNA, the strategy targeted a minimum of 30 percent female representation from 2011-2015 and a minimum of 35 percent from 2016-2020. The targets are in line with the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action's assessment that 30 percent is the "so-called 'critical mass', believed to be necessary for women to make a visible impact on the style and content of political decision-making."[2]

Despite the targets to increase the number of women in the legislature, little is known about how the women whom have won seats in the VNA perform their roles. Few studies have examined the positions women are selected to in the VNA or the way they perform their roles once selected. This is an important oversight because the research on the impact of female representation does not universally support the notion that greater numbers of women necessarily lead to legislation more aligned with the policy preferences of women (Waring 2010).

While gender quotas for executive positions such as village leaders have been found to have an impact on educational attainment for girls (Beaman, et al. 2012), the results are mixed for the impact of women in the legislative sphere. Some have found that greater proportions of women can have an impact on legislative output on issues of particular importance to women such as day care policy (Bratton and Ray 2002). However, most scholars of Western legislatures have found that party affiliation has a greater impact than gender on whether or not representatives vote for legislation boosting the rights of women (Tamerius 1995, Waring 2010). Despite the lack of strong evidence for the impact of gender on voting, other research finds that women do have an impact on setting the agenda (Tamerius 1995) and structuring debate (Piscopo 2011).

Given the conflicting nature of these studies and the fact that Viet Nam's political institutions are different from the contexts where previous studies have taken place, research into female representation in Viet Nam is necessary. Many of the studies are on Western (Tamerius 1995, Bratton and Ray 2002), Latin American (Piscopo 2011), or African legislatures (O'Brien 2012).[3] However, these countries have dramatically different electoral systems, political institutions, and cultures, which may render the findings from those contexts inapplicable to Viet Nam. For these reasons, this project will address the following questions in the context of Viet Nam.

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[1] See "Tăng đại biểu chuyên trách, giảm đại biểu là thành viên chính phủ." [The National Assembly will increase the Full-time delegates and Decrease the Government Delegates." February 24, 2007. www.nguoidaibieunhandan.com.vn.; "Hội nghị Hiệp thương thứ nhất bầu cử đại biểu Quốc hội." February 23, 2011. Tin Moi Online.

[2] See UN Women. "Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-making Processes, with Particular Emphasis on Political Participation and Leadership." Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. October 24, 2005. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/>

[3] This is just a small sampling of a much larger literature on this subject. However, to date no studies have examined female representation in Viet Nam or China, two countries with largely similar political systems.

1. Are women represented equally in the VNA?

2. How well are women represented in the different leadership positions in the VNA?

3. How do women perform their roles in the VNA? Do they represent issues pertinent to women? Are they more likely to criticize the regime than men?

Election of Female Candidates

In terms of elections and selection into leadership positions, the party failed to achieve its target for the 2011 election of a minimum of 30 percent elected. One obvious solution to the problem would be to nominate more women. In both the elections for the 12th and 13th VNA, roughly 30 percent of the nominated candidates were women. Increasing this number would lead to a greater likelihood of more women being elected. However, the results of the election show another problem – female candidates fared worse than male candidates in the elections. More than 60 percent of male candidates winning election compared to about 40 percent for female candidates.[4]

While this could suggest that the electorate is punishing women at the polls, further analysis reveals that it is not gender that hurts female candidates, but instead *the types of women nominated for election.* Voters are almost 20 percent likely to vote for military officials compared to the baseline candidate from the party or state. Military candidates are almost always male. However, voters are almost 17 percent less likely to vote for candidates nominated from private businesses and state-owned enterprises than from the baseline category. These candidates are disproportionately female. Out of the total 1,704 candidates for election to the 12th and 13th VNAs, about 24 percent of candidates were from the state-run or private business sectors, but 36 percent of the total number female candidates were from the business sector. Furthermore, centrally-nominated candidates, of which a higher proportion are male, fare better.

Therefore, in order to ensure that the VNA hits the NSGE target of a minimum of 35 percent of the VNA comprised of female candidates, the party needs to further increase the number of female candidates and increase the number of female candidates with backgrounds voters prefer. The best way to do this is increasing the number of female candidates nominated by central level institutions.

Leadership positions are also important. In the VNA the chairs and deputy chairs of the committees, along with the Standing Committee, hold a disproportionate level of power. The analysis shows that women predominately occupy lesser roles in the VNA while men are more likely to be leaders. However, as with the elections results, the decreased proportion does not appear to be a function of discrimination. *Rather, the fact that fewer women are leaders is a function of disproportionately fewer women being nominated by central institutions such as the VNA Standing Committee and the Office of the VNA prior to election. Therefore, to increase the number of female leaders, the VNA either needs to change the way it selects leaders or nominate more female candidates centrally.*

Looking at membership in committees, women are not equally represented on the powerful Economic, Law, and Justice committees.[5] Furthermore, even on those committees where they are represented, such as the Social Affairs Committee; the Culture, Education, and Youth Committee;

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[4] It is important to note that Viet Nam's nomination system starts with a higher number of candidates than eventually make it to the ballot. Previous research shows that the initial list has a much higher percentage of women, but a disproportionate number of women fail to make it through the nomination process (Vandenbeld and Ly 2012).

[5] We consider the standing committee separately from the other committees because the majority of the standing committee is made up of the chairs of the substantive committees.

and the Council for Ethnic Minorities, they are less likely to occupy leadership roles.[6] This adds more evidence that in addition to focusing on increasing the raw total number of women in the VNA, more needs to be done to ensure women are taking leadership roles. *Again, given the nomination procedures in the VNA, this means that the VNA Standing Committee and the Office of the VNA needs to nominate more women at the central level.*

Female Delegate Performance

While we do not have access to data on roll call votes or participation in committee hearings, an analysis of the substance of the speeches reveals that women do appear to raise different issues to men. Using speeches to make inferences about the patterns of representation has been used to explore gendered contributions in countries such as Argentina (Francheschet and Piscopo 2008) Australia (Broughton and Palmieri 1999), and New Zealand (Grey 2002) among others. This analysis suggests that increasing the number of women in the assembly should increase the level of representation of women's issues, at least within the public forum of the VNA query sessions, hearings, and debates on laws. Women were more likely to discuss issues of direct concern to women during their speeches. More than 30 percent of speeches made by women made a reference to women, a woman's issue, or children's issues compared to about 20 percent for men.

However, as the mere mention of women's issues may not indicate that the speech was truly about such topics, we conducted another analysis where coders coded a portion of the speeches. These speeches were used to inform a computer algorithm to assess the remaining speeches to see whether or not women were more likely to raise issues. Based on this method, we found that an estimated 11 percent of speeches made by women contained at least some reference to issues of concern to women as compared to only 8 percent for men. The evidence, combined with the analysis of the terms and the case studies, strongly suggests that women are more attentive to issues that impact women. In addition to showing the increased attention to issues of concern to women, the case studies also show that women are more likely to support pro-women policies and oversee the implementation of these policies during government hearings.

A final question regarding behavior focuses on the assertiveness and technical quality of women in the assembly. While many recent studies have downplayed the difference between men and women in legislatures in terms of tone, some past research has suggested that women are less critical. This project assesses the behavior of women in the assembly **on all issues** to measure whether or not women are more or less critical of ministers during query sessions or of laws during debates on legislation. The analysis does not reveal any clear differences between men and women in terms of criticality or technical quality when speaking about any issue. In fact, the only slight difference is that women actually appear more willing to participate in debates than men. Although women only made up 26 percent of the total number of delegates for the 12th and 13th VNAs, they made 28 percent of the total number of speeches.

Taken together, the analysis of how women perform in the VNA shows that women are more likely to raise issues of concern to women and support pro-women policies. At the same time, this increased focus does not appear to come at any cost in terms of quality of their contributions and the willingness to challenge the government on other issues. If anything, the evidence seems to

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[6] *An interesting debate is whether or not setting up a special committee on gender, as has been done in some Latin American and Eastern European contexts is a good idea. Although it may serve to raise women's issues to the fore, some research suggests that the existence of women's committees allows legislative leaders the opportunity to quarantine all women on such committees, thus inadvertently decreasing their representation on other more powerful committees (Heath, Schwindt-Bayer and Taylor-Robinson 2005).*

show that they are more willing to participate than men in any discussion. *Therefore, increasing the number of female delegates should lead to greater emphasis on women's issues at no cost to the level of debate on other issues.*

Findings and Recommendations

- Women are more likely to raise issues of concern to women than men.

- Women contribute to debates on all issues, not just women's issues, with the same level of quality.

- In order to increase attention to women's issues, the number of women in the VNA should be increased. This will come at no cost to the quality of the VNA.

- To increase the influence of women in the VNA, more women need to be selected to leadership positions in **all** committees, not just Social Affairs and the Council on Ethnic Minority Affairs.

- The best way to increase the number of women elected and selected to leadership positions is to increase the number of female candidates **and** increase the percentage of female candidates nominated by central level institutions.

Section 1: Who are the Women in the Viet Nam National Assembly?

The first question in this report is how well women are represented in the VNA. The VNA set the target of a minimum of 30 percent of the assembly for women in 2011. However, Viet Nam has not achieved this level of female representation since the 5th VNA in 1975 (Vandenbeld and Ly 2012). Since then, the number of female delegates has oscillated between 18 and 28 percent. This leads to the first puzzle – why have women consistently won less than 30 percent of seats in the VNA?

There are several possible explanations. As a recent UNDP report argues, women may fail to be considered as nominees, they may fail to win placement on the ballot, or they may fail to win election. As that report shows, the total number of female delegates nominated at the first stage of the electoral process is actually near 50 percent (Vandenbeld and Ly 2012). However, on the final ballot, only about 30-35 percent is comprised of women. This suggests that the Central Election Council could do more to ensure that female candidates make it through the entire candidate selection process.

With that said, an examination of the figures for the number of women that made it to the ballot and those that were elected shows that Vietnamese voters elected men at a higher rate than women. *Table 1* shows that in the elections for both the 12th and 13th VNAs more than 30 percent of the candidates were women.[7] However, the number of female delegate did drop from 2007 to 2011. Nonetheless, if men and women were elected at equal rates, more than 30 percent of the assembly should be comprised of women. Yet, as *Table 1* also shows, in both elections about 45 percent of female candidates won seats while more than 60 percent of male candidates won.

Table 1: Nominated and Elected Delegates by Gender

	12th		13th		Total	
	Nominated	Elected	Nominated	Elected	Nominated	Elected
Total	876	493	828	500	1704	993
Male *Success Rate*	576	355	568	378 66.55%	1144 67.14%	733 64.07%
Female *Success Rate*	309	138 44.66%	260	122 46.92%	569 45.69%	260 45.69%
Female %	35.27%	27.99%	31.40%	24.40%	33.39%	26.18%

Note: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes form information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

This raises the second question: Why do voters not select female candidates at equal rates? While discrimination among the electorate is possible, there is also a possibility that the party nominates

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[7] *It is tempting to suggest increasing the number of female candidates as a way to boost the number of women selected to the VNA. However, an increase in candidates is accompanied by a decrease in the quality of female candidates, it is far from clear that this will lead to an overall increase in female representation. Therefore, any increase in the number of candidates must be accompanied by an increase in the quality of those candidates.*

men with different backgrounds than women that impact their likelihood of selection. For example, we would see the same result if voters prefer to elect candidates with high ranking government positions and a higher proportion of male candidates have such positions.

