

GENDER ANALYSIS (SUMMARY)

A. Progress and Key Challenges

1. Viet Nam has made considerable progress toward gender equality, especially by closing gender gaps in education, reducing maternal mortality, and expanding economic opportunity for both men and women. However, significant challenges remain because of limited women's participation in public decision-making; a highly gender-segregated labor market; HIV/AIDS spreading among women; and rising male sex ratios at birth, which reflects a deep-rooted social bias against girls. Gender disparities are more marked in rural areas and among some ethnic minorities. Viet Nam's gender development index ranks the country 58 out of 138, ahead of its neighbors Thailand, at 69, and the Philippines, at 78.¹

2. **Economic empowerment.** Female participation in the labor force stands at 72.3%, one of the highest rates in the region, but many female workers are unpaid family workers (53.5%).² The Department of Statistics estimates that 81% of female workers are in the informal sector. The percentage of women employed as unskilled workers is 68%, compared with 57% for men. Gender segregation of the labor market concentrates women in low-skilled, low-paying, and flexible occupations. The largest segment of women work in agriculture (50%), followed by services (33%), and industry (17%).³ Apart from manufacturing, retail, and vehicle repair, most women cluster in hotels, restaurants, health, and education, while men cluster in construction, utilities, transport, business, and financial services. In industries where women predominate, such as garments, textile, and footwear, they tend to be unskilled, earning low salaries while working long hours and enjoying little access to training or promotion. On average, women earn a quarter less than men for the same type of work, with gaps decreasing with level of education and training completed and the type of education and employment received. Men tend to be more educated or skilled, as 20% of economically active men and 15% of economically active women have completed vocational training and 5.4% of men and 4.0% of women have graduated from university. That males retire at age 60 while women retire at age 55 influences women's access to promotions and managerial jobs. Only 5.0% of the presidents of large companies and 9.7% of the vice presidents are female.⁴ A combination of low education levels, limited access to skills training, lack of access to credit and financial services, and gender segregation in the labor market hampers women's ability to get better jobs and improve their incomes.

3. **Education.** Viet Nam has good gender parity in education, with almost half of students being female in both primary education (48.5%) and secondary (lower 48.2% and upper 49.3%). In higher education, there are more female than male students, as women were 53.8% of those in college and 55% of those in university in 2007. However, gender disparities persist in educational outcomes in rural and mountainous areas, especially among ethnic minority girls and women.⁵ Distance to schools, language of instruction, persistent gender stereotypes, and

¹ United Nations Development Programme. 2010. *Human Development Report*. New York.

² Male labor force participation rate is 81%, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA). 2010.

³ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, General Statistics Office. 2008. *Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey*. Ha Noi.

⁴ Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). 2011. *Country Gender Profile: Viet Nam Final Report*. Ha Noi.

⁵ Ethnic minority girls have the lowest enrolment and attendance rates of any group. They also have the highest rates of repetition and dropout rates and lowest rates of primary school completion and transition from primary to lower secondary school. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2010. *An Analysis of the situation of children in Viet Nam*. Ha Noi.

the lack of gender-sensitive and locally relevant curricula and teaching methods and of qualified female teachers are key concerns. At the tertiary level, gender imbalances in types of study⁶ and academic staff are key issues, as are the lack of correlation between women's vocational education and labor market demand. In the labor force, 2.7% of males and 4.5% of females were illiterate in 2007.⁷ Larger gaps are found in technical vocation education, as 70.9% of the females and 60% of males in the labor force in 2007 had no technical education. These gender gaps in basic literacy and technical and vocational education and training highlight that working women face major disadvantages relative to working men in today's labor market.⁸

4. **Health.** Viet Nam has made considerable progress in reducing maternal mortality. The maternal mortality rate stood at 69 per 100,000 live births in 2009, less than a third of the 233 recorded in 1990. However, progress has been uneven, with significant disparities between rural and urban areas (145 rural versus 79 urban) and the Kinh ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups (81 Kinh and 316 minority).⁹ Improving the access of ethnic minorities to high-quality reproductive and obstetric services and to skilled birth attendants is a key challenge in the battle against maternal mortality, as only 45.8% of minority childbirths are attended by skilled birth attendants, or less than half of the 96.4% of Kinh births. Viet Nam has made impressive achievements in reducing the infant mortality rate to 15 per 1,000 live births in 2008 and the child mortality rate to 26.¹⁰ An estimated 243,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS in Viet Nam, of whom 25% are women, but this figure is expected to rise as men infect their wives and other female partners).¹¹ A 2010 study found that men and women underestimate women's risk of contracting HIV from their partners for lack of knowledge (footnote 5).¹² An emerging concern is the increase in sex-selective abortions and rise in the ratio of male births to female (112:100), reflecting a cultural preference for sons and pressure to adhere to a two-child policy. According to the United Nations Population Fund, the current ratio will mean a 10% surplus of men by 2035, the adverse implications of which include rising demand for sex work, marriage migration, and the trafficking of women.

