

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

**NATIONAL REVIEW REPORT
ON 25-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM
FOR ACTION**

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SECTION 1

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: achievements and challenges of implementation during 2014-2019 and next priorities

The current population of Viet Nam is 96.2 million, of which men account for 49.8 per cent and women 50.2 per cent.¹ The average life expectancy is 73.5 years, 70.9 for men and 76.2 for women.²

1.1. Notable achievements

1.1.1. Improved legal and institutional framework to promote gender equality and women's empowerment

Viet Nam has been striving to improve the legal framework on gender equality, notably by strengthening laws to ensure the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination, as well as the prevention of and response to violence against women. Specifically, laws now ensure equal participation of men and women in state management and social activities (2014 Law on Organization of the National Assembly). The law also ensures equal benefits and interests to men and women when they enter the labour market (2014 Law on Social Insurance, 2015 Law on Occupational Safety and Health, draft revised Labour Code). There are provisions to ensure that boys and girls have access to the same number of years of schooling and enjoy equally favourable conditions for the completion of general education as well as selection for fields of study and training (2014 Law on Vocational Education). Legislation now ensures equal opportunities for men and women in doing business and prioritizes support for small and medium-sized enterprises owned by women, as well as for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employing more women workers (2017 Law on Support to SMEs).

The Law on Promulgation of Legal Normative Documents, adopted in 2015, requires drafting agencies of specialized codes and laws to comply with the regulations on mainstreaming gender equality in the formulation of legal normative documents.³ This requirement has widened the scope of gender mainstreaming in Government Decrees and Prime Minister's Decisions. Of the 111 legal documents passed since 2015, 40 documents included gender mainstreaming as regulated.⁴ Ministries and ministry-level agencies have coordinated with the National Assembly Committee for Social Affairs to organize consultation forums, conferences and workshops with experts experienced in gender and specialized working areas in order to assess the impact of policies from a gender perspective and promote the integration of gender equality issues in formulating, proposing and promulgating documents.

The 2015 revised Law on State Budget prioritizes budget allocations for gender

¹ Preliminary results of the 2019 Census on Population and Housing.

² Report on implementation of national targets on gender equality in 2018, the Government of Viet Nam.

³ Article 5 of the Law on Promulgation of Legal Normative Documents.

⁴ The 2017 Report of the Ministry of Justice.

equality targets and identifies gender equality as one of the bases for the annual state budget estimate. The 2015 Law on Election of Deputies to the National Assembly and People's Councils first introduced regulations to ensure the minimum percentage of women in the official candidates list is 35 per cent.

The government, ministries, ministry-level agencies and localities have been paying due attention to the mainstreaming of gender equality issues in the formulation and enforcement of laws and policies with remarkable results. This is especially the case regarding the socio-economic plans at the different levels of sectors, regions and localities. The Prime Minister enacts a directive on the formulation of socio-economic development plans and state budget estimates annually. The Ministry of Planning and Investment then issues a guiding framework for the formulation of socio-economic development plans for ministries, sectors and localities, in which the contents related to the promotion of gender equality is always mentioned. (See section 2 of this report).

During this period, Viet Nam has promulgated and implemented a vast array of policies, programmes, and schemes to promote gender equality in all spheres of social life. These include the National Action Programme on Gender Equality for 2016-2020; the Project "Controlling the Imbalance of Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) for 2016-2025"; the Scheme to implement gender equality measures for female staff, civil servants and public employees for 2016-2020; the Scheme on Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response for 2016-2020 with a Vision to 2030; and the Scheme to Support Gender Equality Activities in Ethnic Minority Areas for 2018-2025. The Prime Minister also issued a Decision on amendments and supplements to the National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2011-2020 that add specific measures to effectively implement policies on gender equality and advancement of women⁵.

National authorities have placed great importance on instruction and guidance regarding the implementation of international commitments related to gender equality. The Prime Minister approved the National Action Plan for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is divided into two implementation phases: 2017-2020 and 2020-2030.⁶ The Plan emphasizes equal development opportunities for every individual and community, and commits to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls with specific targets, as required by the United Nations and in line with the national context. In 2017, the Prime Minister approved the Plan for the implementation of the General Recommendations from the Committee of the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for 2017-2020. The approval clearly assigned ministries, sectors and localities to implement the CEDAW Committee's recommendations in alignment with required content and a specific timeframe and roadmap.

The aforementioned efforts are assessed to be among the outstanding successes. They have created reasonably solid legal corridors for agencies, units and organizations to issue and implement specific measures with the aim of strengthening the roles and participation of both men and women in the country's development. This also further demonstrates the extent of Viet Nam's point of views and determination in promoting gender equality and the

⁵ Decision No. 800/QĐ-TTg was approved by the Government Prime Minister on 2 July 2018.

⁶ Decision No. 622/QĐ-TTg was approved by the Government Prime Minister on 10 May 2017.

empowerment of women.

1.1.2 Increased women's participation in the sphere of politics

Promoting the participation of women in leadership and managerial positions while ensuring the principle of gender equality in the political sphere at all levels remains central to both the content of legal documents and policies and to the directions given to central and local leaders regarding implementation.