The Viet Nam Election Process

Before proceeding with the analysis, it is useful here to briefly review the Viet Nam nomination and election process in order to provide context for the findings. More comprehensive overviews have been provided elsewhere (Koh 2006, Malesky and Schuler 2009, Vandenbeld and Ly 2012), but to understand the findings a few specific points must be emphasized.

In terms of nomination, the process involves three main steps.

- **Step 1:** First, the VNA Standing Committee, the Central Election Council, and Fatherland Front sets targets for the proportion of the VNA that should go to certain functional groups and demographics. For example, the election leadership states specific figures for the number of women, ethnic minorities, and members of mass organizations amongst other factors. At this stage, no specific candidates are nominated.

- **Step 2:** During the second stage, the different organizations given seat targets are tasked with nominating delegates. It is at this stage that the Women's Union and other organizations will put forward specific names of candidates to the Central Election Council and the provincial election boards.

- **Step 3:** Final meetings of the Central Election Council at the national level and the election commissions at the provincial level are held to determine the ballot. As previous work has shown, many women are dropped from consideration between the second and third stages (Vandenbeld and Ly 2012). *Reducing this loss of candidates during the nomination stage is one straightforward way to increase the number of female delegates eventually elected.*

Locally-Nominated Versus Centrally-Nominated Candidates

Another feature of election procedure important for the analysis is the distinction between ***locally nominated*** and ***centrally nominated*** candidates. The nomination process in Viet Nam takes place on two parallel levels. The majority of candidates are nominated by provincial level party and state organizations, while a minority are nominated by central level institutions. In the election to the 12th VNA, 18 percent of the candidates were nominated at the central level, while in the 13th 22 percent were nominated centrally. The central level institutions tasked with nominating delegates are listed below with the total delegates nominated from each organization in the 12th VNA from each institutions in parentheses[8]:

- The Judiciary (2)
- The President (2)
- The Central Party (11)[9]
- The military (16)

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[8] *We only show the 12th VNA because data is not available from the 13th.*

[9] *These are typically members of the Politburo*

- The Office of the Government (20)[10]

- The Fatherland Front (33)

- The VNA (81)

It is important to note that centrally nominated candidates are not necessarily from the Communist Party Central Committee. Nor are members of the Communist Party Central Committee elected to the VNA always centrally nominated. This is because the Central Committee includes many party leaders who are heads to state and provincial organizations. For example, most of the members nominated by the office of the government, which include the government ministers, are also Central Committee members. However, these delegates are nominated by the Office of the Government.

Additionally, many members of the Communist Party Central Committee are nominated centrally, but others, particularly provincial party secretaries such as former Da Nang secretary and VNA delegate Nguyen Ba Thanh are nominated at the provincial level. In the election for the 12th VNA, 23 out of the total 76 members of the Central Committee nominated for election were nominated at the local level. In the 13th VNA, 31 out of the 90 members of the Central Committee were nominated locally. *Therefore, while the Central Committee nominates some members directly to the elections, other Central Committee members are nominated by other state or local institutions, where they also hold positions.*

Understanding the distinction between centrally nominated and locally nominated candidates is crucial because as the analysis below shows, centrally nominated delegates win at a higher rate even after controlling for levels of education and age. Furthermore, most of the leadership positions are reserved for those nominated centrally. In particular, as others have shown, most of the leaders for the VNA are drawn from the pool of candidates nominated by the VNA itself (Malesky and Schuler 2013). This suggests that in order to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions, great attention should be paid to the process by which central level institutions, particularly the VNA, nominates candidates.[11]

Analysis

Using the discussion above as background, this section considers how the following factors impact the likelihood of winning election in Viet Nam:

- Education

- Age

- Ethnicity

- Career type (e.g. government, military, mass organization, private business)

- Party Status (i.e.: Party member vs. non-party member; Central Committee members versus lower-ranking party members)

- Nomination level: Was the candidate nominated at the central or local level?

- Incumbency

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[10] *These are typically government ministers*

[11] *It is not clear what the criteria is for becoming a centrally nominated candidate. Presumably different organizations, such as the VNA or the Party, use different criteria.*

When we analyze these factors together, we can see that voters do not appear to discriminate against women. **Figure 1** shows the impact that different delegate characteristics have on the likelihood of winning election when all other factors are controlled for (see **Appendix 1** for the full regression results). As **Figure 1** shows, the effect of gender on electoral outcome is slightly negative, but statistically insignificant. Instead, what voters appear to care about is the education level, the career, and the nomination level of the candidate. The education variable should be treated with caution however, because the baseline category are delegates with less than a university education, which comprises a small portion of the pool of candidates. When we look between the education variables, we see that the differences are less substantial. While there does appear to be some effect of having a master's or Ph.d degree, but the marginal returns to education appear most steep in terms of having any degree, regardless of whether it is undergraduate degree, masters, or doctorate.

Figure 1: Factors Impacting Probability of Winning Election
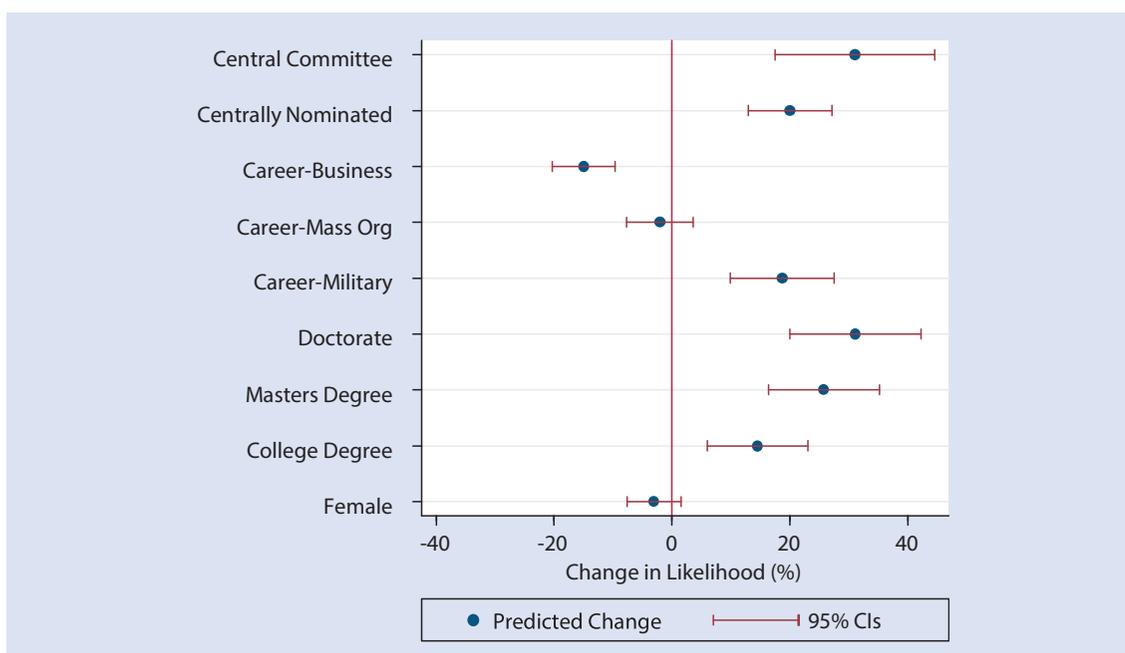
Notes
1. The x-axis represents the marginal effects from the full regression of the probit model shown in Model 1 if Appendix 1
2. For the **Career** variables, the omitted category is Party/Government. This means, for each of the career variables, they should be interpreted as relative to a candidate with a career in the party or government. For example, military candidates have an 18 percent higher estimated likelihood of winning election than a party or government delegate. A business candidate has an estimated 15 percent lower estimated likelihood of winning election
3. For the **Centrally Nominated** variable, the omitted category is locally nominated delegates. Therefore, the result should be interpreted as centrally nominated delegates having an estimated 20 percent greater likelihood of winning election than locally nominated delegates.
4. For the **Central Committee** variable, the omitted category is a candidate who is not a Central Committee member. Therefore, the result should be interpreted as a Central Committee member having a 31 percent greater likelihood of winning election compared to a delegate who is not a Central Committee member
Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

For the career variables, working for the party or government is the baseline category. **Figure 1** shows that voters consider members of the Fatherland Front similarly to members of the government and party. However, they are more likely to vote for members of the military and less likely to vote for candidates with business backgrounds. Using members of the government as the baseline category, military candidates have a 13-30 percent higher likelihood of winning elections while those in the business community had a greater than 15 percent lower chance of winning.

Whether or not the candidate was nominated by central-level or provincial-level institutions matters. As the previous section highlights, some candidates are nominated by provincial offices while a subset are nominated at the central level. Nomination status is visible to voters and can signal that the candidate is preferred. The estimate on the central nominee variable should be interpreted as the difference between a central nominee and a local nominee, which is the omitted baseline for comparison. *Figure 1* shows that centrally nominated candidates were about 20 percent more likely than provincially nominated to be elected. Finally, status within the party matters. Controlling for all other factors, members of the VCP Central Committee were almost 30 percent more likely to win election than candidates not in the Central Committee. Again this is a disadvantage for women as there are very few women in the Central Committee – approximately 8 percent in the previous 3 terms.[12]

In terms of the impact on whether or not nomination status and career play a factor in women suffering at the polls, for these factors to matter those traits must be inversely correlated with the likelihood that a female candidate exhibits those traits and the impact of those traits on election. For example, if being a military officials is positively correlated with election but negatively correlated with female candidates, then the fact that fewer military women are nominated could provide part of the explanation for why women win election at a lower rate to men.

