

VIETNAM COUNTRY GENDER PROFILE UPDATE

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARP	Agricultural Restructuring Plan
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEMA	Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs
CEPEW	Centre for Education Promotion and Empowerment of Women
CFAW	Committee for the Advancement of Women
CGEP	Country Gender Equality ¹ Profile
CGP	Country Gender Profile
CLIP	Country Level Implementation Plan
CSAGA	Centre for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender, Family, Women and Adolescents
CRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
DOLISA	Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
DRM	Domestic Revenue Mobilisation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GBVNet	Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Network in Viet Nam
GBSS	Gender-biased Sex Selection
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GED	Gender Equality Department, Government of Viet Nam
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
GSO	General Statistics Office
IFGS	Institute of Family and Gender Studies
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISDS	Institute for Social Development Studies
iSEE	Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment

¹ *Poland understands "gender equality" as referring to "equality between men and women".

LFS	Labour Force Survey
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex
LURC	Land Use Rights Certificate
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MMR	Maternal Mortality Ratio
MOCST	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NA	National Assembly of Vietnam
NASC	National Assembly Standing Committee
NACSA	National Assembly Committee for Social Affairs
NCAFW	National Committee for the Advancement of Women
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSGE	National Strategy on Gender Equality
NTP-NRD	National Target Program-National Rural Development
NTP-SRD	National Target Program-Sustainable Poverty Reduction
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRHRR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SRB	Sex-Ratio at Birth
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAW	Violence against women
VHLSS	Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey
VSDGs	Viet Nam Sustainable Development Goals
VWU	Viet Nam Women's Union

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender² equality is a core value of the EU and a universally recognized human right, as well as an imperative to well-being, economic growth, prosperity, good governance, peace and security. All people, in all their diversity, should be free to live their chosen life, thrive socially and economically, participate and take a lead as equals.

Drawing from the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025, which calls for a gender-equal Europe, the new EU gender action plan for 2021-2025 (GAP III) calls for a gender-equal world and is complementary to the LGBTQI equality strategy for 2020-2025. It aims to scale up the EU contribution to reach SDG 5 in all EU internal and external policy areas and across the 2030 Agenda.

To support the implementation of GAP III and to enable the timely integration of its objectives and targets in programming, EU Delegation to Vietnam, in consultation with EU Member States Embassies in Vietnam, prepare an update of this Country Gender Profile (CGP).

Analysis of the CGP indicates that Vietnam is facing institutional reform challenges that enable gender equality, despite the fact that the country ratified a number of relevant Conventions. The reason why it is so difficult to improve gender equality performance is because the socio-cultural barriers, such as gender-biased norms and customary stereotypes, are deeply rooted in generations of leaders; politicians; officials; business owners; men and women; girls and boys in Vietnam. These norms and stereotypes lead to discriminatory attitude against women and girls. As a consequence, discriminatory behaviours somehow become normal or acceptable in the society.

As the global front-runner in promoting gender equality, the EU considers GE as a key political objective of its external action and common foreign and security policy. The CGP suggests that the EU in Vietnam takes a gender-responsive approach, which aims at addressing the root causes of gender equality through gender-mainstreaming, targeted actions and political dialogue.

² “Gender” means the socially-constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose

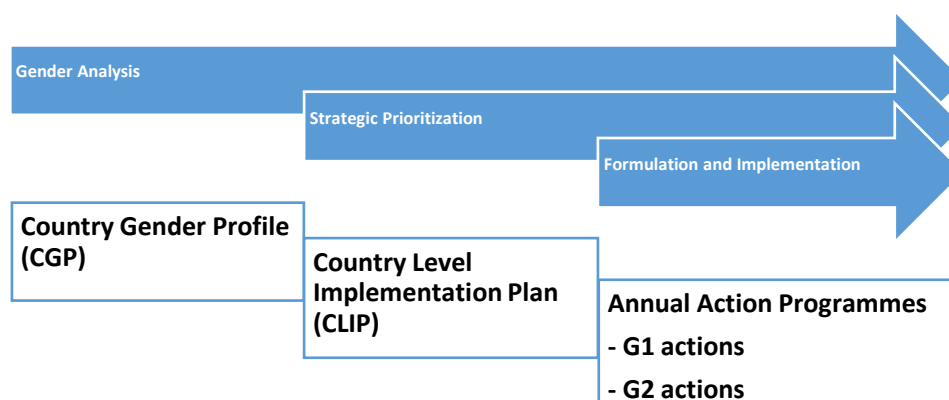
DG Koen Doens and SG Stefano Sannino co-signed a note to all Heads of Delegations (ARES 754225 - 29/01/2021), following the European Presidency Conclusions of 16 December and College' adoption of the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) in November 2020. The note highlights the policy objectives and targets of the GAP and clarifies what to do at country and at regional level.

Following the above-mentioned note, EU' GAP Support Service circulated a model ToR for country gender profile (CGP), template for country level implementation plan (CLIP), the brief No.1 on country gender profile and gender sector analysis and the joint Staff Working Document (SWD), which includes suggested indicators for GAP III thematic areas of engagement.

The **purpose** of this CGP is to provide an analysis of current situation in terms of gender equality in Vietnam, from the point of view of EU GAP III, and, based on that, to recommend inputs for the formulation of the CLIP.

The CGP is not a research thesis about gender equality in Vietnam. It is the analytical document, being developed on the basis of different reports and putting together available pieces to complete a puzzle about gender-related situation, under the lens of EU GAP III and the Vietnam MIP 2021-2027. It is relevant for Vietnam as the sequencing, that leads to EU's future action(s) to promote gender equality and women empowerment, starts from thorough understanding of country situation. The CGP helps EU Delegation to Vietnam and EU HQ (INTPA and EEAS) answer the question where to place the priority to optimize the effectiveness and sustainability of EU's future action(s).

The sequencing of EU's action(s) to implement the GAP III is as follow.



2. Overview

In the previous programming period (2014-2020), the Delegation used directly the CGP provided by UNWomen in 2013 as the basis for its engagement. That approach, somehow, caused discrepancies between the operational requirements of EU GAP II and the information, provided by the CGP. For this period (2021-2027), the EU Delegation to Vietnam develops its own CGP around 6 policy areas of GAP III to ensure the comprehensiveness of the document.

The CGP constitutes level 1 of gender analysis, providing comprehensive and detailed information on gender equality and women's rights in Vietnam. The CGP informs and supports the formulation of the CLIP. Level 2, the gender sector analysis, will look at the priority sectors of the MIP (2021-2027) from GAP III perspective to inform the AAPs, and ensure that at least 85% of new actions of the MIP will be gender-responsive (OECD G-marker 1 and 2) and 5% should have gender equality as the principal objective (OECD G-marker 2).

Finally yet importantly, the CGP maps out on-going and future support by local actors and suggest entry points/opportunities for future EU political and operational support and dialogue.

3. Methodology

Formulation of the CGP is a complex task. The process consists of 3 phases:

- **Review:** Available documents, such as “Gender Equality and the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific” baseline and pathways for transformative change by 2030; Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) in the Southeast Asian region; the Country Gender Assessment report by UNWomen/Australia/ILO/ADB (draft); SEDS/SEDP; latest speeches of government officials at gender equality related events; minutes of the meetings of Informal Group of HoD/Ambassadors on Gender Equality, progress reports of Safe and Fair regional program and We Empower Asia program, etc. are reviewed. Information collected feed in the analytical framework set forth by (i) EU's ToR for country gender profile, (ii) template for the CLIP and (iii) indicative sectors of the MIP. Feedbacks from the group of consultants, who are working on the CSO Roadmap, are analyzed as well.

- **Interviews:** Face-to-face /online consultation is conducted with key informants of EUMS, CSOs, government (i.e. MoLISA), national assembly (if possible), associations (i.e. Women Entrepreneur Council), mass-organizations (Vietnam Women's Union), and the UN (as part of the EU-UN consultation process for the MIP). Once the draft CGP is available, additional consultations may be organized with different clusters of informants.
- **Writing:** To ensure the consistency between the CGP; the MIP; and the CLIP, these documents are developed in parallel. In between, the Thematic Units of INTPA (i.e. G1 and E2) are consulted as well. The CGP takes into account developments in terms of the new CSO roadmap and the new strategy for human rights and democracy.