5. **Water supply and sanitation.** Significant disparities exist in access to water supply and sanitation, which is 87% in urban areas and 54.2% in rural, and 66.7% for the majority Kinh and 26.5% for ethnic minorities. Only 18% of people know that using hygienic latrines prevents diarrhea and related conditions. The lack of safe water and sanitation has significant negative effects on women's workload, time allocation, health, and well-being, as women bear primarily responsibility for household and community sanitation and for caring for sick children and elderly family members.

6. **Public decision-making and politics.** Women comprise 25% of the National Assembly, which is one of the highest women's participation rates in a national parliament in the region. However, there is only one woman minister of 22 ministers, and only 2 of the 9 government departments are headed by women. Women's participation rates in government councils is at 23.9% at province level, 23% at district level, and 20% at the commune level. (Footnote: UN Viet Nam (2009) , UN Gender Briefing Kit: Gender Relations Through History) However, the number of women in leadership positions remains very low. Men dominate the civil service,

⁶ Men tend to specialize in engineering and technical studies (40%) and women in education and business studies (55%) UN Viet Nam 2010. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). *Country Gender Profile: Viet Nam Final Report*. 2011. Ha Noi.

⁷ World Bank. 2010. Viet Nam Country Gender Assessment. Draft report.

⁸ World Bank. 2010. Viet Nam Country Gender Assessment. Draft report.

⁹ UNICEF. 2010. *An Analysis of the situation of children in Viet Nam*. Ha Noi.

¹⁰ UNICEF. 2010. *An Analysis of the situation of children in Viet Nam*. Ha Noi.

¹¹ UNICEF. 2010. *An Analysis of the situation of children in Viet Nam*. Ha Noi.

¹² UNICEF. 2010. *An Analysis of the situation of children in Viet Nam*. Ha Noi.

especially the departments of defense and security, law, justice, economics, foreign affairs, and finance, holding 85%–92% of positions. The departments of culture, education, social affairs, technology and environment have higher percentages of women employees, ranging from 28% to 37%. Women are generally better educated than male party leaders at the commune level, suggesting that women need more education to gain the support of local party members. Barriers to women's public participation include unequal burdens of household and reproductive responsibility, traditional values and attitudes related to women's roles, official rules and regulations that are gender biased, and unequal opportunities for training and capacity development.

7. **Gender-based violence.** Violence against women remains a concern, with 21% of couples reporting domestic violence.¹³ Although there are laws to protect women, such as the Law on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence, 2007, weak enforcement, traditional cultural attitudes, women's lack of knowledge of their rights, and negative gender stereotypes and perceptions contribute to continuing violence.

B. Government's Gender Laws and Strategy

8. Viet Nam is strongly committed to gender equality and women's empowerment, as reflected in the Law on Gender Equality, 2006—supported by Asian Development Bank (ADB) technical assistance—which guarantees equal rights to women and requires gender strategies at the ministerial level. The Gender Equality Department was created in the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs to help implement the Law on Gender Equality. In 2007, Viet Nam passed the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and subsequently launched a public awareness campaign targeting men. The government in July 2011, adopted the National Program on Gender Equality 2011-2015. Other important legislation adopted to protect women's rights includes the Law on Anti-Human Trafficking, 2011. The penal code provides the legal framework for prosecuting crimes of rape, including marital rape under the domestic violence law. The Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU), a mass organization, has created a vast network of members from the central to the grassroots level, with branches in every province and commune. The VWU implements an array of programs in a range of sectors, including health, education, credit, and training, to support women's development. Women have to become members of the VWU to receive support, which pays special attention to the poor. The VWU is thus an effective mobilizing force for gender equality, but uneven capacity among VWU officials constrains effectiveness, particularly in ethnic minority areas.