Figure 2: Factors Impacting Female Selection
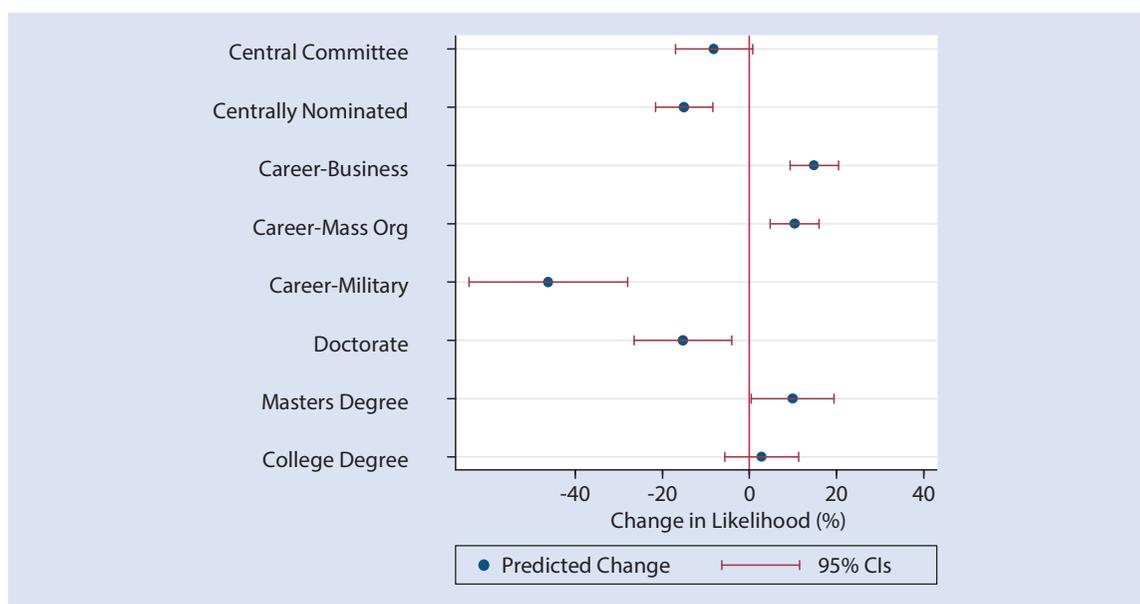
Notes
1. The x-axis represents the marginal effects from the full regression of the probit model shown in Model 1 if Appendix 2
2. For the *Career* variables, the omitted category is Party/Government. This means, for each of the career variables, they should be interpreted as relative to a candidate with a career in the party or government. For example, a female candidate is 46 percent less likely to be a member of the military than a fulltime member of the party or government.
3. For the *Centrally Nominated* variable, the omitted category is locally nominated delegates. Therefore, the result should be interpreted as a female having an estimated 15 percent lower likelihood of being centrally nominated than locally nominated.
4. For the *Central Committee* variable, the omitted category is a candidate who is not a Central Committee member. Therefore, the result should be interpreted as a female member having an 8 percent lower likelihood of not being a Central Committee member than being one.
Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

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[12] *The impact of Central Committee membership on whether or not the candidate is female may seem not as substantive given the few women on the Central Committee as a whole. Two factors explain this. First, a higher proportion of Central Committee candidates that are nominated for the VNA are women compared to their overall number in the committee. Although only about 8 percent of the Central Committee is women, in the election for the 12th VNA, of the 73 Central Committee members that ran for the VNA, 9 (12 percent) were women. In the election for the 13th VNA, of the 90 Central Committee members that ran, 11 (12 percent) were women. The other factor is that other traits that negatively predict being a female candidate, such as being centrally nominated, are also negatively associated with being female. This reduces the size of the impact of Central Committee membership.*

Figure 2 shows the impact of career and demographic factors distinguishing female from male candidates. The results are based on a probit regression included in *Appendix 2*. The figure shows that that female candidates are much more likely to be members of a mass organization or work in business than male candidates while there were virtually no female military candidates.

Furthermore, women are much less likely to be centrally nominated. As *Table 2* shows, of the 348 centrally nominated candidates from the elections to the 12th and 13th VNAs, only 12 percent were female. This suggests that the central institutions, most importantly the VNA Standing Committee and the Office of the VNA, which nominates approximately half of all the centrally nominated candidates, could increase the number of female candidates they nominate. Indeed, of the 81 candidates nominated by the VNA Standing Committee and the Office of the VNA in the election for the 12th VNA, only 12 percent were female candidates.

Table 2: Central Nominees By Gender

	Provincially Nominated		**Centrally Nominated**	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Male	830	61.21%	305	87.64%
Female	526	38.79%	43	12.36%
Total	1356		348	

Section 2: Analysis of Selection to Leadership Positions

Leadership positions within the assembly are important to being able to exercise influence within a legislature. Even if females are elected in equal numbers to men, if they are barred from leadership positions they will be constrained in their ability to influence the outcomes of debates and legislation (Waring 2010, Miguel 2012). Research in other regions suggests that even where women win a large number of seats, they are excluded from leadership positions and selection into "power committees" governing important issues such as economic, budget, and foreign affairs and often only granted positions on social affairs committees or committees related specifically to "women's issues". Furthermore, this situation is exacerbated when there is a specifically designated "women's committee", as women are put into those committees, thus reducing their numbers in the other committees such as those dealing with foreign affairs, the budget, and economic policy (Heath, Schwindt-Bayer and Taylor-Robinson 2005).

The issue of leadership selection is particularly important in Viet Nam, where the leaders have much greater influence than the rank-and-file members. Some suggest that the chair and deputy chair of the substantive committees are the dominant players in crafting legislation (Harrington, McDorman and Neilson 1998).[13] The importance of being selected to a leadership position is highlighted by the power of the standing committee, which is much like a legislature within a legislature. Between VNA sessions, it has the power to pass resolutions and query government officials. Furthermore, it wields a great deal of agenda setting power during the sessions. It decides which laws will be heard and which ministers will be queried. Finally, it also sets up the election commission, which includes many members of the standing committee. This body is critically important as they have the final say in the structure of the upcoming VNA as well as which candidates are nominated.

Such is the power of the Standing Committee that suggested during the most recent constitutional revisions that the power of the Standing Committee should be limited. Mai Hong Quy, head of the Ho Chi Minh City Law School, said during a debate on the proposed constitution that "giving a great deal of power to the VNA Standing Committee can lead to the misperception that the Standing Committee is above the VNA." For that reason, Quy, along with others the HCMC Lawyers Council, suggested that its powers should be reduced.[14]

Including the standing committee and deputy chair positions, the VNA can be broken down into six different types of delegates.

- Part-Time/Non-Committee Members: These delegates appear in Ha Noi only during the two month-long sessions. They are also not members of the ten substantive committees. Therefore, their role is strictly limited to participating in the full plenary sessions and the small

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[13] The list of committees includes the Council of Ethnic Minorities

[14] See Viet NamNet. "Đề xuất thu hẹp quyền của Thường vụ QH". March 13, 2013. http://Viet Namnet.vn/vn/chinh-tri/112681/de-xuat-thu-hep-quyen-cua-thuong-vu-qh.html

group sessions of provincial delegates. They do not participate in the committee meetings nor do they have a great deal of influence between sessions.

- Part-Time/Committee Members: These delegates also only appear in Ha Noi during the two month-long sessions of the VNA. However, unlike the non-committee members, they serve on one of the ten substantive committees. Therefore, they have more influence in that they can participate in the committee meetings during the full sessions.[15]

- Fulltime/Locally Nominated: These delegates are nominated at the provincial level and are fulltime representatives for provincial delegations. Each province, with the exception of Ha Noi and HCMC, have one fulltime delegate. These delegates are members of committees, but remain in the province between the plenary sessions.

- Fulltime/Centrally Nominated: These delegates are fulltime delegates that reside in Ha Noi throughout the year. Although they are not chairs or deputy chairs of the committees, they can nonetheless appear in committee meetings during the year and have some influence on laws.

- Deputy Committee Chairs: Viet Nam's 10 permanent committees each include a chair and 3-5 deputy chairs. We consider these separately from the chairs, because all the chairs are members of the standing committee. These delegates are crucially important because, like the Standing Committee, they meet between the full plenary sessions to discuss draft legislation. In many cases, the deputy chairs work with the government committees to put together the draft laws that the full committees consider during the plenary session. As the analysis below will show, virtually all of the chairs and deputy chairs are centrally nominated.

- Standing Committee: The Standing Committee has significantly more influence than the rest of the assembly because unlike other delegates, they convene throughout the year. This committee also has several exclusive powers. First, it can pass ordinances and legislation while the rest of the assembly is not in session. Second, it has agenda setting power. It has the responsibility of deciding which ministers will be queried and which laws will be heard. Finally, the Standing Committee plays a role in setting up the electoral commission, which plays a major role in deciding the composition of the next VNA.

Analysis

This section will assess whether or not women are equally likely to take leadership positions within the VNA. **Table 3** shows the proportions of the different types of delegates by gender, suggesting that women make up a higher proportion of the part-time positions, while men hold a disproportionately greater number of leadership positions. While women made up 26 percent of the 12th and 13th VNAs, they held a disproportionately greater number of part time positions. Of the part time non-committee members, 31 percent were women. For the part-time committee members, women comprised 29 percent. However, for the leadership positions, women had a lower percentage of seats. Only 10 percent of the deputy chairs were women while 20 percent of the Standing Committee was made of up women.

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[15] It is important to note, however, that some steps have been taken to allow all delegates to participate in committee meetings between full sessions of the VNA. Anecdotal evidence suggests that committees are increasingly using the Internet to allow part time delegates to participate in the meetings virtually.

Table 3: VNA Delegates by Leadership Type

	Men		Female		Total
Part-Time Non-Committee Member	163	68.49%	75	31.51%	238
Part-Time Committee Member	327	70.47%	137	29.53%	464
Fulltime Local Delegate	104	80.62%	25	19.38%	129
Fulltime Committee Member	40	83.33%	8	16.67%	48
Deputy Committee Chair	69	89.61%	8	10.39%	77
Standing Committee	27	79.41%	7	20.59%	34
Total Delegates	730	73.74%	260	26.26%	990

Note: This includes all delegates from the 12th and 13th VNA. Three delegates are missing due to lack of data.
Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

Does this mean that the VNA is discriminating against women? As with the analysis, we need to look at how the leadership positions are selected to ascertain why women are disproportionately occupying lower positions within the VNA hierarchy. If, as with elections, the VNA is selecting certain types of delegates for leadership positions, such as those that are centrally nominated or who have different career backgrounds, then part of the remedy should entail nominating women in a different manner.

Figure 3 includes an analysis of how the different VNA leadership positions are selected. This section mirrors analysis conducted by Malesky and Schuler (2013), who find that demographic background, election results, and region have a minimal influence on who will occupy positions as deputy chairs and members of the standing committee. Instead, what matters is whether or not the delegate was centrally nominated, indicating that these posts were selected by the VNA Standing Committee and the Office of the VNA prior to the election.

