
DEMOGRAPHY

In 1999, it was estimated that Viet Nam had a population of 76.3 million.¹³ This represents a modest annual population growth rate of 1.54%, reflecting the relative success of Viet Nam's family planning policy. Women comprise 50.8% of the population and are markedly overrepresented in the age cohorts higher than 50 years due to the dramatic loss of life, particularly of men, during the Viet Nam War. This overrepresentation contributes to a high number of female-headed households (45% of those with heads more than 50 years old). Viet Nam also has a young population, with about 44% of the population aged less than 20 years (Table 2.1). The youthfulness of the population creates excessive demand for job creation but also propels the rapid pace of economic, social, and cultural change that is evident today.

The sex ratio indicates a male bias among those aged less than 15 years (Table 2.1), which suggests male preference in children. Typically, if a couple produces two daughters, they will try for a son. If they have two sons, they are less inclined to try for a daughter. Female infanticide may also occur in some areas where ancestor worship and the need for a male heir are strong.

National demographic statistics have improved for women and children during the last decade but the improvement has been geographically uneven. The under-5 mortality rate fell from 55 to 48 per 1,000 live births from 1989 to 1999, the infant mortality rate declined to 37 per 1,000 live births by 1999¹⁴ and life expectancy is 11 years higher than that of other countries of similar GDP per capita. During 1989–1999, delivery complications fell by 52%, maternal mortality halved from 2 to 1 per 1,000 births and the fertility rate declined from 3.8 in 1989 to 2.3.¹⁵

Table 2.1: Population Structure by Sex and Age, 1999

Age Group	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Sex Ratio
0–4	10.09	8.98	9.52	108.6
5–9	12.65	11.38	12.00	107.4
10–14	12.59	11.36	11.96	107.2
15–19	10.99	10.55	10.77	100.7
20–24	8.75	8.97	8.86	94.3
25–29	8.60	8.37	8.48	99.3
30–34	7.96	7.77	7.86	99.0
35–39	7.20	7.35	7.27	94.7
40–44	5.72	6.09	5.91	90.7
45–49	3.91	4.22	4.07	89.7
50–54	2.57	3.02	2.80	82.4
55–59	2.12	2.60	2.36	78.5
60–64	2.07	2.55	2.31	78.3
65+	4.80	6.79	5.81	68.3
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	96.7

Source: Population and Housing Census Sample (GSO 2000).

The crude birth rate fell from 30.1 per 1,000 women in 1989 to 19.9 in 1999. It was kept low among the Kinh through vigorous family planning campaigns and the two-child policy, which has been rescinded only recently. The family planning policy made exceptions for ethnic minorities, who were allowed to have more than two children, particularly the smaller population groups. However, these statistics vary markedly by ethnic group, economic quintile, and region. Major gaps are evident between rural and urban communities. For example, in 1999 the infant mortality rate was 41.0 in the rural areas compared to only 18.3 in the urban areas, the crude birth

rate was 21.2 compared to 15.9, and the total fertility rate was 2.6 compared to 1.7. Regional differences also exist, especially between the Southeast (Ho Chi Minh City) and Red River Delta (Hanoi) with the best records, and the poorer Central Highlands and Northern Uplands with the worst.¹⁶

According to the 1999 Population and Housing Census Sample results, female-headed households comprised 21.6% of households and the proportion of female-headed households was higher (more than 30%) in both the poorest areas (northern mountains, the midlands, and the Central Highlands) and the most prosperous areas (Southeast).¹⁷ These differences were because of the higher loss of life in the mountainous areas than elsewhere during the war, which gave rise to a higher proportion of widowed female-headed households; and migration by men from both the poor and prosperous areas to take advantage of nonfarm opportunities offering higher income.

The population of Viet Nam is surprisingly mobile for an agriculturally based economy. About one third of the population aged more than 10 years has moved at least once and this increases to more than 50% in the Southeast. The Southeast and the Central Highlands are net receivers of migrants. People move for economic reasons, government resettlement, to join other family members, in response to disasters such as floods and fire, and in the past because of war. Although 1999 census data on migration are not yet disaggregated by sex, case study research indicates that not only young men but also young single women are leaving the countryside to secure urban employment.¹⁸ In the longer term this will create pressure on urban resources.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

The extended family is the main social and economic unit within Viet Nam. Although 71% of families reside as nuclear families, these families often live adjacent to their parents and households of siblings, and still function as an extended family.