Since the CLIP follows "Team Europe" approach, the entire process requires regular engagement with EUMS. Monthly meeting of EUDC could be utilized for sharing; consultation; and endorsement, while the HOMs meeting could be for final endorsement (mid-June 2021).

COUNTRY CONTEXT

1. Political, legal and human rights situation

1.1. Ratification of international treaties related to gender equality:
Vietnam has signed or ratified the following international human rights treaties:

- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified in 1982
- the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified in 1982
- the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, ratified in 1982
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in 1990
- the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed in 2007
- the Convention Against Torture, signed in 2013 but not yet ratified
- the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed in 2007 but not yet ratified

Vietnam ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1982 and submitted five periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee on its progress in implementing the treaty. The country also ratified ILO Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration in 1997 and the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons in 2012. Vietnam is a non-permanent member in the UN Security Council (2020-2021) and, at the time of this update CGP, the country is a candidacy of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the body's 2023-2025 term.

The latest concluding [observations](#) of the CEDAW Committee include a number of concerns as per Annex I to this document. The main areas of concern are:

- Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework
- Legal aid and access to justice
- National machinery for the advancement of women
- Stereotypes and discriminatory practices

- Violence against women
- Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution
- Participation in political and public life
- Women human rights defenders
- Education
- Employment
- Migrant women workers
- Health
- Economic empowerment of women
- Rural women
- Refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless women
- Marriage and family relations
- Data collection and analysis

The CEDAW Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention and invites the National Assembly, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.

1.2. Institutional framework for gender equality:

Viet Nam's national institutional structure for gender equality is complex, comprising of state-based and socio-political entities. At central level, relevant entities include the National Assembly (especially its Social Affairs Committee), state management agencies, an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism, as well as the mass organisation for women. At sub-national level, such structure (see Figure 1 below) is replicated in all 63 provinces of Viet Nam.

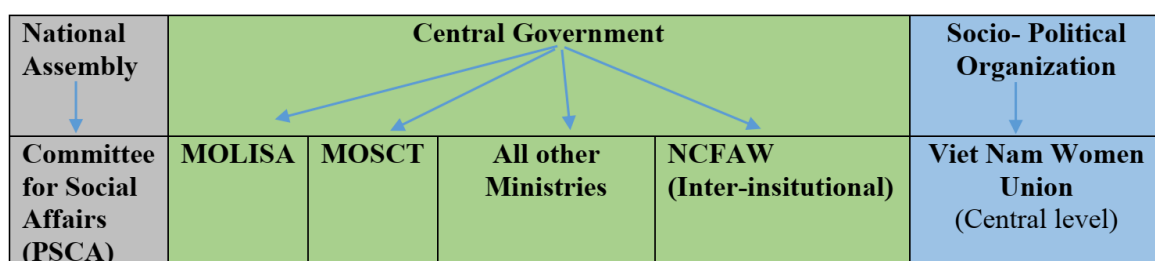


Figure 1 - Viet Nam's national institutional structure for gender equality at central level

Analysis: While the framework ensures that gender equality responsibility is distributed across a number of technical and policy-making agencies, this has led to an overlap in directives and accountabilities. Moreover, the framework encourages the view that

gender equality is synonymous with women's issues and as such not of relevance to men or the quality of economic and social development.

According to the Gender Equality Law, the National Assembly's Social Affairs Committee (NASAC) is responsible for examining proposed and draft laws to ensure that gender issues are incorporated into these documents. The government, through MOLISA, is obliged to report annually to the National Assembly on the implementation of gender equality objectives and the achievement of targets specified in the National Strategy on Gender Equality.

Analysis: While the proposed laws are now required to produce a gender analysis as part of the drafting process, the legal departments of line ministries in-charge of the drafting process only have limited capacity to analyse gender issues. The consequence is that the quality of gender mainstreaming in Vietnam's legislation process is compromised.

Within MOLISA, the Gender Equality Department (GED) leads the coordination, with other ministries, for the implementation of the Gender Equality Law and the National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE) 2011-2020 at the national level, as well as being responsible for Viet Nam's reporting obligations under CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. By the end of 2018, all provinces had established an entity named Division of Children Protection and Gender Equality combining oversight of children's affairs and gender equality within DOLISA, the sub-ordinate agency of MOLISA. National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCAW) is the inter-sectoral government body established to advise the Prime Minister on issues relating to advancement of women within the country. And this set-up is replicated in all provinces and ministries.

Analysis: The segregation of duty between NCAW and GED is not clear-cut, given the fact that MOLISA staff both entities. GED somehow plays a more visible role, in comparison to that of NCAW.

Within MOCST, the Department of Family is mandated to provide guidance on the implementation of Viet Nam's Family Development Strategy to 2020 with a vision to 2030 and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control 2007. Concerning family and domestic violence, MOCST is specifically tasked to build a database on domestic violence prevention and control, and to build and guide the social reproduction of the model of a 'happy and stable family'.

Analysis: *There is an overlap with MOLISA's responsibility for the action plan on gender-based violence (GBV) and with MOCST's responsibility for domestic violence.*

Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) is a national socio-political / mass organization within the political system, with the authority to represent the rights and interests of all Vietnamese women. Three focus tasks for the VWU over the period 2017-2022 include: (i) Advocate for and support women's comprehensive development, and build happy families; (ii) Mobilize and support women to create start-ups (enterprises), develop the economy and protect the environment; and (iii) Build a strong association, participate in Party and State building, as well as monitor and provide independent policy feedback.

VWU is preparing for its Congress in 2022 and for a new set of focus tasks (2022-2027). Following the consultation with VWU, the indicative tasks include: (i) Gender-related & gender-mainstreamed policy development and implementation supervision; (ii) Communication to change men's and women's perception about gender equality; (iii) Promoting the roles of men and women in building happy families*; (iv) Fighting GBV and improving rehabilitation of GBV victims; (v) Promoting women political participation & economic empowerment (i.e. vocational training, access to finance, women-led start-up/innovation/entrepreneurship); (vi) Improving environment protection and climate change adaption; and (vii) International cooperation for the promotion of gender equality.

* The concept of "happy family" is defined in the Family Development Strategy to 2020 and Vision to 2030 and Law on Marriage and Family. A happy family is the family, in which members respect each other; care for each other; take care of each other; and get along well with no discrimination. Though there is nothing wrong with such concept, the contention emanates from the communication campaigns under its label. For example, it is not too difficult to find "brain-washing" messages such as:

- For centuries & forever after, Vietnam's women have been confirming their important role in building happy families.
- Building happy family is an indispensable and noble function of women because of their born nature, given to them by the Creator.

Such campaigns merely reinforce the traditional, home-bound reproductive roles of women. In the cultural context of Vietnam whereby women's principal role as "home maker" and wherein family breakdown is simply attributed to the women's faults, the campaigns entrench restrictive and at times punitive gender norms.

Analysis: VWU is one of the most important entry points for gender-related interventions because, as the largest organization tasked with representing women and advancing the Communist Party's women-focussed socio-political agendas, the VWU plays a pivotal role in positioning the gender-responsive ideologies and gender-responsive values that (i) shape society's attitude and people's behaviours and (ii) regulate their lives. The operational strength of VWU is its nationwide network down to village level with more than 15 million members. It means that a good lessons or a success story can be easily multiplied through out such network. The institutional strength of VWU is its teamwork with (i) the legislative body of Vietnam, which is the National Assembly (and especially the Social Affairs Committee), and (ii) the training institution for all Vietnamese politicians, which is the Ho Chi Minh Political Academy (and especially the Sociology Institute of that Academy). It means that VWU is in a position that (i) can influence policy and political dialogues, concerning gender equality, and (ii) can facilitate the change of gender-responsive attitude and gender-responsive behaviour of decision-makers and politicians. The weakness of VWU is the lack of technical capacity, financial resource and communication skills. VWU has been successful with a number of cooperation projects, focused on women's access to micro-finance/credit; women entrepreneurship; disaster preparedness; inter-generational equality; and combating domestic violence – financed by the EU; Belgium BTC; Spanish Embassy; Dutch NGO (SNV); German Savings Bank Foundation for International Cooperation (SBFIC); and UNWomen. It is expected that the engagement of VWU would create long-lasting and radical changes for gender equality, as communication campaigns on "happy families" refrain from propagandizing the traditional, home-bound roles of women and from the promotion of mothering and wifely duties as these are, to some extent, counter-productive in the cultural context of Vietnam.