Figure 3: Impact of Gender and Nomination on VNA Leadership Selection
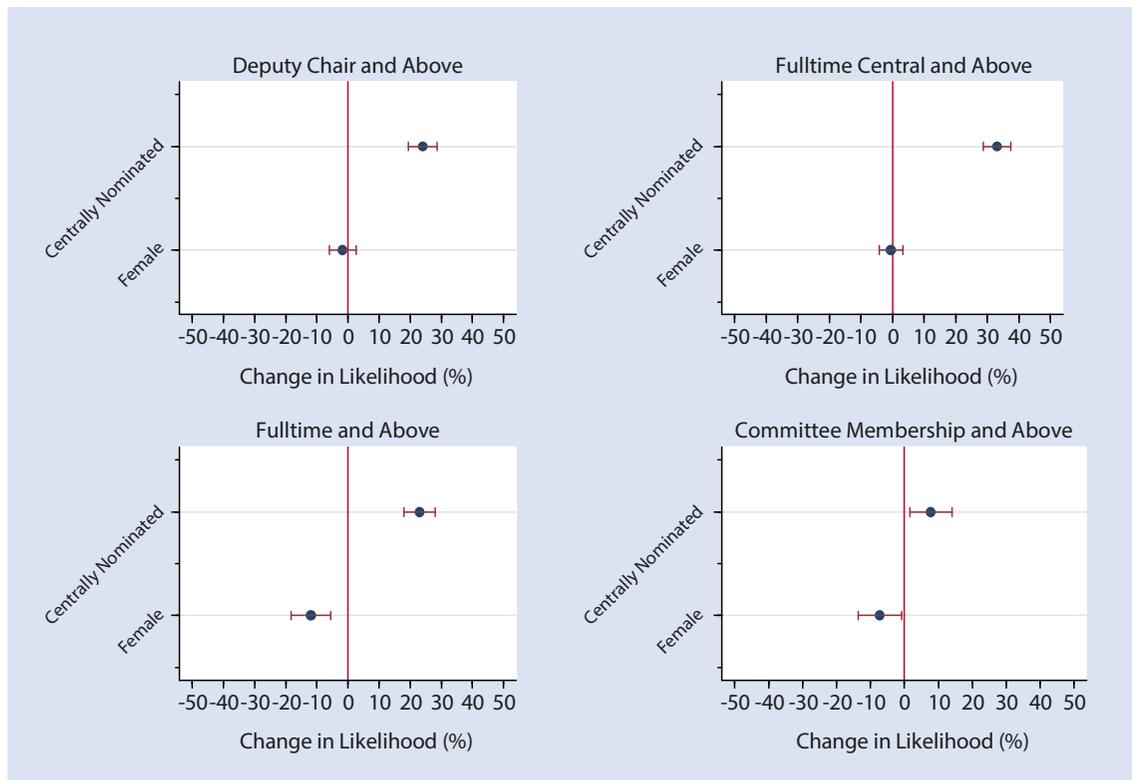
Note: The blue dots are the estimated effects of gender and and nomination status on likelihood of selection to those positions derived from the models in Appendix 4. The red bars are the 95% confidence intervals surrounding those estimates
Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

Figure 3, which shows the effect of gender and central nomination status based on the models included in Appendix 3, echoes these findings. It shows that when all other factors are controlled for, there does not appear to be discrimination against women for upper leadership positions or fulltime committee membership positions. However, when the definition of a leadership position is expanded to include all fulltime members or those who are members of the committees, there does appear to be some penalty for being a woman. Returning to the issue of the upper leadership positions, the results confirm Malesky and Schuler's (2013) finding that being centrally nominated is the most important factor predicting who will hold an upper leadership position. Being a central nominee increases the chances of selection to an upper leadership position by 17 percent. When the definition of leadership is expanded to include deputy chairs, the benefit of being a central nominee grows to a 48 percent increased probability.

As with the findings for elections, these results suggest that to increase the number of women in leadership positions either the manner in which leaders are selected needs altering or the VNA Standing Committee and the Office of the VNA should nominate more women prior to the election. Given that most leadership positions are taken by centrally nominated delegates and only 12 percent of all centrally nominated candidates are women, it follows that the leadership will be disproportionately male unless measures are taken to positively discriminate in the direction of women.[16]

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[16] *In terms of making specific suggestions about how the leadership could be selected, on paper the VNA already votes for the leadership. However, in practice, the identity of these leaders is predetermined by the outgoing VNA leadership. Therefore, the recommendations on changing the institutions would involve changing how selection occurs in practice rather than any formal suggestions.*

Section 3: Committee Membership

The VNA is divided into 10 substantive committees, which each have authority to review legislation and the performance of government ministers whose portfolios overlap their issues areas. Because women might have different interests in the different issue areas, it is important to look within committee membership to see if there are any patterns to female representation on the substantive committees.

Figure 4 shows the proportion women filling the different committees. It reveals a dramatic difference across different issue areas. While the Defense Committee had only one female member in the 12th and 13th VNAs combined, more than half of the Council of Ethnic Minorities is made up of women. Indeed, for many of the powerful committees, such as the Economic, Law, and Justice Committees, female representation is less than 20 percent. In addition to the Council of Ethnic Minorities, women are better represented in the committees dealing with public services, such as the Social Affairs Committee and the Culture, Education, and Youth Committee.

Figure 4: Committee Membership by Gender (12th and 13th VNAs)
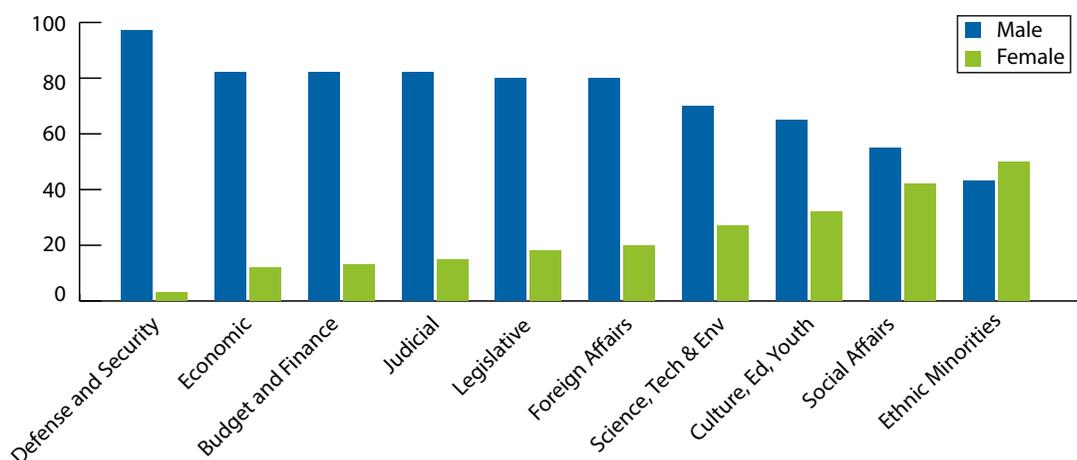
However, as the previous section suggests, leadership positions are vitally important. The influence of women on these committees will be reduced if they are part time member or do not hold leadership positions on these committees. *Figure 5* shows the proportion of the committee chairs and deputy chairs are made of women. It reveals that in five of the committees there were no women as chairs or deputy chairs in both the 12th and 13th VNAs. Furthermore, even those where there were women leaders, they were less than 30 percent of the total. Once again, this confirms the results from the previous section showing that not only are women failing to win seats, but they are faring even worse in terms of selection to leadership positions.

Figure 5: Upper Leadership by Committee (12th and 13th VNAs)
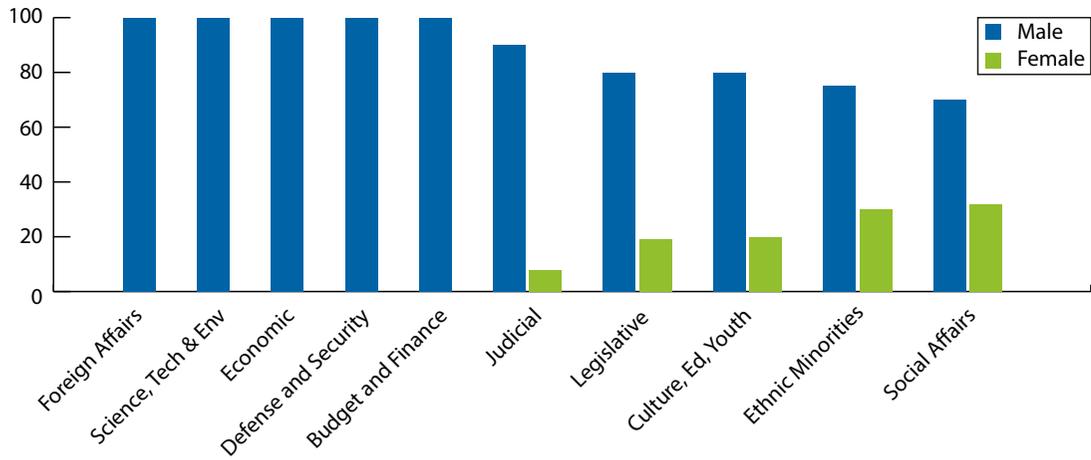
Section 4: Analysis of Women's Legislative Priorities

The previous sections looked at how many women are elected to the VNA and the positions they hold once elected. The next question is whether the women that do win election perform their roles differently than men. Of particular importance is whether the inclusion of more women in the assembly leads to greater representation of issues important to women. Using the typology of representative behavior developed by one of the most prominent scholars of representation, having seats ensures women have "descriptive" representation, which is when the assembly looks like a cross-section of society. However, this does not necessarily mean that women will promote the issues important to their constituency (Pitkin 1967).

Some have used the comparison between policies enacted by the Ghanaian and Rwandan assemblies to highlight the potential disconnect between descriptive and substantive representation. While Ghana's assembly has a relatively low proportion of women, it has enacted more policies seen as favorable to women compared to Rwanda, where more than 50 percent of the assembly is female. According to Waring, while Rwanda's high proportion of women in the parliament is a "nice little earner" in the sense that it attracts development money, numbers "do not necessarily translate into legislative or budgetary gains for women's rights in development." (2010, 30)

For this reason, one of the first questions of importance in assessing the efficacy of gender quotas or targets is whether or not "women's issues" are being promoted. In the abstract, this appears straightforward. However, empirical study of this question immediately runs into the difficulty of defining what a women's issue is. On the one hand, some scholars have tried to define certain issues. Franceschet and Piscopo suggest that women's issues include "all themes related to improving women's lives, including but not limited to eliminating violence against women, expanding reproductive rights and women's health, and advancing equality and non-discrimination measures." (2008, 397) However, they also suggest this is not an exclusive list of issues. Unfortunately, defining women's issues is difficult. As Tamerius writes, "Sadly, there is no resolution to this dilemma" (1995, 105).

In practice, previous work has relied on several strategies to try and measure the substantive representation of women. One approach has been to look at attitudes on specific issues or policy preferences. Lovenduski and Norris (2003) show that men and women in Britain do not differ in their opinions on a wide range of issues, however women do differ on issues "directly related" such as affirmative action and gender quality. Several other studies also find that women are likely to prioritize women's issues more than men (Piscopo 2011, Thomas and Welch 1991, Tamerius 1995).

Another approach is to see whether men and women differ in their support for any issues. When measured in terms of roll call votes, the evidence appears to suggest that while some find an effect for gender (Hogan 2008), party matters more than gender across a wide range of issues (Tamerius 1995, Barnello 1999). A different set of scholars suggest that while gender may not have an impact on all issues, it is likely to impact votes on issues specifically important to women. To

test this assertion, these studies look at male and female support for different policies deemed of importance to women. Bratton and Ray (2002) look at variation in female representation and municipal support for day care in Norway. Swers (1998) finds that while women in the US Congress do not vote differently than men on most issues, they are more likely to vote differently on women's issues. Importantly, she defines women's issues as five specific laws debated in the 1990s that were highlighted by prominent women's lobbying groups.

Research Design

In terms of analyzing substantive representation for women in Viet Nam, each of these approaches has benefits and weaknesses. First, given that votes on issues are not made public, we cannot use roll call votes to examine participation. Furthermore, sponsorship of bills, which have been used by others (Thomas and Welch 1991) is not feasible, because individual delegates in Viet Nam almost never propose legislation despite having the constitutional right to do so.