The expectation is that all people marry. In 1999, only 3.3% of those aged more than 50 years claimed never to have married.¹⁹ The mean age for first marriage is higher in urban than in rural areas but is rising slightly for both men and women in general: for men, 25.5 years in 1999 compared to 24.5 in 1989; and for women, 24 years compared to 23.2, respectively. After a temporary rush toward early marriages in the early 1990s when housing land within the commune was being distributed to households, the age of rural marriage is also rising, with the exception of some ethnic minority groups in which underage marriage is still common.²⁰ The divorce rate is still low in Viet Nam, although it is increasing, especially in urban areas. According to the 1999 census, 13% of women aged over 15 years are widowed, separated, or divorced. However, this is probably under-enumerated due to the social stigma.

Most Kinh communities are patrilocal, which means that after marriage the couple live in the husband's village and often with his family if he is the first son. Both sons and daughters may inherit land. However, if a woman marries into another village, it may be difficult for her to take up her land rights. In the case of divorce, the wife has rights over any land that she has brought to the marriage and theoretically over a proportion of land used by the couple.

Patriarchy underpins the functioning of the family. Throughout their lives, Vietnamese women must defer firstly to their fathers, then their husbands, and finally their eldest son. Wives

should be compliant; they should not be seen to be the major decision maker or income earner; they should be sexually available to their husbands and take responsibility for contraception. Husbands are responsible for the behavior of their wives and have the right to discipline them where necessary.

Because the role of wife is that of a peacemaker, acts of domestic violence perpetrated by men rarely attract community criticism and are instead interpreted as the failure of the wife. Reconciliation is the preferred outcome of any domestic dispute. Consequently, separated and divorced women often carry blame within the community. Unmarried women should be chaste. Evidence to the contrary brings shame even in cases of sexual harassment, rape, incest, and forced prostitution. These social attitudes that diminish the standing of women in the community have indirectly sanctioned domestic violence, lack of choice of contraception, male irresponsibility with respect to the transmission of sexual transmitted diseases (e.g., HIV/AIDS), trafficking of women, and female infanticide. Although reliable comparative data are not available, there is no evidence to suggest that Viet Nam is more advanced than its neighbors in the area of gender-based violence.

Although patriarchy is strong, women have substantial decision-making power within the family and it is perceived that this power has increased. However, some areas of decision making appear to remain in the province of men. Women complain that they have little control over male expenditure on alcohol, tobacco, and gambling. They also note their lack of input into reproductive decisions; pressure exists for women to produce male progeny and the husband often insists on more children until a son is born, even though high birth rates have detrimental effects on women's health.²¹

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Since the implementation of *doi moi*, Viet Nam has achieved great advances in health care. Many facilities have been upgraded and access to community health care has improved. Almost all communes have a health center, and of these 30% have a doctor and 82% have a midwife or obstetrics-pediatric assistant. Although access has improved nationally, some communities, mainly in poor and remote areas, are underserved.

Women have a greater demand for health services than men because of their reproductive roles and women's susceptibility to reproductive tract infections. Therefore, the lack of access to health care services has a greater impact on women. Fee for service, ineffective implementation of the fee exemption program, and inequitable budget allocation mechanisms have resulted in unequal access to quality health care. The fees and charges for these services are often out of the reach of the poorest households. The burden of taking care of sick children and the elderly is passed on to women in the family.

Poor health among ethnic minority households is due to isolation, lack of clean water, lack of infrastructure and equipment, high fertility rates, poor quality soil, shortage of food supply, and limited access to community health stations. Common health problems for ethnic minority women and their families include malaria, malnutrition, and respiratory and gynecological infections. These result in high levels of maternal mortality, obstetric complications, and maternal and child malnutrition.²² The gender gap in adult nutritional status is

greater in rural areas, in poorer households, and among ethnic minorities; in resource-constrained households, women's share of food is lower than that of men.²³

New issues for women's health are becoming evident with improved awareness of the impact on women's health of male promiscuity and domestic violence. Although awareness of male promiscuity and female prostitution is increasing it is not clear whether the incidence itself is also increasing. In an environment where the use of condoms is not common and intravenous drug use is a significant problem, the risks of HIV/AIDS have grown. Although the number of reported cases of HIV/AIDS in Viet Nam is still low compared to that in Thailand, it is increasing. By December 2000, the number of reported HIV infections reached 32,000. However, it is estimated that 107,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS (0.2% of the adult population), of which 65% of cases are related to intravenous drug use. The prevalence of HIV in female sex workers in 2000 was 4.3%²⁴ and 14% of all HIV cases in the country were women. Without improvement in the status of women both economically and socially, the fight against HIV/AIDS is a lost cause. Women's empowerment and the decrease in the spread of HIV/AIDS are intrinsically linked.