On 03 March 2021, the government issued Resolution 28/NQ-CP to adopt the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030. The overall goal of the Strategy is "to narrow the gender gap, create conditions and opportunities for women and men to equally participate in, and benefit

from, all aspects of public life, contributing to Vietnam's sustainable development". New highlights from the Strategy include the focus on (i) counselling and healthcare support for LGBT groups; (ii) minimizing pregnancy and abortion among adolescents; and (iii) integrating gender equality into the curriculum of the national education system and pedagogical universities. On top of that, the Strategy emphasizes the important role of communication and education on gender equality in politics and from all dimensions of life.

2. Key gender equality issues, barriers and challenges

This section will follow GAP III engagement areas, covering also the sectors indicatively selected for the MIP 2021-2027.

2.1. *Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence (GBV):*

Viet Nam does not have an official definition of GBV under law. However, different forms of GBV are treated by various instruments in the legal framework. This includes the legal prohibition of forms of GBV, including: domestic violence, sexual violence including sexual harassment in the workplace and in public places, sexual abuse, human trafficking, and gender-based harmful practices, such as child marriage and prenatal gender-biased sex selection. Viet Nam has published two violence-against-women (VAW) prevalence studies. The first, in 2010, focused only on domestic violence, and the second, in 2019, was expanded to cover violence beyond the home (including in the world of work), as well as extending the age cohort from 18-60 to 15-64 years.

Reference is made to the [National Study on Violence against Women in Viet Nam 2019](#): JOURNEY FOR CHANGE, co-financed by Australian Aid; UNFPA; and MOLISA. Figure 2 below, used by such study, gives some definition about the violence against women, caused by women's partners or non-partner perpetrators.

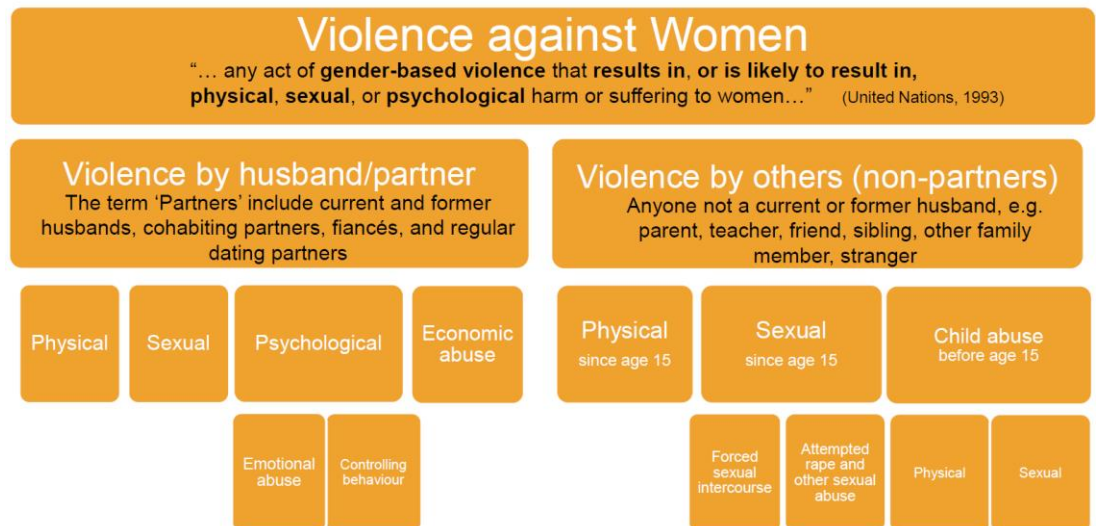


Figure 2. Violence against Women

About 63% of ever-married women in Vietnam (2019) experienced physical, sexual, emotional, controlling and economic violence by husbands during their lifetime and 32% of those reported being violence during the last 12 months. Women with disabilities were more likely to experience all forms of violence by a husband than women without disabilities. For example, 55% of disabled women ever experienced emotional violence during their marital life compared to 44% of non-disabled women.

Prevalence of physical and sexual, non-partner violence (after age 15) and child sexual abuse (before age 15) among all women are 11.4%; 9%; and 4.4% respectively. The 3 youngest groups of women (aged 15-29) experienced 41% of sexual violence by their non-intimate partners. Perpetrators of physical violence were most commonly male family members (mentioned by 35% of women who had experienced such violence). Perpetrators of sexual violence were predominantly male friends, acquaintances or male strangers including in the world of work. Coping with the violence, for every 5 women who experienced violence, 4 "never fought back" (80.8 per cent). Only 50.4% the women who experienced violence by a husband have told anyone about it, while the rest remained silent. And only 9.6% of the women, who experienced physical or sexual violence by husband, sought help from official agencies (court, legal advisor, local leader, women' union, hospital, people's committee, etc.). Of the women who did seek assistance, 69.7% did so only when the violence became unbearable.

As a conclusion, the report confirms that fewer women experienced violence by their husbands / intimate partners in 2019 than in 2010, except sexual violence and that women with disabilities or living in

rural areas have higher rates of all forms of violence by their husbands /partners. But violence by non-partner perpetrators is however increased for physical and, especially, sexual violence (4 times higher in 2019 compared to that of 2010).

GBV and COVID-19 pandemic: Home has become a dangerous place for many women around the world as they stay in the same place with perpetrators to slow the spread of coronavirus. Study in some countries indicate that domestic violence tends to increase 25-30% since the start of the lockdown. In Vietnam, the Peace House, a system of safe shelters that offer support and accommodation to women and children fleeing domestic violence, sexual abuse and trafficking, estimates the intake in February and March 2020 as 2.5 times higher than that of 2019. According to UNWomen, pandemics like COVID-19 can exacerbate not only violence within the home, but other forms of violence against women and girls. Violence against female healthcare workers as well as migrant or domestic workers increases. Xenophobia-related violence, harassment and other forms of violence in public spaces and online is more prevalent and the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse becomes more likely.

GBV in Humanitarian Emergencies: Emergencies here imply cyclones, floods, landslides, draught, earthquake and conflict. Vietnam is one of the disaster prone countries due to the impact of Climate Change. According to UNFPA, what happens during emergencies include: i) separated families and communities; ii) disrupted mechanisms for protection and service delivery such as health, education, public security; and iii) broken-down community support systems and protection mechanisms. Though there is no data presented for Vietnam, UNFPA indicates that disasters exacerbate and make more visible existing forms of discrimination and inequality, including existing patterns of GBV. The displacement and destruction that accompanies disasters puts women and girls at high risk of multiple forms of GBV. Gender equality, at this stage, is not reflected in Vietnam's disaster preparedness and response plans, including arrangements for preventing and addressing GBV.