In Viet Nam, another method that is available is to look at the content of speeches. Thanks to the efforts of the Office of the VNA, the full transcripts of hearings on the floor of the VNA are publicly available. Using these transcripts, we can examine patterns of participation along with how women substantively represent their constituencies. Others have used speeches to examine issues of representation in Viet Nam (Malesky and Schuler 2010) and elsewhere (Piscopo 2011, Broughton and Palmieri 1999, Grey 2002).

Speeches, of course, are not a complete indicator of participation in the VNA. Delegates can contribute in other ways, such as through suggestions on laws and participation in small meetings. While these are undoubtedly important indicators of performance, there is no reliable information on how delegates perform in these arenas. Nonetheless, participation in debates on the floor of the VNA are a good indicator of representation because of their public nature. Unlike all other forms of participation in the VNA, voters and constituents can directly observe the behavior of their representatives. In contrast, voters, and importantly the media, can log into the VNA website to look at transcripts of speeches of the VNA to see the performance of their delegates. As noted above, relying on speeches to make inferences has been used in other contexts, most notably in an analysis of the Argentinian legislature (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

Analysis: Word Counts

To assess the performance of women, we employ two strategies. One relies on predetermining what a women's issue is and simply measuring word counts for those terms. Given that there are many definitions of what a "women's issue" is, we defined some key words based on the Franceschet-Piscopo (2008) coding of women's issues. The assumption is that if women use these terms more often, it is likely that they are raising women's issues more often. This approach, also known as the dictionary method, has been used elsewhere to measure media coverage of race in the US (Kellstedt 2000), the level to which US presidential campaigns focus on the budget (Burden and Sanberg 2003), and the tone of political texts (Young and Soroka 2012).[17]

For the dictionary method, the simple assumption is that the more frequently a set of words are used, the more attention that subset of speakers focus attention in that issue area. For gender, if women

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[17] For an explanation of the benefits and tradeoffs of using a dictionary approach, see (Laver and Garry 2000, Grimmer and Stewart 2013)

use words related to gender more frequently, we can assume they are representing women's issues to a greater degree. **Figure 6** presents the total mentions of certain words as a percentage of the total number of words spoken by men and women. The figure shows that women are substantially more likely to use the words "family", "gender", "women", and "children". To ensure that all of these words are not simply appearing in certain speeches, we also assessed the percentage of total speeches that contained at least one of these words. **Figure 7** shows that a higher proportion of women's speeches make at least some mention of women's issues.

Figure 6: Mentions of Key Words
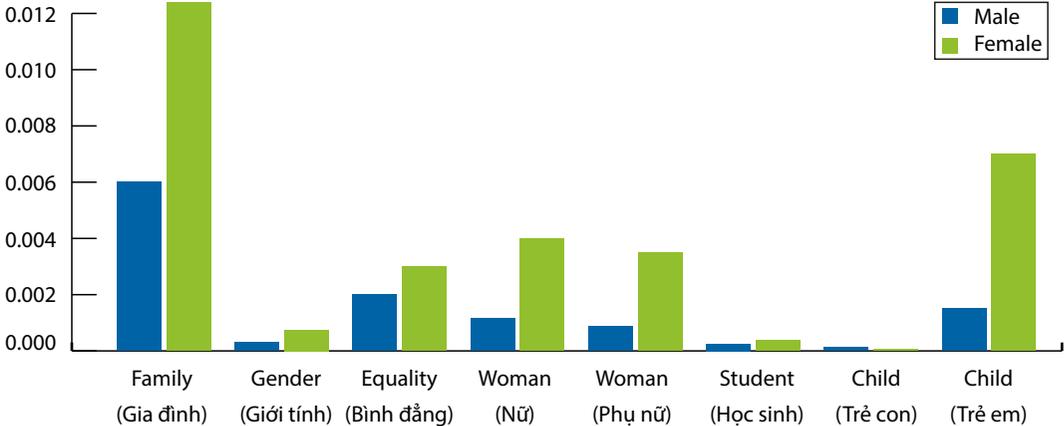
Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

Figure 7: Total Percentage of Speeches Mentioning Words Related to Women or Children
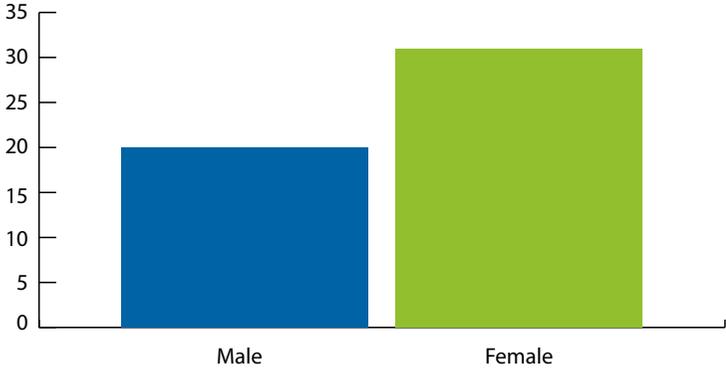
Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

Analysis: Automated Coding

While the dictionary method provides intuitive evidence that women are more likely to represent women's issue, other methods should be used to confirm this. The first reason is that although automated text analysis has made many advances, it is still an imperfect science. Therefore, according to experts in this area all analyses should be validated with multiple approaches (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). The second issue is that with the dictionary method, the analyst has to predetermine the terms that indicate a "women's issue." The main problem with defining issues ahead of time is that the analyst is required to predict all types of women's issues that might be

discussed, thus missing out on speeches that might not align with such topics, but that nonetheless touch on women's issues.

An alternative approach is to rely on recent advances in the modeling of automated text in ways that do not require the researcher to define what constitutes a women's issue ahead of time. One method is to have a team of researchers code speeches based on the level to which they address women's or children's issues. For this, we asked coders to look at a subset of speeches and answer the following questions:

Some issues are specifically relevant to women. How much of this speech is devoted to such issues?

    a.   None

    b.   Some part of the speech, but it is not the main point

    c.   The majority of the speech

    d.   The speech is entirely devoted to issues that are specifically relevant to women

Some issues are specifically relevant to children. How much of this speech is devoted to such issues?

    a.   None

    b.   Some part of the speech, but it is not the main point

    c.   The majority of the speech

    d.   The speech is entirely devoted to issues that are specifically relevant to children

This approach has several advantages over the dictionary method. First, it allows the coders to update their own definition of what entails an issue relevant to women and children. Second, it provides a way of assessing the degree to which a speech focuses on women and children's issues not simply whether or not they focus on such issues. To understand the importance, consider two types of speeches. In one, the delegate addresses human trafficking or maternity leave, which clearly relate to women's issues. In the case of these speeches, the topics would be "entirely devoted" to women. In another case, in a debate on cadres a delegates might discuss the retirement age for women. While the overall debate was about the Law on Cadres, the delegate who raised the issue of female retirement age made this point in the context of several other points. Therefore, this speech might be codes as the "some of the speech" about issues relevant to women.

One complication of using this method is that it requires reading all speeches. Unfortunately, because there were more than 6,500 speeches made on the floor of the VNA between 2007 and 2013, we cannot code all of the speeches. However, recent models developed allow us to code a subset of speeches, which then use similarities between the coded speeches and those that are not coded to assign scores for the non-coded speeches. This method, developed by Hopkins and King (2010), has been used in several other contexts (Grimmer, Messing and Westwood 2012, King, Pan and Roberts 2013, Rhodes 2014).

Therefore, out of all the speeches, we hand coded 500. This test set was then used to allow the Hopkins-King automated algorithm to determine the proportion of speeches made by men and women that were about women's issues. The basic intuition of this model is that the software determines the likelihood of a speech being coded as relevant to women by assessing which words are in the speeches the coders coded as being of concern to women. The computer uses the probabilities of different words being classified as relevant to women or not to automatically classify the remaining speeches. Please see **Appendix 4** for a deeper explanation of this methodology.

Based on the preliminary analysis, it appears that a higher proportion of women's speeches are on topics relevant to women. **Figure 8** shows that in terms of topics relevant to women, an estimated 10 percent of speeches based on the coders had at least some portion of the speech on topics relevant to women compared to less than 7 percent for men. The 95 percent confidence intervals show that this difference is significant, providing strong evidence of a systematic difference between the likelihood of women to raise issues of concern women versus men. In terms of topics relevant to children, **Figure 9** shows that an estimated 11 percent of speeches for women devoted at least some attention to speeches relevant to children, while for men the number of speeches was about 10 percent. This suggests that there was not a significant difference between men and women in terms of their willingness to raise issues of concern to children.

This analysis partially supports the findings in **Figure 6**. It appears that women are more focused on women's issues than men are. The word counts align with the findings of this alternative method. At the same time, men and women do not differ in terms of their willingness to raise issues of concern to children. This discrepancy could be due to imprecise coding. However, it could also suggest that the dictionary method above is not accurately measuring overall attention to children's issues.

Figure 8: Estimated Percentage of Speeches Pertaining to Women's Issues
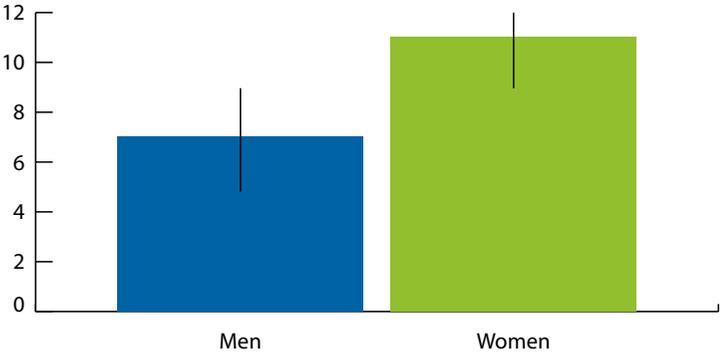
Note: The estimated values are based on coders reading 500 speeches and assessing by hand whether or not they related to women's issues. The algorithm discussed in Appendex 4 was then used to assess whether or not the remaining speeches related to issues of concern to women. The black bar represents the 95% confidence interval of these estimates
Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

Figure 9: Estimated Percentage of Speeches Relating to Children's Issues
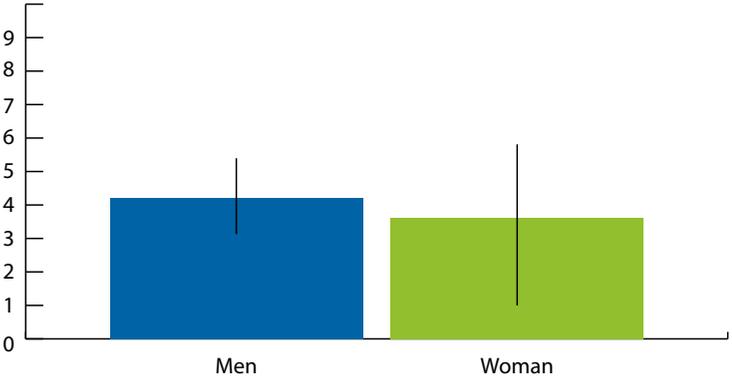
Note: The estimated values are based on coders reading 500 speeches and assessing by hand whether or not they related to children's issues. The algorithm discussed in Appendex 4 was then used to assess whether or not the remaining speeches related to issues of concern to women. The black bar represents the 95% confidence interval of these estimates

Section 5:
Level and Quality of Activity

Another question is whether or not women behave differently from men once elected **on all issues**. Some research in the US indicated that women may be less critical, however others suggest that as women gain more experience in politics these differences decline (see Thomas (1991)). Similarly, in the context of Viet Nam even VNA delegates were conflicted as to whether or not women play an active role or are merely "tokens." (Vandenbeld and Ly 2012, 6) This section therefore looks at patterns of behavior between men and women **on all issues, not simply those of particular importance to women.**

To address the first aspect of this question, we simply looked at the overall level of activity in the VNA. **Table 4** shows the overall level of activity between men and women over the 12th and 13th VNAs for all debate, hearings, and query sessions. We can see that the relative level of activity between male and female delegates is similar, and if anything, women are more likely to participate than men.