For the first time, Viet Nam has a Chairwoman of the National Assembly. The proportion of women participating in the Politburo increased from 12 per cent in 2012 to more than 17 per cent in 2016. Women make up 10 per cent of the Party Central Executive Committee Tenure XII, with 20 out of 200 members, up by one per cent from Tenure XI. As of June 2019, Viet Nam has had a woman Vice President and one female minister out of 22. There are key female leaders in 14 out of 30 ministry-level agencies and other government agencies. The proportion of National Assembly female deputies is 27.06 per cent during the 2016-2021 tenure, an increase of 2.54 per cent compared with the 2011-2016 tenure, and higher than both the global and Asian averages (23.4 and 18.6 per cent, respectively). Viet Nam is in the list of countries with high rate of National Assembly female deputies in the region and in the world (See section 2 for details).

1.1.3 Ensuring gender equality in the economy, labour and employment

Viet Nam recognizes that women's participation in labour and employment, and other economic activities will enhance not only their status and boost their contribution to the economy and but also add social value to the country overall. Therefore, when issuing and implementing relevant legal documents and policies, equal opportunities must be ensured for both men and women in the establishment of businesses; the performance of business and production activities; business management; access to information, capital, markets and labour resources; the reduction of gender gaps in labour and employment; and the guarantee of equal rights for women workers in accessing insurance and health care... (See section 2.1 on inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work for details).

The proportion of women in the labour market in Viet Nam is higher than the global average. In 2017, the labour force participation rate of Vietnamese women was 71.2 per cent,⁷ compared with 61.1 per cent for East Asia and the Pacific region, and 49.6 per cent globally.⁸ The proportion of women starting new jobs has been 48 per cent annually or higher. Women run a quarter of the small and medium enterprises, which employ more than one million workers. In 2018, the rate of business owners who are women was 26.54 per cent nationwide, of which 31.6 per cent were in urban areas and 18.7 per cent in rural areas.⁹

1.1.4 Pilot development and replication of diversified models regarding the provision of support services for gender equality and for the prevention and control of gender-based violence

The establishment and maintenance of service models that support gender equality have made support services more and more accessible. A series of models has been piloted at the local level. These include social work centres providing support services on gender

⁷ ILSSA, 2017.

⁸ World Bank, 2017.

⁹ Survey on Labour and Employment, 2018.

equality; facilities providing support to victims of gender-based violence; women's clubs for those at risk of being forced to marry foreigners; safe and friendly cities for women and girls; and women's shelters in the community. Viet Nam is also one of ten countries piloting the UN global programme for an Essential Services Package (ESP) for women and girls subject to violence for 2018-2019.

The implementation of these models has helped to raise awareness of gender equality and the importance of the prevention of and response to gender-based violence. Notable results include the improved design and implementation of support services in law enforcement, justice, health care and social protection for women and girl survivors of violence, which testify to the models' effectiveness. The localities have become more gender responsive in formulating and implementing policies and laws and have committed to allocating budgets for such implementation.

Viet Nam's aforementioned efforts and achievements in gender equality have been recognized by the international community. The World Economic Forum ranked Viet Nam 6th out of 57 countries regarding the rate of women entrepreneurs; 56th out of 156 in implementation of the SDGs, more specifically 26th out of 156 in realization of SGD 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment; and 77th out of 149 in relation to the gender gap index.¹⁰

1.2. Limitations and challenges

Law and policy enforcement have faced numerous difficulties: a number of laws and sub-law documents still do not fully incorporate thorough gender mainstreaming or are gender neutral; knowledge and understanding of gender equality demonstrated by policymakers are still limited; human, technical and budget resources for gender equality work are insufficient.

Gender stereotypes around women's roles and capacities for work, career development and leadership are constant barriers for women to find good jobs and earn higher incomes. The rapid changes in the workplace due to information technology and artificial intelligence, sometimes dubbed the Industrial Revolution 4.0, are also raising issues around professional and technical qualifications. Women face increased risks of job loss or degradation and the consequent impacts on their family life, their career development opportunities and on gender inequality in society. Viet Nam's female workforce remains largely concentrated in the informal sector, where access to comprehensive social protection is limited, including training opportunities, financial resources, income levels and social security programmes. The financial obstacles include a lack of flexible and convenient mechanisms to access bank loans or ensure equitable income. These obstacles all contribute to a myriad of difficulties that prevent women's equal access to economic development opportunities.

Widespread gender bias, patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes still often rigidly determine the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society. There is a persistent preference for sons over daughters in society. Child marriages and other

¹⁰ 2018 Global Gender Gap Report by WEF.

harmful discrimination against women and girls still occur in some areas where ethnic minorities reside. Violence against women and girls is committed in various forms, such as dating violence, sexual harassment in public places and in the workplace, violence in schools, as well as violence against older women. Trafficking in women and children inside the country and across the border for sex and labour exploitation also persists.

Compiling information and statistics for reporting is still very difficult due to the lack of a sex-disaggregated database and because gender is still not fully mainstreamed into every sector. Systematic collection of comprehensive data on violence against women at the national and local levels is also still limited, which is compounded by the lack of support and recovery services for survivors of violence.