Sexual harassment and abuse: Sexual harassment and abuse is a special form of GBV. Sexual harassment was first officially mentioned in Viet Nam in the 2012 Labour Code. However, it was not possible to

enact the provisions of the Code (2012) in reality because (i) the lack of clear definition of sexual harassment; (ii) the lack of specific regulations on addressing sexual harassment; (iii) the lack of provisions for perpetrator punishment; and (iv) the absence of provisions to engage related entities (employers, labour unions, labour inspectors, etc.). These shortcomings were not addressed until the adoption of revised Labour Code in 2019. Nonetheless, sexual harassment, in general and/or beyond the workplace, has not been covered in legislation despite of its frequent occurrence in public places. The 2019 VAW study indicates that 11.4% surveyed women experienced one or more kinds of sexual harassment in their lifetime, with the most common type being unwanted personal electronic messages with sexual content (7.6%), followed by being touched sexually in a public place or on public transportation (4.9%). However, the figures appear to be much higher in some smaller-scale studies. A [study](#) by Action Aid in 2014 suggests a high prevalence, with 87% of the 2000 women surveyed in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City reporting that they had been sexually harassed in public places. Furthermore, the sexual harassment of students in schools has been increasingly documented in the last few years. A [study](#) by GBVnet in 2019 reveals that 31% of adolescent and young girls reported being sexually harassed in public places and on public transport, and 11% of high school students surveyed had been sexually abused and harassed. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a sensitive topic in Viet Nam and official statistical data is scarce. A [study](#) by MOLISA and ILO in 2013 notes that certain groups of women are particularly at risk, including those aged 18-30 years, women in junior positions or low status jobs. Women working in factories, offices, or services reported being subject to sexual harassment, both online and offline, perpetrated by employers and/or colleagues. Many were forced to change jobs frequently to avoid sexual harassment, some even suffered damage to their income and family relationships. Last but not least, child sexual abuse is increasingly reported in Viet Nam. Data from the Department of Criminal Police in the Ministry of Public Security over the period of 2015 - 2019 recorded 8,442 cases of child abuse with 8,709 victims, of which 19% of cases involved boys and 81% related to girls. Due to various reasons, including intimidation against the victims, the real figures can be much higher. The 2019 VAW [study](#) estimates that 4.4% of the women surveyed had experienced child sexual abuse. Women aged 30 to 34 years in 2019 experienced the highest rates of child sex abuse, at 6.5%. There is some proposal at the National

Assembly on the need to have a Law on sexual abuse against children. In the mean time, there is a discrepancy between existing Law on Children (2006) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in term of the definition of the age of a child. Vietnam accepted the 2019 UPR recommendations to align all Vietnam's national legislation with the Constitution and with the CRC.

Latest [survey](#) undertaken in 2018 finds more than 1.7 million children participating in economic activities across Viet Nam, among whom more than 1 million are engaged in child labour (of which 67.2% are boys and 32.8% are girls). To underscore the pressing need to step up efforts to eradicate child labour, the year 2021 has been designated by the UN General Assembly as the international Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. To meet this challenge, the Government has developed a roadmap towards SDG Target 8.7 in conjunction with the country's National Action Plan to prevent and reduce child labour for the period 2021-2025.

[Trafficking in women and children:](#)

Trafficking in women and children in Vietnam occurs both domestically and internationally. A report in 2018 by the Supreme People's Procuracy of Viet Nam suggested that human trafficking occurs in all 63 provinces of the country. Domestic trafficking, specifically in women and girls, is mainly from poor rural areas to urban areas. A study by ISDS looking at cross-border trafficking between Viet Nam and China found four main forms, namely: forced marriage, forced labour, sexual exploitation, and trafficking in children for adoption.

Information about the incidence and prevalence of trafficking in Viet Nam is difficult to obtain. This in part reflects the inherent challenges in measuring human trafficking and the reluctance of victims to come forward due to psychological trauma, social stigma or fear of consequences. A report by the Vietnamese National Committee on Crime Prevention and Control found that over 90% of victims were female and, of those, 80% were from ethnic minority groups. Most of the victims had been trafficked internationally (90% to China), and 80% reported being sexually exploited in marriage or in commercial sex industry. However, it is likely that this figure does not fully capture the magnitude of the problem.

A newly emerging issue that has attracted considerable law enforcement and media attention internationally is the trafficking of adults and children from Viet Nam across Europe and on to the UK. This

has included trafficking for forced labour to grow cannabis, or for exploitation within the service industry. In recent years, Vietnamese has been one of the three top nationalities with the highest number of potential trafficking victims to the UK. Combatting human trafficking/modern slavery of Vietnamese people has officially been prioritised by the UK Government.

The rise of international and domestic migration flows has been increasingly exploited by trafficking networks. However, information and data collection on this issue is limited. The scarcity of data on labour exploitation results in an extremely partial picture on trafficking victims which may also include men and boys. It appears that women and girls are more likely to be identified in the data as victims of human trafficking, especially regarding sexual exploitation.

For 3 consecutive years since 2017, the number of investigations; prosecutions; and convictions of trafficking cases have declined. This may be due to a combination of factors, including delays relating to complex nature of transnational cases. However, it may mean greater impunity if trafficking rates remain unchanged or have increased.

[Remaining challenges/barriers](#): The first and most important challenge is the existence of gender-biased norms and stereotypes. The 2019 VAW study points out that 51.8% of women interviewed agree with at least one reason or situation whereby violence by a husband/partner is acceptable. The 2020 research by Institute for Social Development Studies confirms that gender-biased norms, somehow, justify gender-based discrimination. Second, victims of domestic violence are reluctant to speak out due to social stigma and the fear of being harassed by family members, according to [Hagar International](#). Violence is often seen as the fault of the women and the internal affair of individuals' family. Furthermore, the use of civil procedures instead of criminal procedures for domestic violence cases as well as the "Happy Family" ideology which is promoted throughout the country strongly emphasise resolution and reconciliation within the family, which is often contrary to the idea of disclosing violence. And third, there have been gaps in legislation, law enforcement, and services. For example, the definitions of rape and attempted rape have been stipulated in the 2015 Penal Code. But a serious 'omission' in the Code that needs to be highlighted is that the Code does not explicitly prohibit and criminalise rape by a husband or intimate partner. This perpetuates the misperception that rape or attempted rape cannot

happen between a woman and her husband or intimate partner, binding women to the duty of satisfying the sexual desire of their husbands or intimate partners. Another example is a significant gap in providing specialised and effective services (such as forensic examination) to victims of different forms of GBV. There is also serious shortage of specific provisions on GBV prevention for women with disabilities, migrant women, and LGBTQI individuals.

2.2. *Promoting sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (SRHRR):*

Access to SRH information, education & health services: Viet Nam has made good progress in improving maternal health.

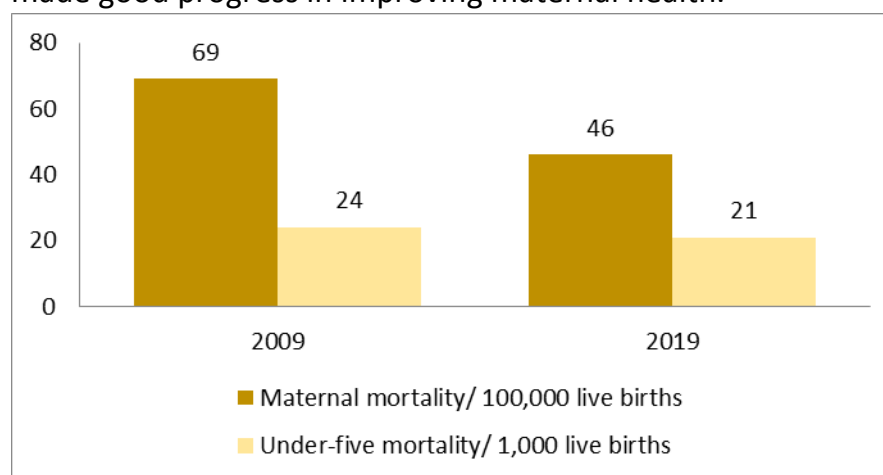


Figure 3. MMR and U-5 MR

Despite such achievements, disparities in maternal and child health are prevalent. In 2015, the CEDAW Committee recommended that Vietnam should enhance its efforts to “reduce maternal mortality in rural areas and among women from ethnic minorities by improving their access to basic prenatal and antenatal care, emergency obstetric care and the presence of skilled attendants at births”. Unfortunately, the 2019 data on MMR, disaggregated by administrative region, is not available. There is an issue in accessing SRH information and behaviour change education.

- Irrespective of the data source, Viet Nam’s adolescent fertility rate is high compared to other Asian countries, and a recent regional report by [UNICEF](#) noted that it is mostly occurring outside of marriage, driven by sexual activity combined with inadequate SRH knowledge, social norms regarding gender and sexuality and gender power dynamics including girls’ limited decision-making power.