Table 4: Total Speeches

	12th VNA		13th VNA		Total	
	Total	Speeches Per Delegate	Total	Speeches Per Delegate	Total	Speeches Per Delegate
Male	2379	6.70	2296	6.07	4675	6.38
Female	1024	7.42	847	6.94	1871	7.20
Total	3403	6.90	3143	6.29	6546	6.59

Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

While looking at the raw total number of speeches is important, it might mask important differences in the quality of those speeches. For example, perhaps women are more likely to support amendments or are less likely to criticize government officials. To address this possibility, we asked the coders to look at the 500 speeches and answer the following questions. For speeches on laws, we asked the coders to grade the speeches using the following question:

Which of the following is true about this speech?

a. *This speech is in support of the law/amendment*

b. *This speech is generally in support of the law/amendment, with some changes suggested*

c. *This speech is generally opposed to the law/amendment, with some changes suggested*

d. *This speech is in total opposition to the law/amendment*

For speeches in hearings and query sessions, we used the following question:

Which of the following is true about this speech?

a. *The speaker is support of the minister or government performance*

b. *The speaker is somewhat supportive of the minister or government performance*

c. *The speaker is somewhat critical of the minister or government performance*

d. *The speaker is critical of the minister or government performance*

Figure 10 shows that at the extreme values, women are no different from men in criticizing government ministers. However, there are differences in the intermediate range. Queries by men are more likely to be "somewhat critical", while women are more likely to be perceived as "somewhat supportive". This finding suggest that there may be some fine-grained differences on some topics during less contentious queries, but in terms of the "very critical" challenges, men and women are no different. Regarding debate on legislation, **figure 11** shows that there is no difference in the level of criticism. Taken together, these findings suggest that there may be small differences between men and women in their speeches, but not substantial enough to suggest that women play a fundamentally different role. With that said, more research needs to be done to assess more specifically how men and women differ during more mundane queries.

Figure 10: Proportion of Speeches by Attitude Towards Minister
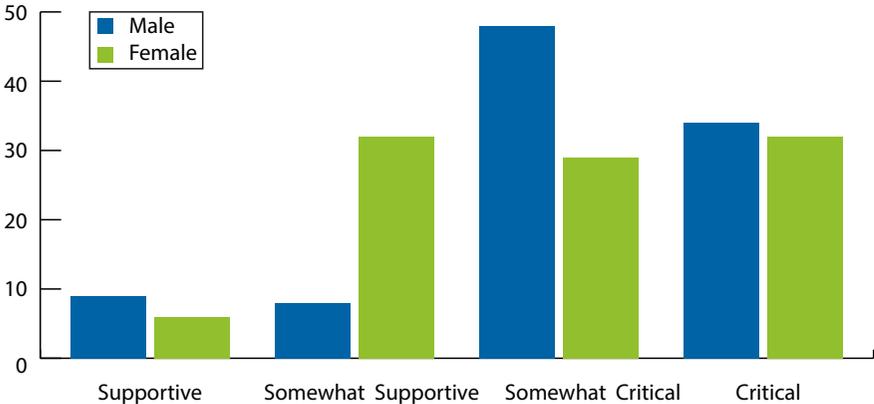
Note: The estimated values are based on coders reading 500 speeches and assessing by hand whether or not the speaker criticised the government official or government. The algorithm discussed in Appendex 4 was then used to code the remaining speeches.
Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

Figure 11: Proportion of Speeches by Attitude Towards Law

Note: The estimated values are based on coders reading 500 speeches and assessing by hand whether or not the speaker criticised the proposed law. The algorithm discussed in Appendex 4 was then used to code the remaining speeches.
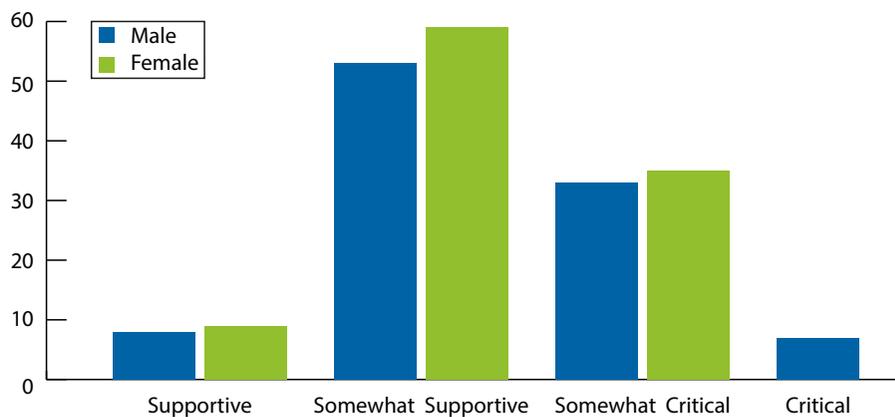Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

In addition to the criticality of women, we also wanted to address any potential differences in the technical quality of the speeches. Therefore, we asked the coders to grade the speeches using the following question:

How would you rate this speech in terms of its technical quality?

a.   *The speech demonstrated no knowledge of the subject*

b.   *The speech demonstrated some knowledge of the subject*

c.   *The speech demonstrated deep knowledge of the subject*

We used the following criteria to judge between the categories.

•   *The speech demonstrated no knowledge of the subject: These speeches should include no factual evidence or research. They could simply be requests for information or requests for the minister to explain his or herself.*

•   *The speech demonstrated some knowledge of the subject: These speeches include some factual evidence or knowledge of the subject. However, the level of knowledge displayed could be available to an average college graduate with no specific knowledge or research into the issue at hand.*

•   *The speech demonstrated deep knowledge of the subject: These speeches include a great deal of factual evidence on the subject matter that could only be obtained to training in that issue area or extensive research prior to making the speech.*

Figure 12 shows the comparison of men and women on this metric. Based on this, there does not appear to be a great difference in terms of the quality of the speeches.

Figure 12: Technical Quality of Speeches
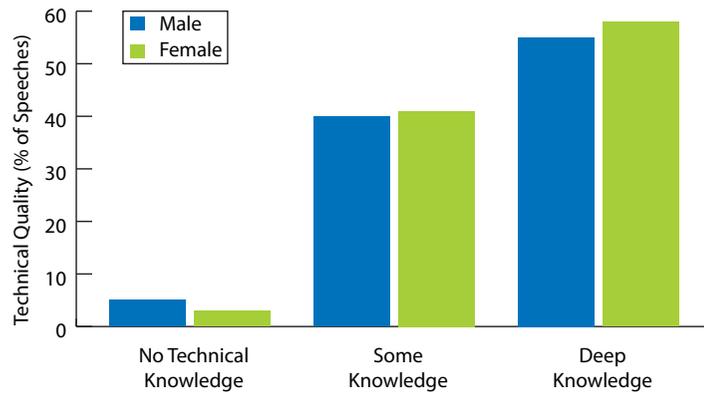
Note: The estimated values are based on coders reading 500 speeches and assessing by hand the technical quality of the speeches. The algorithm discussed in Appendex 4 was then used to code the remaining speeches.
Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

Section 6:
Case Study of Specific Issues

The previous analysis provides some insight into the level of attention delegate paid to different issues and an overall assessment of quality of their participation. However, it does not provide an easy way of interpreting whether or not men or women supported policies that would be beneficial to women. This section addresses patterns of behavior on three issues important to women that were raised during the 13th VNA. Those issues include:

- Increasing maternity leave to six months

- Equalizing the retirement age for men and women

- Encouraging joint registration for spouses on land use rights certificates

- Domestic Violence

The debates over the first two issues centered on the Labor Law, which was raised in the November 2011 and May 2012 sessions. The issue of the land use rights was discussed during the debate over the Land Law, which was held in the November 2012 and May 2013 sessions. The final issue relates to the Law on Domestic Violence passed in 2007. To address the potential role of gender in impacting the debate and resolution of these issues, this section will assess two factors. First, did women disproportionately raise the issue? Second, were women more forceful and securing a more advantageous outcome for women? The analysis will be based on an examination of the speeches made during the plenary debates on these laws.

Before proceeding with the analysis, several limitations should be highlighted. First, because only the speeches in the plenary sessions are made public, we are not able to observe patterns of participation in the committee meetings nor negotiations between the government drafting committees and the VNA committees. In the case of the Labor Law, the Social Affairs Committee worked with the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MoLISA) to prepare the draft law. As Figures 1 and 2 show, the Social Affairs Committee has one of the highest proportions of women as well as the highest proportion of women in leadership positions compared to the other committees. The chair of the committee is Truong Thi Mai and one of the four deputy chairs is Nguyen Thuy Anh. Therefore, it is possible they were critical in raising the issue of maternity leave and the retirement age for women during these private sessions. In the case of the Land Law, the law was debated in the Economic Committee, which has no women as either chair, deputy chair, or fulltime in Ha Noi.

The second limitation is that we are not able to assess how individuals voted on the legislation. Therefore, we do not know the views of those who did not speak in the plenary sessions on these matters. The Law on the Organization of the National Assembly allows individuals to propose laws and amendments. However, in practice, because of the Law on Promulgating Regulations and Laws it is difficult for an individual delegate or group of delegates to do so because the government and VNA Standing Committee have a great deal of power in allowing proposed laws to be placed on the

VNA schedule.[18] Therefore, women, who may otherwise like a draft law, have few opportunities to force votes on small amendments to those laws.

This greatly empowers the leadership of the committees and the VNA, who can essentially offer the assembly laws as a "take-it-or-leave-it" proposition. Therefore, if a delegate likes all elements of a proposed bill except a piece pertaining to women's rights, the delegate has difficulty expressing disapproval for that measure through their vote. In short, a vote against the law would not necessarily signify opposition to the piece of the law. As a consequence, although only one delegate opposed the Labor Law when it came to a vote in 2012, it is difficult to interpret whether or not this indicated support for the provision specifically relating to the retirement age for women. After all, that provision was only one out of a total of 242 articles in the law.

With all this said, speeches on legislation can at least give us insight into the views of individual delegates. Using the speeches we can assess whether or not women were more likely to raise and support the issues of women's equality in the context of broader debates on the Labor Law and the Land Law.