Social attitudes restrict sexual empowerment for women. Women are responsible for contraception and the use of condoms is low. Although more than 50% of families now use modern contraception methods, the choice of contraception in isolated areas is limited to intra-uterine devices (38.5%). The use of oral contraceptives is increasing but the present rate is only 4–6% of couples. Oral contraceptives are expensive because they are imported. Supply is unreliable in remote areas and rural lifestyles are not conducive to the rigor of the daily regime. Abortion is still the most common form of family planning in Viet Nam. It is estimated that 40% of pregnancies are terminated,²⁵ the highest rate in the world (2.5 per woman)²⁶. Such high incidence of intrusive procedures has negative implications for women's health.

Domestic violence is clearly a health issue for women. In the past, domestic violence often went unreported and was dealt with by the family or sometimes the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU, described in Chapter IV) and neighbors rather than the law. Social attitudes, which sanction a husband's right to discipline his wife, meant that domestic violence was not seen as problematic. Rather than address either the causes or consequences of domestic violence, the Vietnamese family's response was to preserve the marriage. In recent years, official reports of domestic violence have increased and a greater number of cases are being heard in court. This reflects a cultural shift with respect to the rights of women encouraged by international pressure for the Government to recognize such violence as a problem.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Progress in male and female education has been impressive in Viet Nam and the official rate of female literacy is high compared to that in neighboring countries (Table 1.1). The policy of the VCP since the 1946 Constitution has been to provide equal access to education for boys and girls to enable them to participate fully in achieving national goals. The correlation between education for women and reduced birth rates, improved nutrition, and health is now well known and Viet Nam's success in these areas is in part due to the focus on education for girls. Fertility rates are 53% lower and child mortality is 75% less for girls who have attended at least lower secondary education than for girls without schooling.²⁷

Enrollment and attainment rates in primary school have increased across the country and enrollment is nearly universal at the primary level (Table 2.2). However, these national statistics mask the disadvantage experienced by people in remote areas, especially ethnic minorities and the poor (Tables 2.3 and 2.4). Disadvantage includes not only lack of access to education but also the poor quality of education and low levels of attainment in many rural areas (Table 2.5).

Table 2.2: Rate of School Enrollment by Sex, 1993–1998 (%)

Level	1993		1998	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Primary	87.1	86.3	90.7	92.1
Lower Secondary	29.0	31.2	62.1	61.3
Higher Secondary	6.1	8.4	27.4	30.0

Source: VLSS93 and VLSS98 quoted in State Planning Committee – GSO 1994; Desai 2000.

At the national level, no difference is reported between boys and girls in enrollment rate in primary school. However, gender gaps appear in the poorest households, in the Central Highlands, and among the Chinese and the ethnic minorities (Table 2.3). Nationally, the gender gap appears in secondary schooling, at 6% in lower secondary (Table 2.4) and 11% in upper secondary. However, these gaps are narrow, especially in comparison to the initial high drop-out rate of girls following *doi moi* from 1990/91 to 1993/94. The gap is most pronounced within the poorest households, the rural areas, the Northern Uplands, the Mekong Delta, the Central Coast, and among ethnic minorities. Of those aged more than five-years old, 12% of girls and 7.5% of boys have never attended school, and these proportions have remained remarkably constant over the past 20 years. Of those aged between 6-14 years who have never attended school, 50% are from ethnic minority groups.²⁸ The gap is closing for higher education but not for vocational and technical education. Of some concern is the appearance of a gender gap in the levels of schooling completed by men and women in the age cohorts below 22 years.²⁹ In the adult population, although the national level of literacy is high, two out of every three illiterate people are women. At present, 90% of adult males and 79% of adult females are literate according to the conventional definitions of literacy.³⁰

Mean years of schooling are a better measure of education than enrollments, which do not reflect completion. On average, females have only 5.6 years of schooling compared to 6.8 for males but the largest gender gap occurs between Kinh and ethnic minorities (Table 2.5).