- The abortion rate has been reducing over the last 10 years. But with 15.7 abortions per 100 live births, it is still very high by international standard. According to [UNFPA](#), the issue is adolescent abortion rate, which could possibly account for 20% of the total abortion in Vietnam.

One of the fundamental causes of the high adolescent fertility and abortion rates in Viet Nam is customary gender-biased norms. These norms dictate that “good girls” must appear sexually innocent and inexperienced, which is serious deterrent to young girls accessing and negotiating contraception with their intimate partners; meanwhile, boys are often excused from participating in contraceptive use. Moreover, official Government SRH policies do not adequately cover the adolescent population, and there is no specific adolescent SRH strategy or program, resulting in a gap in early education and adequate services for this age group.

Harmful practices of gender-biased sex selection and forced marriage:

Son preference and gender-biased sex selection (GBSS) are the most instinctive practices of gender discrimination and also a powerful manifestation of underlying forms of discrimination against women. GBSS leads to an imbalance in the sex ratio at birth (SRB). In Vietnam, the phenomenon started in 2005, after a long period having biologically natural ratio of 105 boys versus 100 girls. In 2020, the country ranks the third over 153 countries for a skewed SRB of 111.5, according to the 2020 [report](#) of the World Economic Forum. In the society of Vietnam, having a son confers benefits and protections for his mother, including being able to maintain her status in the family, to avoid domestic violence, and to secure support for her old age. The goal of having sons has become increasingly achievable due to the growing accessibility and affordability of assistive reproductive technology. The goal of the government to return to a biologically natural SRB by 2025 is likely not attainable.

Early marriage and forced marriage are banned by the Law of Marriage and Family and criminalised by the Penal Code. According to the 2019 Census, 0.4% of women aged 20-24 years in Viet Nam are married for the first time before their 15th birthday, and 9.1% before they turn 18 years old. Forced marriage happens mainly among certain ethnic minority groups; people with disabilities; and LGBTI persons. Both early marriage and forced marriage are found to be closely associated with the early school drop-out of girls, reduced of economic opportunities

and greater risk of maternal and child health complications - according to GBVnet' Independent [report](#) for 25 year-implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Viet Nam.

2.3. *Promoting economic & social rights and empowering girls & women:*

Economic empowerment

Labour market participation of women is remarkably high in Viet Nam, with 70.9% of working-age women in the labour force (2019) compared to the global level of 47.2% and the lower rate for Asia and the Pacific (43.9%). The participation gap of 9.5% between women and men can be explained by the uneven division of labour in family responsibilities in the society. It means that, despite their high labour market participation overall, women still face unequal opportunity to engage in economic activity compared to men.

According to Vietnam Labour Force [Survey 2019](#), the weighted gender pay gap, based on monthly wages, was 13.7% between men and women (not too high compared to the world's average pay gap of 20.5%).

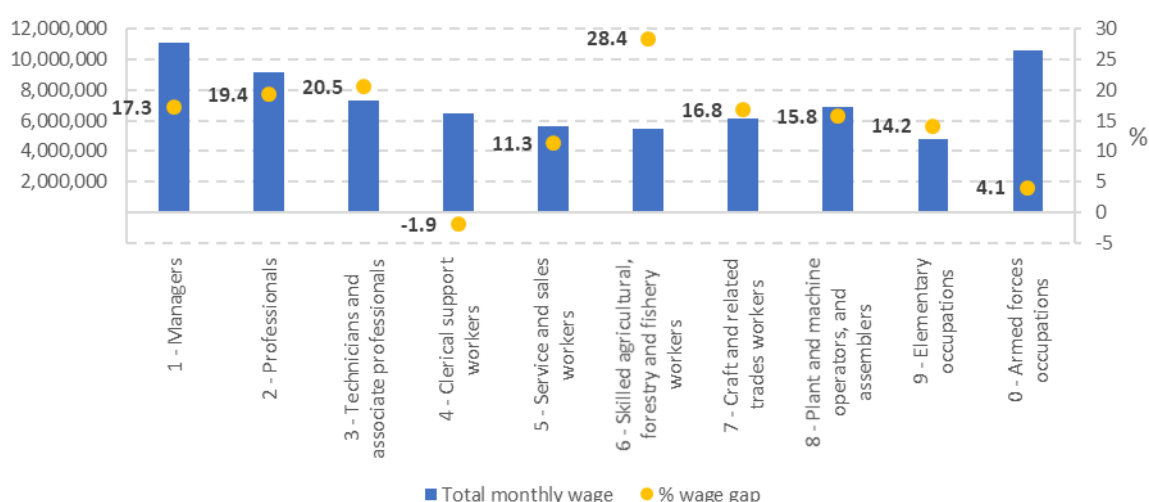


Figure 4. women-men wage gap

But, the chart above discloses the occupational areas in which women disadvantage well beyond the national figure. For example, female skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers experience the pay gap that is twice as much as the aggregate value (28.4% versus 13.7%).

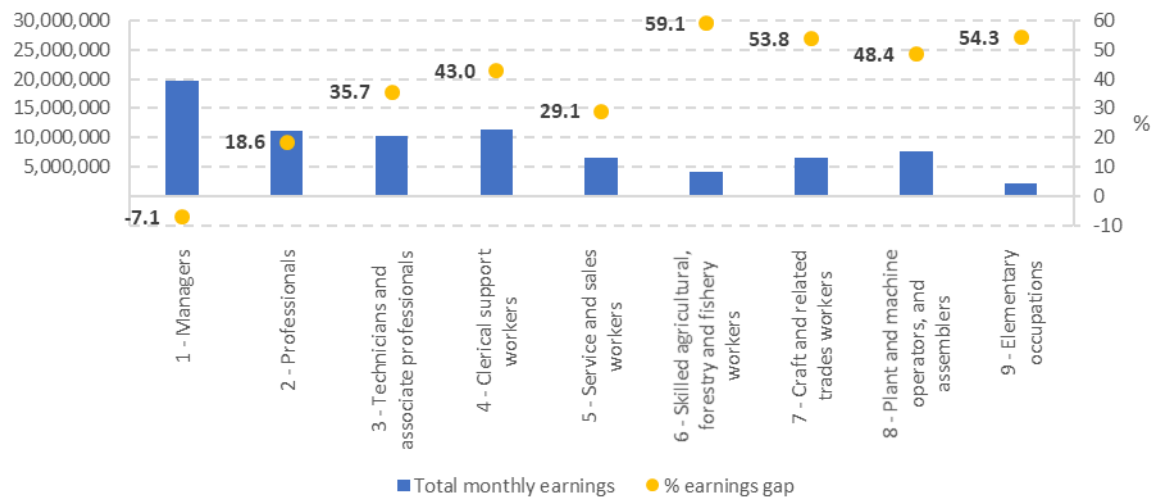


Figure 5. women-men earning gaps

When it comes to income gaps between self-employed women and men, the differences appear to be significant. As the self-employed accounts for the majority of Vietnam's labour force, the figures here can somehow illustrate the income gaps in the labour market. It is interesting from the figure above that, when women lead their own business as managers, their self-employed earnings can be considered as reflection of business profits, meaning that female managers have economic advantage vis-à-vis male ones.

The elimination of gender gaps in education has not translated into a comparable narrowing of pay gaps, income gaps or the gender gap in decision-making jobs. Women account for almost half (47.7%) of the labour force, but less than one-fourth (24.7%) of management positions. The gaps are not due to women having lower qualifications, or a lower level of engagement in the labour market or working significantly less hours. It is unrealistic for women to pursue stable jobs, career opportunities or skills upgrading, while they shoulder a disproportionate amount of household responsibilities. According to the mentioned Labour Force Survey 2019, women on average spend twice as many hours as men working to produce domestic services, including cleaning; washing; cooking; shopping; and caring (their children and the elderly). With the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced working time and job loss widen the existing gaps, especially in sectors with larger proportion of female workers.

Equality in education

The overall literacy rate for the people aged 15 and above is as high as 95.8%, with 97.0% for men and 94.6% for women. However, women in the poorest households have the lowest rate of at 84.2%. The lowest

literacy rate in Viet Nam is found among ethnic minority women (83.2 per cent), underlining chronic educational shortfalls for non-Kinh women. The literacy rate among women with disabilities is even lower, only 69.81% compared to men with disabilities (82.6%).