Maternity Leave

The proposed revised Labor Law of 2013 placed several issues on the table, only some of which related specifically to women. Some of the issues included minimum wage, overtime regulations, and the retirement age. Within this broad set of issues, two related specifically to women. One was increasing the length of time for maternity leave from four months to six. The second issue related on equalizing the retirement age for men and women in the civil service. In both the previous law and the law that was passed in 2013, the retirement age for most men is 60 and 55 for women.

Starting with the issue of maternity leave, a total of 53 speeches were made commenting on the Labor Law in the November 2011 and May 2012 sessions. Of those, 29 speeches were made by men and 24 were made by women. Given that women comprise less than 30 percent of the delegates, the fact that they made about 45 percent of the speeches on the Labor Law suggests that their overall participation was high. Looking within these speeches, as **Table 5** shows, 17 of the men raised the issue of increasing the maternity leave while 18 of the women raised the issue. This suggests that a higher rate of women raised this issue in their speeches compared to men.

Table 5: Speeches on Maternity Leave During Debate on Labor Law

	Spoke During Labor Law	Raised Maternity Leave Issue	
		Total	Percentage
Male	29	17	58.62%
Female	24	18	75.00%

Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

In terms of the content of the speeches, there was very little controversy on this issue. By the time of the May 2012 session, the drafting committee, which consisted of the VNA Social Affairs Committee and MoLISA put forward two proposals. In one, women in "normal" jobs would receive

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[18] http://vov.vn/Chinh-tri/Quoc-hoi/Tao-dieu-kien-de-dai-bieu-Quoc-hoi-trinh-sang-kien-luat/299576.vov http://www.baomoi.com/Ho-tro-dai-bieu-Quoc-hoi-trinh-sang-kien-luat/121/11311680.epi

five months maternity leave, while those with "dangerous" jobs would receive six. In the second option, all women would receive six months maternity leave unless they negotiated a different situation privately with the employer. None of the speeches on maternity leave in the May 2012 session supported the first option. Therefore, on the issue of maternity leave, while women were more apt to raise the issue, there was no evidence of divergence in the views between the men and women who did speak.

Retirement Age

Viet Nam's retirement age for civil servants is 60 years old for men and 55 years old for women. This violates the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Viet Nam is a signatory to. In terms of the negative impacts on women, it creates a non-level playing field between men and women in the public sector and can reduce the overall level of income a woman can earn. Furthermore, as delegate Bui Thi An argued, because women have to retire earlier, this can cause government ministries and employers to privilege men over women in terms of training for future positions. This is because if the leadership knows that women will have to retire early, they will see less value in spending the resources on training them. Finally, of direct relevance to this report, the differential retirement ages has an impact on the number of women elected to the assembly as well as the number that will take leadership positions. As a recent report suggests: "Just at the moment when women have the life achievements that would qualify them for elected office, they are taken out of the running." (Vandenbeld and Ly 2012, 14)

This issue followed different dynamics than the maternity leave issue. Men and women spoke about this issue almost equally during their speeches. Where there was more divergence was in their views on the matter. As *Table 6* shows, of the 29 speeches made, only one speech by a male delegate expressed support for equalizing the retirement age. The remainder either suggested that certain types of men and women could petition for different retirement ages or expressed outright opposition to equalizing the retirement age. In contrast, three of the speeches made by women expressed support for equalizing the retirement age.

Table 6: Speeches on Equalizing the Retirement Age During the Debate on the Labor Law

	Spoke During Labor Law	Raised Retirement Age		Support Equal Age		Oppose Equal Age	
		Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Male	29	15	51.72%	1	3.45%	13	44.83%
Femaie	24	10	41.67%	3	12.50%	6	25.00%

Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

The explanations by the men for the opposition varied. Some, such as Le Dac Lam of Binh Thuan argued that many of the women he had met wanted to retire early and not later, which is why he supported keeping the ages separate. Bui Van Phuong of Ninh Thuan suggested that women had a different role to play in society and therefore the different ages were justified. However, they should be compensated for this through social security. Finally, Luong Cong Quyet of Quang Ninh argued that the retirement ages should be different because husbands are generally older than their wives and they should therefore have staggered retirement ages to ensure that they are home at roughly the same time.

The opponents of equalizing the retirement age were not only men. Several women also expressed opposition. La Ngoc Thoang of Cao Bang suggested that women in rural, ethnic minority areas want to retire earlier and collect social security payments. Therefore, she supported the earlier age for women. Nguyen Thi Bich Nhiem also expressed opposition.

In terms of supporting equalizing the retirement age, in the initial debate in November 2011, only Nguyen Ngoc Phuong of Can Tho and Bui Thi An clearly expressed support for equalizing the retirement age. However, the other opinions expressed, while not clearly supporting equalizing the retirement age, did leave some room for maneuvering. Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa wanted higher retirement ages for "intellectual" women, while Nguyen Van Son suggested more research needed to be done on the issue.

However, by the time of the May 2012 debate, the range of views narrowed. Almost all of the delegates supported keeping different retirement ages for men and women. In that session, only Bui Thi An, a chemistry professor from Ha Noi, opposed the issue. The vehement opposition of Bui Thi An is worth highlighting for several reasons. First, although two other delegates expressed opposition to the law, Bui Thi An was unique in that she spoke out against the different retirement ages in both sessions. Furthermore, she devoted her entire speech on the Labor Law to these issues, as opposed to other delegates who only mentioned the issue briefly as part of a larger speech that touched on other aspects of the Labor Law.

Finally, another point is worthy of considering the case of Bui Thi An. Unlike some of the other delegates who spoke who were members of the Social Affairs Committee, and therefore likely expected to speak on this issue, An has a Ph.D in chemistry and is a member of the Science and Technology Committee, suggesting that she was expected to use her expertise to inform debates on science. Therefore, while it is impossible to say whether or not her being a woman played a role in taking on the issue, at the very least it seems that her decision to take this issue on derived from her own personal convictions and not as part of a preplanned design.

In the end, as opposed to the maternity leave provision, the language in the Labor Law continued to specify that men and women would have different retirement ages. In terms of the content of the debate, neither men nor women came out strongly in support of changing the statute, but women did appear to be somewhat proportionally more likely to support equalizing measures. Furthermore, the most vociferous opponent of the statute was a women.

Land Law

The Land Law was a highly contentious issue during the 2012-2013 legislative sessions. It was also a complex law encompassing a wide range of issues. The issue of equal control over land use rights was a component of the debate as a consortium of donors suggested that one of the key changes needed to be a requirement that men and women in the household be required to sign their names to the land use rights certificates. This way, in the event of a divorce or death of the husband, the wife would be secure in her legal right to the land.

Again, as with the previous laws it is difficult to tell what role men and women played in crafting the agenda and the draft legislation behind the scenes. Therefore, we can only surmise their views by examining the speeches made in public. However, using this as a measure is revealing in the case of the Land Law. Of all the speeches made on this law, only 1 raised the issue. This suggests that the issue of equal status on land use rights certificates either was not a priority to the delegates or it was

not placed on the agenda by the VNA leadership.

Indeed, it was not mentioned in the introduction to the debate sessions by VNA Deputy Chair Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan. To some extent, this is understandable given that only two days were allocated to debate the issue publicly on the floor of the VNA and there were many other hot button issues that needed addressing. In the opening to the debate on November 19, 2012 hearing, Ngan suggested that the following topics needed addressing:

- Land use plans

- The rights of the state and individuals with reference to land

- The mechanism for seizing land

- Compensation and resettlement for seized land

- The price for land

- Solutions for resolving disputes

While the issue of non-equal status on land use rights certificates could have been shoe-horned into this agenda, it seems clear that this issue was not a high priority.

This provides a partial answer to why no delegates raised the issue, and consequently, nothing was changed. However, it also raises another question as to why it was not a higher priority. Although it is impossible to say, one answer may lie in the composition of the committee in charge of drafting the law. The Economic Committee was in charge of setting up hearings on the law and working with the government to develop the drafts. As Figures 1 and 2 show women had little representation on the Economic Committee and no representation among the leadership. Therefore, to the extent to which the issue of equal access to land use rights was made an issue, it was largely incumbent upon the men on this committee to make it an issue. Assessing the role of women in the law drafting and agenda setting process is an important area for future research.

This section only looks at delegates who raised the issue within the context of the debate on the Land Law. Outside of the debate on the Land Law, some delegates did discuss the issue at other times. For example, Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa raised the issue during a debate on June 8, 2009 on various issues related to investment. She suggested that more needed to be done to ensure that women co-signed with their husbands on land use rights certificates. Further research is needed to examine whether or not there is any gender difference in those discussing this issue outside of the debate on this law.

Domestic Violence

The Law on Domestic Violence, which was passed in the November 2007 session of the 12th VNA, established the definition of what constitutes domestic violence, set in place mechanisms to resolve incidences of violence, and established fines for those committing acts of domestic violence. In terms of the different views on the law, there was actually little divergence in opinions on the law as a whole. There was some discussion around technical matters, such as whether or not domestic violence could occur between unmarried partners who were cohabitating. However, all speakers on the law – men or women – suggested that the law was necessary and that the domestic violence was a serious problem in Viet Nam.

While there was little difference in terms of the perspectives taken on the proposed legislation, an examination of attention paid to the issue in the VNA *after* the law was passed is revealing. The continued attention to the implementation of this law was particularly critical because despite increasing the penalties for domestic violence and providing the mechanisms to punish perpetrators, a recent report suggests that most women are unaware of the law. Furthermore, the local officials, who are tasked with protecting women who accuse husbands of violence and setting the fines, are also often unaware of the stipulations of the law (United Nations 2010, 102). This has led to a situation where the law may be on the books, but women are reluctant to invoke it and local leaders are unaware of it. A further challenge to implementation is that many women are reluctant use the law because forcing the husband to pay a fine acts as a punishment for the entire family.

Analysis of attention to these issues after the passage of the law shows that women disproportionately raised the issue during subsequent sessions of the assembly. **Table 7** shows a breakdown of the delegates that raised the issue of domestic violence, particularly the implementation of the law, after the law was passed in 2007. It shows that outside of the debate on the Law on Domestic Violence, the issue was raised in 27 speeches in the 12th and 13th VNAs. Furthermore, the results show that women were disproportionately more likely to raise the issue than men. Of those speeches, 17 (62 percent) were made by women, compared to 10 by men.

Table 7: Speeches on Domestic Violence

	Spoke During Debate on Law		Raise Issue After Debate on Law	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Male	8	47.06%	10	37.04%
Female	9	52.94%	17	62.96%

Source: All data including the speeches and the biographical information comes from information available on Office of the VNA website (http://na.gov.vn/)

Several of the speeches also focused squarely on the issue of implementation. In particular, four female delegates – Bui Thi Hoa, Truong Thi Thu Hang, Hoang Van Toan, and Nguyen Thi Thu Hong – all raised the issue during the contentious November 2010 hearings on the government's performance in implementing the socio-economic plan. Each of these speakers highlighted the fact that the domestic violence remained a persistent problem despite the passage of the law. Only one male delegate, Nguyen Van Tien, discussed the issue during this hearing. Given the important role the VNA plays in overseeing the implementation of laws, the greater level of attention paid to the law after its passage is further evidence of the important role women play in bringing issues important to women before the VNA.