The real disparities in education are not around the issues of gender but in the different levels of achievement and performance of students in rural and urban areas, ethnic minorities and Kinh groups, and the rich and the poor. Within the rural poor and ethnic minority students, gender disparity is exacerbated, making women in this group doubly disadvantaged. The gap between girls and boys for the lowest income quintile is larger than for the top quintile.³¹ In the poorest quintile, the gap between girls and boys in primary school enrollments is pronounced at 5%, and reaches 12% in lower secondary (Tables 2.3 and 2.4).

Table 2.3: Age-specific Enrollment (% in school) Among Children 6–10 Years Old

	Girls (%)	No.	Boys (%)	No.	Overall (%)	No.	Gender Gap (%)
Per Capita Expenditure Quintiles							
Poorest 20%	83.8	410	89.1	418	86.4	828	5.3
II	94.5	360	95.1	378	94.8	738	0.6
III	96.7	323	97.7	338	97.2	661	0.9
IV	97.7	260	98.7	277	98.2	537	1.0
Richest 20%	98.5	262	96.9	296	97.6	558	1.7
Region							
Northern Uplands	96.2	286	96.6	282	96.4	568	0.4
Red River Delta	97.6	239	100.0	264	98.9	503	2.4
North Central	98.2	218	99.0	213	99.6	431	0.8
Central Coast	90.8	205	91.4	222	91.1	427	0.6
Central Highlands	75.7	149	85.6	164	80.9	313	9.8
Southeast	93.9	219	93.2	267	93.5	486	-0.7
Mekong Delta	85.8	299	90.0	295	87.9	594	4.2
Rural	92.2	1,309	94.8	1,361	93.5	2,670	2.7
Urban	97.5	306	95.0	346	96.2	652	-2.5
Ethnic Group							
Kinh	95.5	1,315	96.9	1,406	96.2	2,721	1.4
Chinese	96.8	31	90.4	25	93.9	56	6.4
Minority	81.1	270	85.7	276	83.4	546	4.6
Overall	93.0	1,616	94.8	1,707	93.9	3,323	1.9

Source: Desai 2000, Table 5.2.

Lower enrollment rates in poorer areas and among the ethnic minorities are attributed to higher monetary and opportunity costs and the perceived lack of relevance of education. Since *doi moi* and the implementation of the user-pays principle for services, the monetary costs of education have extended beyond the capacity of some poor households to pay—at least for all their children. Decisions about whom to educate are based on anticipated returns to the household. Principles of patriarchy favor the son. Although tuition is free at primary level, the families have to pay for books, uniform, the fee for extra lectures, the “voluntary” contribution, transportation, and lunch, which make up a substantial proportion of the total cost of a child’s attendance at primary school. The implementation of fee exemption for the poorest families is inefficient. The opportunity costs of the loss of child labor from household production also discourage poor households from investing in education, especially of daughters for whom the opportunity costs are greater.

Table 2.4: Age-specific Enrollment (% in school) Among Children 11–14 Years Old

	Girls (%)	No.	Boys (%)	No.	Overall (%)	No.	Gender Gap (%)
Per Capita Expenditure Quintiles							
Poorest 20%	68.2	291	80.5	282	74.2	573	12.4
II	83.2	292	84.5	310	83.9	602	1.2
III	87.2	274	93.7	329	90.7	603	6.6
IV	87.1	315	93.0	329	90.1	644	5.9
Richest 20%	96.8	267	98.8	291	97.9	558	2.0
Region							
Northern Uplands	82.6	224	91.6	253	87.4	477	9.0
Red River Delta	93.0	229	95.3	256	94.2	485	2.3
North Central	88.4	171	94.8	193	91.8	364	6.3
Central Coast	80.8	162	88.6	184	85.0	346	7.8
Central Highlands	80.3	117	86.6	111	83.3	228	6.4
Southeast	89.0	244	91.6	243	90.2	487	2.6
Mekong Delta	71.8	292	79.7	301	75.9	593	7.9
Rural	81.3	1,105	89.2	1,237	85.5	2,342	7.9
Urban	92.7	334	92.8	304	92.7	638	0.1
Ethnic group							
Kinh	84.6	1,213	89.6	1,283	87.2	2,496	5.1
Chinese	88.7	22	90.6	32	89.8	54	1.9
Minority	76.8	205	90.2	226	84.1	431	13.4
Overall	83.5	1,440	89.8	1,541	86.8	2,981	6.3

Source: Desai 2000, Table 5.3.