Although the ratio of women and men with a college/university degree is almost equal, women account for only a small fraction of those with postgraduate qualifications. Again, gender gap at postgraduate level is because women continue to face obstacles in the pursuit of advanced study due to marriage, childbirth and the fulfilment of family responsibilities.

Gender stereotypes and the streaming of girls and boys into 'suitable' fields of study is notable in Viet Nam, and hampers women and girls from pursuing subjects that could offer better opportunities for future employment. Enrolment data from the 2019-2020 school year shows that female students concentrate in the fields of Teacher Training and Education (80%), Business and Administration (69%) and Health (62%). Meanwhile, male students account for 80% in Mathematics and Statistics, Computing and Information Technology, Engineering Technology, Manufacturing and Processing, Architecture and Building, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Equality in health

According to a [study](#) by JICA and WB, aging is the prominent trend in Vietnam. In 10 years, Vietnam ageing index increased from 35.9% in 2009 to 48.8% in 2019. Predictably, the country will become an 'aged' nation by 2035. This happens faster than in any other ASEAN countries. This trend will no doubt put further burden on the shoulder of women, who are supposed to bear unpaid family care responsibilities, because the elderly often have complex health conditions, including chronic non-communicable diseases.

Women with disabilities: The disability rate among women is higher than that of men, and the highest prevalence of disability is concentrated among women in rural areas. The proportion of women with a mobility-related disability, having access to supportive devices and to functional rehabilitation services, is lower than that of men. Findings from small-scale studies have shown that people with disabilities (PWDs) have limited knowledge about reproductive health, due to a lack of access to reliable data and the stigma against PWDs. In combination, this increases the potential for unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

2.4. Promoting equal participation and leadership:

For more than a decade now, Viet Nam has normative documents and policies to promote gender equality in political participation. For example, the Law on Gender Equality includes recognition of gender equality in the field of politics, at all administrative levels, and to specify the responsibilities of Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) in recommending female candidates for leadership and managerial positions of political system's agencies. The National Gender Equality Strategy sets targets for women's representation in Party's Committees at all levels (at least 25%), National Assembly and People's Councils (at least 35%), and that more than 95% of Ministries, Agencies, and People's Committees will have 'key female leaders' (i.e. Head or Deputy Head/Chair). The Law on Election of Deputies to the National Assembly and People's Councils introduces the quota that at least 35% of total official candidates for the National Assembly and People's Council should be women. Over the last 10 years, there has been a gradual rise in the percentage of women's political participation. However, the above-mentioned targets have not been met. At a closer look, female deputies concentrate mainly in non-essential Committees of the National Assembly (i.e. Ethnic Council or Culture Committee) not in the Committees, that are much more powerful (i.e. Security and Defence or Economic/Finance/Budget) where the majority of deputies are men. As the result, Vietnam never achieves the critical mass threshold necessary for women to have a visible or substantial impact on political decision making.

According to the recent [study](#) by ISDS, social norms pertaining to women's roles (at home) and men's role (outside in society) have been a significant barrier for women to pursue and attain leadership positions. Such gender-biased norms are deeply rooted and reflected at both individual and institutional levels. At the same time, there is a lack of governance mechanism(s) to enforce the implementation of legislations towards the targets/quotas. For example, the Law on Organisation of the National Assembly and the Law on Organisation of the Local Governments do not specify sufficient measures to ensure women's political participation in decision-making agencies.

2.5. Integrating the women, peace and security agenda:

Last year is the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). On such occasion and under Vietnam's chairmanship of the ASEAN, the ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Strengthening Women's role for Sustainable Peace and Security took place in Hanoi, where Foreign Affairs Ministers underscored the importance of effective implementation of UNSC Resolutions 1325 (adopted in 2000) and 1889 (adopted in 2009), which constitute the fundamental basis for global efforts in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The Ministers committed to continue support for the WPS agenda to be prioritized in ASEAN's cooperation policies and programmes. The Ministers encouraged enhanced role of women in peace processes and welcomed the recognised prominent role and contribution of ASEAN women in UN peacekeeping operations. As women face higher risk and high exposure to the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19, the Ministers encouraged cooperation to facilitate women's economic empowerment which is crucial in the recovery process. Though WPS agenda is no longer a new concept in Vietnam and WPS is even a priority of the country as non-permanent member in the UNSC (2020-2021), implementation as such seems to be less prominent so far. Vietnam appears to be descreet in the UNSC's Informal Expert Group (IEG) on WPS, which is co-chaired by Ireland and Mexico. One issue, that attract public attention in Vietnam now, is GBV in emergencies (such as natural disasters or COVID-19 pandemic) and the need to address increased violence threats in such situations. This is particularly serious in the lock-down period as the victims of domestic violence may be trapped in the same places with their perpetrators. On the 14th of April, the UNSC held an Open Debate on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and called for sanctions against perpetrators; tackling impunity; and ensuring UN missions monitor and document CRSV. Another issue, that also links to emergencies, is the special needs and voice of women and girls to be included in post-pandemic recovery process. Last but not least is women's participation in security forces. While Vietnam makes good progress in sending women soldiers to serve in UN Peace-Keeping Force, the country puts some thresholds for the recruitment of female students in public security academies (i.e. 10% of female students accepted for police faculty and 15% for technical faculty).

2.6. *Climate change, Environment and Digitalization:*

As a result of climate change (CC), Viet Nam is a disaster prone country with 4-6 typhoons and numerous storms striking the country each year. These climate events are accompanied by strong winds, tidal waves, storm surges and incessant rainfall, with the potential to cause catastrophic damage in the country. According to the Viet Nam Household Living Standards [Survey](#), 41% of women surveyed reported working in agriculture, forestry and fishery compared to 37% of men. Due to their predominance in the sector, women assume more workload in agricultural production as the sector becomes more vulnerable to disaster risks and impacts. This is a significant add-up to existing women's unpaid household responsibilities. Women, especially those from poor and ethnic minority households, have fewer savings and other resources to cope with disaster-related losses and they have less access to land and assets needed to secure financing to do so. Due to their lack of access to technical training, women have limited capacity and opportunity for climate-resilient and adaptation options. Women's limited access to land and capital also limit their options to invest in more climate-resilient livelihood options by diversifying their production or supplementing their income with small-scale processing or off-farm jobs. Last but not least, the women's limited political participation in decision making bodies at provincial and lower levels also hinders their voice of priorities and involvement in important issues, such as disaster preparedness and water resource management. In 2013, Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) became a member of the Central Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control. However, VWU [representatives](#) were invited to the Committee in only 29% of provinces, 44% of districts and 51% of communes.

Vietnam was already committed to a digital transformation, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. It launched in December 2019 the National Public Services [Portal](#), an e-platform that connects the government, citizens, and businesses and providing information on public services and administrative procedures. At that time, it vowed to become the leading digital economy in ASEAN by 2030, with digital economic activities set to account for 20% and 30% of its GDP in 2025 and 2030 respectively. The pandemic only accelerated the trend. In June 2020, the Prime Minister approved the National Digital Transformation [Roadmap](#) 2025 (with a vision toward 2030), which sets additional targets and guidelines to help Vietnam reaching its digital

transformation goals with a focus on three pillars: E-government, e-economy and e-society. In such context, [projection](#) by McKinsey indicates that digital technologies will create a revenue pool of US\$100 billion by 2025, generated by the formation of ecosystems in Vietnam.

- Yet, digital divide can hinder men's and women's ability to benefit equally from the opportunities of the digital age. Women living in disadvantaged areas are facing the mixed challenge of digital and gender discrimination.
- In the more wealth-off areas, digital is also transforming the way people work as workplaces increasingly automate tasks and adopt new technologies. This is especially true in service-heavy industries that account for a significant share of women's employment.