Section 7: Conclusions

Based on the results above, we can make the following conclusions and policy recommendations. First, Viet Nam has not met its set target of women's representation in the National Assembly because few women are nominated as candidates in the electoral process. Secondly, few women hold leadership positions in the National Assembly again because there are few women nominated as candidates from central institutions. Thirdly, women do appear more likely to raise issues of concern to female constituents than men, which points to the need for their continued presence. Additionally, case studies provide some evidence that women are more likely to support policies that are beneficial to women. Finally, the inclusion of women should not come at any cost in terms of the quality of behavior. The analysis shows that women participate at the same rate or higher than men, women do not appear any less critical than men in terms of their speeches nor are their speeches less sophisticated in their analysis.

These results suggest that increasing the number of women in the legislature should increase attention to women's issues without undermining the criticality or technical quality of the debates. The next question is how to increase the influence of women in the assembly. An analysis of women in leadership positions shows that women lose election at a greater rate and are less likely to be appointed to leadership positions in the VNA. Furthermore, this is largely a result of the central institutions, such as the VNA Standing Committee and the Office of the VNA, not nominating a sufficient number of female delegates. *Because the central nominees take an overwhelming number of the leadership positions, the central institutions such as the VNA Standing Committee and the Office of the VNA must nominate more female delegates in order to increase the number of women elected as well as the number occupying leadership positions.* The only other way to increase the number of women would be to either establish quotas for female representation in leadership positions or dramatically change the process for leadership selection.

In summary, the findings and recommendations are:

- Women are more likely to raise issues of concern to women than men
- Women contribute to debates on all issues, not just women's issues, with the same level of quality
- In order to increase attention to women's issues, the number of women in the VNA should be increased. This will come at no cost to the quality of the VNA.
- To increase the influence of women in the VNA, more women need to be selected to leadership positions in **all** committees, not just Social Affairs and the Council on Ethnic Minority Affairs
- The best way to increase the number of women elected and selected to leadership positions is to increase the number of female candidates **and** increase the percentage of female candidates nominated by central level institutions.

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Appendix 1:
Determinants of Election

VARIABLES	Total result	12th VNA result	13th VNA result
Female	-0.0387	-0.0186	0.0158
	(0.0298)	(0.0405)	(0.0461)
Age	0.000395	2.07e-05	0.0103***
	(0.000684)	(0.000506)	(0.00260)
Party Member	0.0844*	0.0721	0.0310
	(0.0432)	(0.0592)	(0.0649)
Ethnic Minority	0.0834**	0.0816*	0.123***
	(0.0324)	(0.0452)	(0.0462)
College Degree	0.184***	0.242***	0.149*
	(0.0559)	(0.0753)	(0.0861)
Master's Degree	0.274***	0.297***	0.276***
	(0.0425)	(0.0565)	(0.0634)
Ph.D	0.306***	0.366***	0.252***
	(0.0409)	(0.0480)	(0.0670)
Military	0.201***	0.300***	0.136**
	(0.0395)	(0.0461)	(0.0557)
Business	-0.0262	-0.000297	-0.0790
	(0.0367)	(0.0505)	(0.0561)
Mass Organization	-0.194***	-0.254***	-0.118**
	(0.0369)	(0.0503)	(0.0552)
Centrally Nominated	0.225***	0.225***	0.194***
	(0.0351)	(0.0554)	(0.0478)
Central Committee Member	0.297***	0.288***	0.293***
	(0.0413)	(0.0606)	(0.0531)
Incumbent	0.326***	0.371***	0.257***
	(0.0261)	(0.0356)	(0.0409)
Observations	1,701	875	826
r2_p	0.238	0.256	0.241
chi2	283.1	184.4	144.0

Appendix 2: Female Delegates

VARIABLES	Total result	12th VNA result	13th VNA result
Age	-0.00112	-0.000960	-0.133***
	(0.00142)	(0.00231)	(0.0132)
Party Member	-0.0705*	-0.487**	0.748**
	(0.0382)	(0.228)	(0.315)
Ethnic Minority	0.203***	0.788***	0.579**
	(0.0339)	(0.191)	(0.248)
College Degree	0.0312	0.243	-0.0694
	(0.0473)	(0.280)	(0.478)
Master's Degree	0.115*	0.818**	0.0603
	(0.0590)	(0.332)	(0.505)
Ph.D	-0.151***	-0.974**	-0.706
	(0.0487)	(0.447)	(0.569)
Military	-0.300***	-3.418**	-1.794***
	(0.0221)	(1.431)	(0.675)
Business	0.121***	0.476**	0.859***
	(0.0350)	(0.206)	(0.261)
Mass Organization	0.175***	0.597***	0.924***
	(0.0353)	(0.210)	(0.258)
Centrally Nominated	-0.152***	-0.663**	-0.507*
	(0.0305)	(0.287)	(0.304)
Central Committee Member	-0.0847*	-0.539	0.175
	(0.0437)	(0.395)	(0.385)
Incumbent	0.0213	-0.0762	0.957***
	(0.0343)	(0.239)	(0.264)
Constant		-0.576*	4.298***
		(0.344)	(0.729)
Observations	1,701	875	826

Women Delegates in the Viet Nam National Assembly:

Appendix 3:
Determinants of Leadership Status

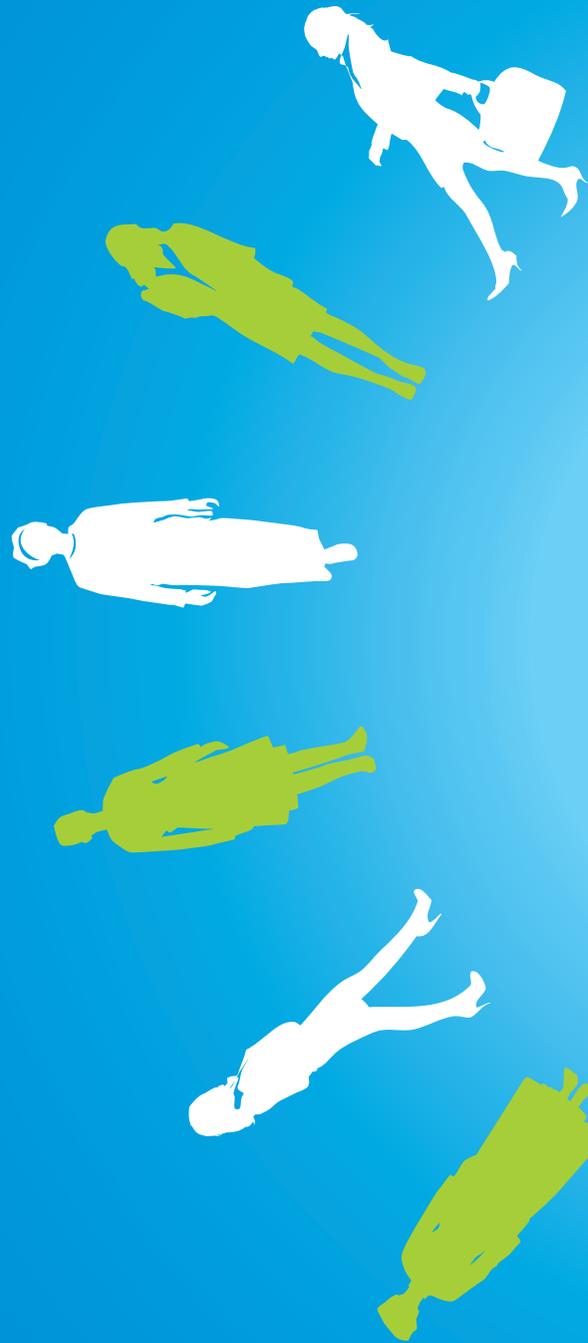|	Upper Leadership	Deputy Chairs and Above	All fulltime Members	Committee Members and Above
Female	-0.00168	-0.00124	-0.112***	-0.0720*
	(0.00234)	(0.00370)	(0.0268)	(0.0387)
Age	-0.000248	-0.00128**	-0.00517***	0.00217
	(0.000199)	(0.000652)	(0.00196)	(0.00222)
Ethnic Minority	0.00341	0.00138	0.0269	0.0229
	(0.00445)	(0.00449)	(0.0463)	(0.0408)
College Degree	0.280*	0.329**	0.946***	0.157**
	(0.160)	(0.138)	(0.0200)	(0.0749)
Master's Degree	0.887***	0.934***	0.986***	0.193***
	(0.137)	(0.0695)	(0.00415)	(0.0478)
Ph.D	0.938***	0.946***	0.984***	0.220***
	(0.0897)	(0.0613)	(0.00465)	(0.0432)
Military	-0.00436*	-0.00786	-0.194***	-0.103*
	(0.00263)	(0.00496)	(0.0174)	(0.0601)
Business	-0.00730*	-0.0115*	-0.170***	-0.0767*
	(0.00396)	(0.00663)	(0.0219)	(0.0441)
Mass Organization	-0.00631*	-0.0110*	-0.226***	-0.0520
	(0.00339)	(0.00640)	(0.0168)	(0.0464)
Incumbent	0.0225**	0.0260*	0.205***	0.0594**
	(0.0104)	(0.0141)	(0.0339)	(0.0301)
Centrally Nominated	0.172***	0.484***	0.277***	0.0683**
	(0.0332)	(0.0467)	(0.0371)	(0.0319)
Central Committee Member	-0.00370*	-0.00879*	-0.188***	-0.459***
	(0.00210)	(0.00519)	(0.0202)	(0.0498)
Southern Province	0.00108	0.00351	0.0323	0.0144
	(0.00174)	(0.00288)	(0.0280)	(0.0288)
Provincial Transfer Revenue	-1.69e-06	-2.00e-05	9.96e-05	2.14e-05
	(8.60e-06)	(1.77e-05)	(0.000142)	(0.000154)
Observations	991	991	991	991

Appendix 4: The "Hopkins-King" Supervised Categorization of Documents

A wide variety of text analysis methods aim to correctly classify documents into categories. Some of these methods are unsupervised, meaning that there is no input other than the documents themselves. Latent dirichlet allocation another method applied in this report is one such method. As a result of their "unsupervised" nature, these algorithms do not always identify categories of interest to researchers. Other methods, like naive Bayesian classifiers, learn how human coders assign documents to groups to predict the categorization of the un-coded documents. However, this class of "supervised" methods also has limitations. "Unfortunately, methods tuned to maximize the percent of documents correctly classified can still produce substantial biases in the aggregate proportion of documents within each category" {Hopkins:2010bs}.

To avoid biased estimates of the percentage of documents belonging to given categories, Hopkins and King developed a superior method that skips the unnecessary process of assigning individual documents into categories. The method can be written as $P(S) = P(S|D)P(D)$ where $P(S)$ is the probability of a word occurring, $P(S|D)$ is the probability of a word appearing given a document category, and $P(D)$ is the proportion of all documents that fall into a category -- our objective. The population level proportions can be solved by assuming that the probability of words appearing given a document is of a certain class, is the same in the hand coded and un-coded proportions: $Ph(S|D) = P(S|D)$.

For a deeper description of this method and other applications, see the paper by Hopkins and King (2010)