The working hours of primary pupils from the poorest quintile are double those of pupils from the richest one. The working hours of female pupils are 20–50% longer than those of males from all quintiles⁵² and this rate is 100% more for female Hmong children. For ethnic minorities, other obstacles to education are limited access to neighborhood schools, poor quality teachers, and the perceived irrelevance of the Kinh curriculum taught in Vietnamese language. Attendance at high schools for ethnic minority pupils usually involves boarding school, which is considered more dangerous for girls.

Table 2.5: Mean Years of Education by Social Group, 1998

Social Group	Female	Male
Total	5.6	6.8
Poor	5.0	6.0
Rich	9.0	10.4
Ethnic Minority	4.5	6.0
Kinh	7.2	8.5
Rural	5.1	6.2
Urban	7.4	8.5

Source: Bales 2000, 70.

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Table 2.6: Gender Streaming in Higher Education: Fields of Study Selected by Men and Women (%)

	Age cohorts								
	<= 24 years			25–34 years			>34 years		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Mathematics and Physical Sciences	7.1	10.1	8.5	4.5	12.7	8.1	10.1	18.1	12.9
Social Sciences (Economics, Political Science, etc.)	36.5	38.7	37.6	37.5	27.4	33.1	36.7	26.3	33.1
Geology, Electronics, Mining Technology	19.9	6.0	13.2	13.7	2.1	8.6	10.4	3.6	8.1
Chemistry, Construction, Technology	13.8	4.8	9.5	10.5	7.1	9.0	5.7	4.5	5.3
Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock	1.4	1.2	1.3	3.7	1.2	2.6	8.1	4.7	6.9
Medicine and Pharmacy	3.6	3.3	3.5	5.1	8.5	606	6.7	12.4	8.7
Pedagogy and Sports Education	7.2	7.6	7.4	7.2	21.3	13.4	6.5	17.6	10.3
Culture, Fine Arts, Linguistics	6.4	25.5	15.6	12.3	16.0	13.9	8.5	11.2	9.4
Police and Military	2.2	0.0	1.2	5.6	0.0	3.1	5.5	0.0	3.6
Other	1.9	2.9	2.4	0.0	3.8	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of individuals	167	159	326	66	49	115	249	139	388

Source: Desai 2001a, Table 5.13.

Although girls perform better in both Vietnamese language and mathematics in primary school,³³ social expectation supports sex segregation in high school and university courses. Sex segregation extends into employment and it appears that gender stereotyping is becoming more pronounced. Before *doi moi*, women as well as men were encouraged to engage in technical areas. It was expected that girls would do well in mathematics at school and later become engineers and doctors. Now, females tend to cluster in pedagogy, social sciences, and linguistics while males dominate technical and scientific courses (Table 2.6). Current sex segregation, especially in technology, potentially disadvantages women from fully participating in new industries fostered by the Government, such as information technology, biotechnology, and new materials.³⁴

LEGAL RIGHTS

The legal rights of women were first institutionalized in Viet Nam in the 1946 Constitution. Since then women's rights have been a central tenet of government policy and are reflected in Vietnamese legislation. Men and women have equal civil rights with respect to economic opportunities, person and property, marriage and family matters, political participation, and public administration. The courts and institutions protect these rights. The penal code and the penal proceedings code also protect women against violence. Viet Nam's participation in the World Conferences on Women and signing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) have exposed the Government to international expectations on women's rights.

Tension exists between the law and international conventions. A criticism sometimes made on women's rights legislation in Viet Nam is the tendency for it to be protective rather than equalizing opportunities and burdens. For example, the Labor Code promulgated in 1995 is generous but effectively restricts the choices of women workers and encourages the employment of men over women.³⁵ It is stated in the code that women workers can take a day off per month during menstruation. The labor code reinforces gender stereotypes with its requirement for a compulsory crèche only when women are employed rather than for all parent workers, maternity leave rather than parental leave, and compulsory early retirement for women.