If Vietnam wants to reach its goal of building a digital economy with the above-mentioned targets, it will require the right supporting enablers to help women benefit from the skill transition. To facilitate the workforce transition for women in Vietnam, existing barriers across three major areas must be eliminated: (a) barriers to employment or upskilling opportunities; (b) gender gap in financial inclusion; (c) barriers to women's participation and engagement in STEM fields. Across all these areas, women must have the skills necessary to participate in Vietnam's digital transformation as consumers, workers, and business owners.

3. Mapping of support

For the last 20 years, the EU has not financed any bilateral project with gender equality being the principal objective. Gender equality has been integrated in EU' bilateral interventions, for example in the area of health or energy. The most visible bilateral donor in this field is Australian government. Australia has been supporting gender-related studies; law-formulatin process; and direct support at provincial level, for example: GREAT project of 33.7 million AUD in support of agriculture and tourism in Lao Cai & Son La (2018-2021). Australian bilateral support comes under a 5-year gender equality Strategy that focuses on women' decision making, economic empowerment and combating GBV.

At regional level, the EU has been financing Safe & Fair project (implemented by ILO) and We Empower Asia project (implemented by UNWomen). The first project aims to build the capacity of partner countries, including Vietnam, on safer migration for work purpose (on contractual basis). The second project

aims to promote the implementation of women economic empowerment principles in the world of work. Beside these 2 on-going projects, the EU also financed another (implemented by UNFPA) which aimed to fight gender-biased sex selection.

At country level, the EU Delegation and EUMS Embassies are active members of the Informal group of Ambassadors and Heads of Missions on gender equality. The group is co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and an Ambassador on rotating basis, meeting 3-4 times a year to discuss how to advocate at political level for greater and better mainstreaming of gender equality and non-discriminatory principles in Vietnam's legislations.

Engagement with CSOs: The EU has been supporting a number of CSO projects that aim to promote gender equality in the areas of education, communication and GBV. Other international donors, such as Irish government or Canadian government, also have their own grant programmes for local initiatives that focus on growth that works for everyone, including women's economic rights, decent jobs and entrepreneurship, investing in the poorest and most vulnerable and safeguarding economic gains, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

4. Entry points and opportunities

EU's bilateral cooperation with Vietnam 2021-2027 focuses on 3 priority areas of (i) Climate-responsive digital circular economy; (ii) Responsible entrepreneurship and decent employment; (iii) Strengthening governance, rule of law and institutional reform.

- Priority area 1 will contain EU action on the sectors of climate resilience; low-carbon development; environmental monitoring and protection; and sustainable waste management.
- Priority area 2 will consist of EU action on the sectors of inclusive and responsible business; decent work; vocational training and skills development.
- Priority area 3 will support EU action on the sectors of effective governance; rule of law and human rights.

Based on the analysis under section 2, the following section will identify the needs for EU Delegation and EUMS Embassies to consider, the opportunities and entry points in each area of the GAP III. Discussion on this will take into account also the priority areas and sectors of the MIP. Further details on the link between the proposed actions will be narrated in the CLIP.

4.1. **Fighting GBV:** To fight GBV, multi-faceted approach to (i) strengthen governance and (ii) promote rule of law will be necessary. Intervention should take into account the support to decent work and to ensure the coverage of public, private, online and offline settings. Vietnam has adopted its cyber security law. It is important to note that support to ensure a safe and secure cyber space, where data are systematically protected in line with EU standards, such as GDPR, will contribute to reducing online GBV, such as virtual sexual harassment. GBV is one of the key priorities of the Informal Group of Ambassadors/HoMs for 2021 and beyond. The group plans to advocate for necessary changes in the Domestic Violence Law (to be reviewed by the National Assembly in 2023) and the Gender Equality Law (to be presented to the National Assembly in 2024). The group also stresses on the need to address the root causes of GBV, such as gender-biased stereotypes and traditional/patriarchal norms that are deeply anchored in the society. At grassroots level, [GBVnet](#) is the active CSO network, working on GBV in Vietnam, and its members would need intensified capacity to carry out education and communication activities. This can be a good basis for the establishment of social accountability mechanism, supportive for monitoring and reporting on GBV. Recent development in this dimension includes the establishment of a GBViE working group, with technical support of the UNFPA, to address the sexual and gender-based violence in emergency context, in line with the UNSC's call for actions against CRSV. Lessons learnt from Da Nang province suggest that the primary target of communication activities should be boys and men. Between policy level and grassroots level, Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) is one of the most powerful socio-political organizations in Vietnam that could become a "game-changer" in the fight against GBV. With its nation-wide system and mandate, VWU is the optimal entry point to eliminate the social stigma against GBV victims; to disclose the violence; to reconcile the institutional discrepancies between MOLISA and MOCST; and to coordinate multi-sectoral support for improved legislation, enforcement and services (i.e. the Peace Shelter (for GBV victims) with financial support from Spanish Embassy and technical support from UNWomen). The EUD to Vietnam collaborates with MOLISA to explore opportunity for further cooperation on anti Human Trafficking and the results from such cooperation will inform policy/political dialogue on GBV. *To highlight EU leadership at multilateral level, the EU will engage with UN system, including but not limited to UNWomen, and [EU-based NGOs](#) (bearing in*

mind that the EC co-leads the Generation Equality Action Coalition on countering GBV). The EU will also ensure the linkages at multi-country level by considering the ASEAN Regional [Plan of Actions](#) on Violence against Women (2016-2025).

- 4.2. **Promoting SRHRR:** To promote SRHRR as one of the important human rights, there will be a need to help those who are currently left behind, in a non-discriminatory manner. According to analysis, the most pressing challenges, concerning SRHRR, seem to surround adolescents and youth; LGBTQI and people with disabilities. Therefore, it is essential to apply the human-centric approach; targeting these groups of people and addressing their unmet needs of information and services. The obvious opportunity is the entry-into-force of National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030, which sets clear targets for minimizing pregnancy and abortion among adolescents and integrating gender equality into the curriculum of the national education system and pedagogical universities. Lessons learnt from [VVOB project](#) indicate that school-based education on gender equality should target teachers, students and parents to attain positive long-lasting changes. Lessons learnt from [MSV project](#) indicate that CSOs could build partnership with private sectors to make SRHRR information and services accessible to workers of industrialized zones. At policy level, the EU could recycle its cooperation with MOH and dialogue within the framework of the Health Partnership Group (HPG). When it comes to specific topics, such as GBSS and SRB; early and forced marriage; or decision 588/QD-TTg on province-based fertility rate, it will be important for the Informal Group of Ambassadors and HoDs to step in. At grassroots level, the Reproductive Health Affinity Group (another active CSOs network) could be empowered to collect data and evidence for policy advocacy and knowledge sharing. In between the policy and grassroots levels, the General office of Population and Family Planning (GOPFP) could be a good entry point, as GOPFP is in-charge of the National Strategy for Population and Development 2021-2030 and the EU used to assist such Agency in piloting the integration of gender-equality content in the high-school' extra-curriculum activities. *Another option could be the Youth Union, the mass organization at the same level as the VWU. UN-related agencies (i.e. UNFPA) will be engaged as well.*

- 4.3. **Promoting economic & social rights and empowering girls & women**
Economic empowerment:

Equality in Vietnam labour market can only be built through a shift in approach to ensure that opportunities work equally for all workers,

irrespective of their gender. In the context of the MIP, there will be a need to diminish the existing barriers between women and new opportunities offered by circular economy and digital transformation. EVFTA places its emphasis on labour and environment provisions to ensure that free trade contributes to sustainable development. Vietnam ratified ILO Convention 100, on Equal Remuneration, and most recently Convention 98, on Collective Bargaining. Opportunity at policy level is EU's proceeding to (a) advocate for the ratification of Convention 87 on freedom of association and Convention 105 on forced labour and (b) monitor the implementation of ILO core Conventions (including of course the roll out of equal remuneration in practice). At the MIP level, responsible entrepreneurship and decent employment are identified as priority area 2. Decent employment and inclusive entrepreneurship are also the focal areas of Team Europe Initiative 2. For support under the MIP to be conducive to women's economic empowerment, the focus should be:

- (a) having dialogue about gender equality and women empowerment within the framework of TSD chapter of the EVFTA
- (b) narrowing the pay gaps between women & men (the sectors, where pay gaps are 2 times higher than national aggregated gaps, include: agriculture, forestry and fishery - which are also the focal sectors that of the MIP)
- (c) promoting inclusive entrepreneurship (on-going "women start-up and entrepreneurship programme" of the VWU (2017-2025) could be a good entry point to consider as it could possibly contribute to productive employment, labour rights enforcement and gender equality at work).