C. ADB's Experience

9. Projects in agriculture and rural livelihood development, education, health, and water supply and sanitation illustrate successful gender mainstreaming in ADB projects. In education, interventions have targeted disadvantaged locations and ethnic minority girls by constructing schools in remote areas closer to disadvantaged communities; providing boarding facilities and special study programs; training female ethnic minority teachers; helping to develop gender- and ethnically sensitive curricula; conducting information, education, and communication campaigns to convince parents to send girls to schools; and providing gender-sensitivity training to education staff at the provincial, district, school and commune level.¹⁴ Water and sanitation projects targeted poor women; involved them in water user groups; built women's capacity to plan, implement, and manage small water-supply and sanitation projects; and promoted

¹³ United Nations Viet Nam. 2010. *Gender Based Violence, Issue Paper*, Hanoi.

¹⁴ ADB. 2010. *Technical Assistance to Viet Nam for Upper Secondary Education Development Project II*. Manila.

behavior change in women regarding waste disposal and sanitation.¹⁵ Better quality of care, new and upgraded facilities, the provision of food and transport subsidies for women patients, the institutionalization of gender-responsive and patient-focused approaches to health care, and the training of women health workers are some of the initiatives that catalyzed positive gender-related outcomes from health sector projects.¹⁶ The Forest for Livelihood Improvement in the Central Highlands Project¹⁷ improved poor minority women's long-term economic security by placing allocated land under the names of household women and men alike. The project ensured that women participate in and benefit equally from land-use planning and livelihood development.

D. ADB's Gender Strategy

10. Through the country partnership strategy, 2012-2015, ADB will invest in gender equity in Viet Nam as shown in the following table.

Strategy 2020	Investments in Gender Equity by Sector
Core areas of operation	Education. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will contribute to gender equality in secondary education and technical and vocational education and training. Interventions in secondary education will address access and affordability issues in disadvantaged areas, the lack of gender-sensitive and locally relevant curricula, the limited capacity of female ethnic minority teachers, and negative perceptions of girls' education. Strategies in technical and vocational education and training will align women's education and skills with labor market needs and promote female access to training in nontraditional fields. The Public Policy Training Program will develop the capacity of female mid-level and senior civil servants.
	Infrastructure. Water, sanitation, and urban development projects will increase women's access to safe water and sanitation, improve their health and living conditions, support their access to credit and employment in the development and management of water and sanitation infrastructure and urban services, and ensure that these services are gender-responsive. Transport projects will increase women's mobility and access to essential social services and markets. Interventions will include gender-inclusive physical design features in urban mass transit and road projects and employment for women in civil works and maintenance and as rail staff, as well as build awareness of road safety and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and trafficking.
Other areas	Mainstreaming gender in agriculture and natural resources will increase women's access to economically rewarding agricultural practices and businesses and increase their participation in local governance and decision-making bodies related to irrigation and rural development. The Microfinance Sector Development Program will ensure the development of supportive policy frameworks for women entrepreneurs. Health projects will reduce maternal mortality rates in rural and ethnic minority areas by improving rural minority women's access to maternal and reproductive health services and supporting investments to strengthen health systems and human resources, particularly in disadvantaged areas. An HIV/AIDS prevention project will strengthen service delivery for vulnerable women; including those in high-risk groups; develop the capacity of service providers to strengthen outreach services; set targets for women's recruitment and training in HIV prevention services; and conduct a gender-sensitive information, education, and information campaign to increase women's knowledge of HIV prevention. ADB will continue to provide technical assistance to strengthen the gender capacity of line ministries and national women's machinery.

¹⁵ ADB. 2003. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the Central Region Urban Environmental Improvement Project*. Manila.

¹⁶ ADB. 2004. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the Health Care in the Central Highlands Project*; ADB. 2008. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the Health Care in the South Central Coast*, Manila; ADB. 2010. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan and Grants to the Kingdom of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam: Second Greater Mekong Subregion Regional Communicable Diseases Control Project*. Manila; ADB. 2008. *Proposed Grant Assistance to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the Community-Based Early Childhood Care and Development (Financed by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction)*. Manila; ADB. 2006. *Grant Assistance Report Socialist Republic of Viet Nam: Improving Vitamin A Nutrition and Deworming for Poor and Vulnerable Children (Financed by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction)*, ADB. 2005, *Proposed Grant Assistance Government of Viet Nam: Nutritious Food for 6-24 Month Old Children Vulnerable to Malnutrition in Poor Areas (Financed by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction)*. Manila; and ADB. 2006. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Asian Development Fund Grant to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the HIV/AIDS Prevention among Youth Project projects*. Manila.

¹⁷ ADB. 2006. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the Forest for Livelihood Improvement in the Central Highlands Project*. Manila.