Tensions also exist between the State and tradition on gender equity, and as the role of the State diminishes, gender gains are more easily eroded. Since 1946, gender equity initiatives in legislation and the associated social support were imposed from the top. The VCP adopted strong gender equity measures, which were implemented through its central planning function. However, with the progressive implementation of *doi moi*, state support for gender initiatives is diminishing. Reproductive functions, such as childcare and household work, have been withdrawn. Clear articulation of gender concerns in such documents as the socioeconomic plan for the next 10 years has also diminished. As the State withdraws from gender concerns, the lack of synergy with culture gives rise to a lack of compliance with these laws at the local level. Even now, the implementation of existing legislation seems to vary according to personal commitment within local institutions.³⁶

According to the 1996 Constitution, women and men are granted equal rights regarding property. Relevant laws, such as the Civil Code (1995), the Law on Marriage and Family (1986,

2000), and the Land Law (1993), govern the ownership of property and the regulations regarding land. According to law, family members must be consulted before the household head can make decisions about the transfer, sale, rent, inheritance, mortgage, and contribution of land as equity for a business. Land-use certificates in rural areas are registered in the name of the male household head in 80% of cases. In urban areas, the tendency has been to register the names of husband and wife and usually the family members as well. Registration of land title is very complicated because land is the most valuable asset and in some circumstances may be registered in the name of a friend in order to disguise assets from the State.

The 2000 Law on Marriage and Family stipulates that land-use certificates for household common land must list the names of both spouses indicating shared possession. However, in the earlier Land Law, there is no mention of co-ownership. Questions now arise as to whether the certificates will be reissued under joint names. There is little ground swell to force these changes and staff of the General Department of Land Administration have little training in gender issues; most discussion of land at the commune level still excludes women.

Traditions of patriarchy challenge gender equity legislation and militate against compliance. International pressure groups argue that legislated equal rights to land are pivotal in the empowerment of women. Some international lobby groups argue that traditional values concerning the rights and roles of women have prevented women from enjoying equal access to land use.

In practice, when women divorce, it is possible that they lose access to land, because the disposal of land is an extended family matter rather than a matter for the individual. When two people from the same village marry, they acquire land from both sides of the family. Upon divorce, the woman retains rights to her portion. Because Viet Nam is largely patrilocal and women move to the village of the husband, women's access to land after divorce is unpredictable. Distance from her birth village to the couple's land and uncomfortable proximity to in-laws militates against maintaining use rights to the land. Under these circumstances, women may receive compensation in rice and livestock, but success often depends on personal connection. Widowed women do not necessarily take over the land-use certificate which may remain in the name of the deceased husband, be transferred to the eldest son, or revert back to the husband's family, but they are less disadvantaged than divorced/separated women.

OTHER ISSUES

Gender-based violence is not a Vietnamese problem but a global problem. It takes the form of trafficking of women, exploitation of women as sex workers, rape, and domestic violence. Data on gender-based violence in Viet Nam are scant and anecdotal and the problem has only recently received public attention. Available data suggest that since 1990, about 10,000 women and children have been sold, mainly as sex workers.³⁷ According to MOLISA and UNICEF, there are currently 200,000 women involved in the sex industry of whom 10% are children³⁸ and the number of domestic violence cases that have reached the courts has increased.

Although the legal framework to punish domestic violence is enshrined in the Constitution, the Law on Marriage and Family, and the criminal code, the incidence is

widespread. The Lao Cai Participatory Poverty Assessment³⁹ found that 40% of women in a lowland village and 70% in a highland village were regularly subjected to physical violence.

Social attitudes toward the appropriate role of women within the family mean that the victim is often blamed for gender-based violence, even for victims of rape, incest, entrapment, and domestic violence. Case studies suggest that domestic violence is usually linked to poverty, alcohol and/or gambling, jealousy, or mental illness. In the case study research, it was found that men often cite women “talking too much” as the main misdemeanor that prompts domestic violence.⁴⁰ In a society where the extended family is the dominant unit, it is not uncommon for other members of the husband’s family—both male and female—to engage in domestic violence against the wife. Victims experience a deep sense of shame and usually consider it a private matter although the demand for counseling centers, which focus on marriage and family issues, has reportedly increased.⁴¹ High-quality counseling and health services as well as a change in men’s attitude to women are required in order to improve women’s health and safety.