Lessons learnt from EU cooperation with Women's World Banking on "[Investing with Gender Lens](#)" and EU-funded regional project "[We Empower Asia](#)" will be taken into account for the identification of new interventions. INTPA E2 could provide technical assistance (30 days field mission), under the Trade and Private Sector Development/Engagement (TPSD) Facility, for the design of those interventions. At grassroots level, CSOs can play an important role in changing the social norms, which hinder women's opportunities, and promoting men's role in household responsibilities.

Access to Education and Health:

Without the recognition and redistribution of unpaid family care and domestic tasks, women's barriers to learning; income opportunities

and civic participation will deteriorate. Furthermore, social protection and healthcare systems should be able to provide affordable services and alternatives to home-based care for people with disabilities and the elderly. Gender-biased stereotypes in education will be addressed to offer equal learning opportunities, regardless the sex of the students. The EU will pursue the same approach as per the entry point for 4.2.

4.4. ***Equal participation and leadership:***

To promote democratic governance and rule of law, there will be a need to ensure that everyone, especially women and girls, participate equally in public and private sphere, including political field and in decision making position. In Vietnam, normally Laws are subject to review and revision every 10 years. It means that the National Assembly could look at the Law on Election of Deputies to the National Assembly and People's Councils, the Law on Organisation of the National Assembly and the Law on Organisation of the Local Governments in 2025. At policy level, the EU will propose Informal group of Ambassadors/HoDs to select “women’s political participation” as one of the group’s policy advocacy priorities as from 2023, paving the way for the revision of the above-mentioned Laws to establish accountable mechanisms that ensure greater participation of women in political system. At the MIP level, effective governance is identified as specific objective 3.1 under priority area 3. For support under the MIP to be conducive to women’s political participation, the focus should be on changing the gender-biased barriers that prevent women’s political participation for meaningful and measurable decision making. On-going cooperation programme between VWU and Social Affairs Committee of the National Assembly, with technical assistance by UNDP, on women leadership coaching could be a good entry point. EU’s MIP support can be included under 4.3, together with economic empowerment.

4.5. ***Integrating WPS agenda:***

To step up WPS integration in Vietnam, there may be a need to formulate a WPS National Action Plan (NAP) to facilitate a more systematic approach to WPS. There are 92 UN member countries that have one and the NAP will be relevant for Vietnam, as the country has announced its bid to join the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the body’s 2023-2025 term. The issue of “GBV in emergencies” will be integrated as part of EU’s support to climate resilience / disaster preparedness and response under priority area 1 of the MIP or under

4.1 as part of EU's support to end all types of GBV. Prevention actions will adopt risk-, needs- and rights-based approach.

For the issue of women's opportunities in military and security forces, the EU will utilize the existing mechanism of regular dialogue and advocacy with the government, such as the PCA Joint Committee, or advocate via the Informal group of Ambassadors/HoDs.

4.6. ***Climate resilience and Digital transformation:***

Green Deal and Digital Transformation are the 2 major policies of the EU, including for EU external relations. It is translated in to priority area 1 of the MIP on climate-responsive digital circular economy. There is a need to help women and girls address the challenges and harness the opportunities offered by green transition and digital transformation in Vietnam.

Climate resilience is a specific objective under the MIP priority area 1. In fact, it relates also to other objectives on environmental protection and sustainable waste management. The overall opportunity is the clear policy of the EU on Green Deal, which is translated into Team Europe Initiative on climate-resilient, low-carbon circular economy. In addition to the [Sendai Framework](#) and Beijing Platform, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 highlights the need to protect the human rights of women and other vulnerable groups and strengthen institutional and human capacity to implement climate change adaptation and mitigation, especially in vulnerable communities.

At policy level, the EU will take the advantage of relevant mechanisms, such as meetings on the EVFTA or the PCA or forums on energy transition; circular economy; or SCP, to promote women's empowerment and participation in climate change adaptation and mitigation. At the MIP level, EU's interventions on women's economic empowerment and political participation will address the challenges and harness opportunities of green transition in targeted sectors, such as agriculture. Possible entry points include individual interventions under priority area 1 and multi-objective intervention with the Vietnam Women's Union being in the driver seat (see 4.1, 4.3, 4.4).

Digital transformation can accelerate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in areas such as vocational education, employment, entrepreneurship and combating GBV. The overall opportunity is the clear policy of the EU on Digitalization that guides the integration of digital transformation aspect in TEI 1&2. At policy

level, the EU will take the advantage of relevant mechanisms, such as meetings on the EVFTA or the PCA or forums on decent work; vocational training and skills development, to promote women's participation in Vietnam's digital transformation as consumers, workers, and business owners. At the MIP level, EU's interventions on decent work; vocational training and skills development will address the digital divide that hinder women's benefits from digital transformation. Possible entry points include individual interventions under priority area 3 and multi-objective intervention with the Vietnam Women's Union being in the driver seat (see 4.1, 4.3, 4.4).

Another issue, in addition to the 6 thematic areas of GAP III, concerns the collection and use of **gender disaggregated data**, which falls under the responsibility of the General Statistics Office (GSO) of Ministry of Planning & Investment (MPI). GSO has the full understanding that improved quality of statistics and disaggregated data (by age, sex, rural/urban, province/city and other characteristics) will lead to more effective decision-making and better development policies. In 2019, the government approved the list of 158 indicators to measure SDGs in Vietnam. But due to technical and financial short-comings, not all of the indicators are disaggregated by sex. Vietnam also has a national set of gender development indicators since 2011. But about 2 third of those are not disaggregated by sex. The most recent support in this area is financed by Australian government, with focus on the indicator that measures the unpaid time used by men and women (i.e. for household and caring work). The biggest concern of GSO, in terms of sex-disaggregated data, is the enforcement of data collection at provincial and lower levels. This would require long-time and significant investment in reforming statistics-related legislation, building the capacity and resourcing for actual enforcement.

Last but not least, Vietnam is lagging behind in its journey to **gender-responsive budgeting** (GRB). At policy level, the last PFM strategy (2011-2020) did not include GRB. The current PFM strategy (2021-2030) is under development and a draft has not been released yet. However, it is foreseen that GRB is unlikely to be covered at the strategy level. GRB was covered in State budget law 2015 (being effective since 2018), the implementation has been uneven. Guidelines are developed for (i) HCM city's GRB implementation and monitoring; and (ii) GRB implementation in transportation sector. Vietnam's PFM system is at the stage where the fiscal discipline still need to be strengthened. Government efforts (with donors' support) over the past few years have been focusing on improving the credibility and predictability of budget planning and implementation. Since the legal framework provide good basis for GRB and mainstreaming of gender in government policies, it

make sense to support GRB in the next period. However it should be aligned with government priorities and action plan to have its strong buy-in.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusions

This update is guided by the EU GAP III, the SWD and the draft MIP 2021-2027. It utilizes secondary data of the draft Country Gender Profile 2021, supported by Australian Embassy and UNWomen, and a number of other available reviews or studies. The update takes into account parallel processes, concerning the formulation of CSOs and Human rights roadmaps. The consultation involves EUMS Embassies, UN, CSOs, mass organizations and relevant unit of INTPA, i.e. G1 and E2. The update will inform the formulation of the EU GAP III Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP), which is the intermediary document between the Country Gender Profile Update and the MIP, that defines what and how the EU will assist in gender equality and women's empowerment.

2. Recommendations

The update is not a “cast in stone” document. It will be reviewed and updated over time to adjust, adapt and reflect (new developments). For the time being, this update should be treated as an internal document – for circulation among EUMS Embassies and to EU HQ only.

ANNEXES

1. List of CEDAW Committee's concerns
2. List of interviews
3. Workshop participants

4. Source of documents

5. Survey questionnaires