1.3. National priorities on implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

1.3.1. Completion of laws and policies

Continue to institutionalize views and policies of the Party into policies and laws for women and substantive gender equality, for the sake of comprehensive human and sustainable development.

Review the implementation of the Gender Equality Law and propose a roadmap for its revision, formulate the National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2021-2030; and the Action Plan and National Project on the Promotion of Gender Equality for 2021-2025.

Incorporate gender equality targets and tasks into the formulation and implementation of socio-economic development plans of all levels and sectors. Conduct monitoring and evaluation during implementation and resource allocation to ensure the successful implementation of gender equality targets under international agreements such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, CEDAW, and the SDGs.

1.3.2. Intensifying the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment activities

Promote education, communication and dissemination of State guidelines, policies and laws on gender equality. Enhance knowledge and understanding of gender and gender equality laws, for application by law enforcement, justice officers and advisors on gender equality at all levels.

Improve accountability of all levels and sectors in state management on gender equality. Intensify intersectoral coordination mechanisms that address gender issues. Increase number of officers working at all levels on gender equality and the advancement of women.

Promote the inspection, examination and supervision of the implementation of policies and laws on gender equality. Address violations of gender inequality legislation and cases of gender-based violence.

Propose further measures to promote gender equality in the spheres of politics, the economy, society and the family. Establish and develop service models to support the implementation of gender equality, and to minimize gender-based violence against both men and women.

1.3.3. Strictly implement the regulations on mainstreaming of gender equality issues

Strictly implement the regulations on mainstreaming of gender equality issues in formulation and implementation of legal normative documents, strategies, plans and working programmes of ministries, *sectors, localities and units*.

1.3.4. Carry out gender statistical work effectively

Perform gender statistical work as stipulated, conduct scientific research, including forecasts regarding gender equality in all spheres, to supplement the argumentative or theoretical basis on gender equality and provide timely data to support the formulation and implementation of policies and laws on gender equality.

Reinforce international cooperation to learn and share experiences about implementing gender equality legislation. Mobilize resources to implement gender equality policies and legislation.

SECTION 2

Results from the implementation of the critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Viet Nam 2014-2019

** This section provides an update on the progress on the implementation of the critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from 2014 to the submission of the 25-year review report.*

2.1 Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Laws, policies and implemented activities

Viet Nam has a strong track record of promoting gender equality and improving the role and position of women in the sphere of work and employment. During the period 2015-2019, Viet Nam has promulgated a great number of legal documents and executed a variety of policies and models aimed at securing the rights and interests of women workers, as well as decent work for society at large. These include: the SME Support Law (2017); several decrees detailing a number of articles of the Law on Social Insurance; the decree stipulating policies on job-creation support and the National Employment Fund; and the Scheme on Supporting Women in Starting a Business 2017-2025...

The SME Support Law (2017) stipulates support to SMEs with an emphasis on women-owned SMEs ¹¹ that are eligible, including those employing a significant proportion of female labourers, will be given priority to receive support in advance. Enterprises owned

¹¹ Article 3, the SME Support Law

by women will be exempted from training tuition fees.¹² These regulations are aimed at supporting women-owned businesses especially in rural, remote and hard-to-reach areas.

The maternity regime has been amended to increase the benefits to women and men from 1 January 2016, under the 2014 Law on Social Insurance and documents guiding its implementation. Men who are paying insurance premiums when their wives give birth are entitled to paternity leave of 5 days or more depending on the conditions of the birth (delivery type, number of babies). Working surrogate mothers are entitled to the benefits of the regime as they apply to antenatal care, miscarriage, abortion, stillbirth or pathological abortion, and giving birth, until the child is handed over to the mother who requested the surrogacy. Mothers requesting surrogacy are entitled to the maternity regime from the time of receiving the child until the child is 6 months old. When only a child's father is receiving social insurance, the father is entitled to a one-off lump sum that equates to two basic monthly salaries for each child born.

The National Employment Fund is still an important channel in creating jobs for workers, especially rural women workers. Its activities sending workers overseas provides workers in rural, remote and hard-to-reach areas with opportunities to receive vocational training and participate in the labour export market. In 2018, jobs were created for 147,631 workers through the National Employment Fund and 95,613 of those were women (65 per cent).

The Scheme on Supporting Women in Starting a Business for 2017-2025¹³, issued by the Prime Minister, includes a target for 2025 of 100,000 newly established women-owned enterprises receiving counselling and support for enterprise development. This support aims to raise women's awareness of the State's guidelines and policies on starting a business, and to galvanize the realization of business ideas, contributing to the implementation of overall national targets on enterprise development. Under the Scheme, the Vietnam Women's Union has organized a series of activities, including: training courses for women on business start-up; trade fairs for women to connect and exchange; promoting the trade and consumption of products from women-owned businesses; encouraging women to initiate business ideas, supporting the completion of business plans and connecting them with the resources to realize those ideas; and launching movements for the excellence of production and business. These initiatives all aim to strengthen women's passion and aspiration to start a business, to establish a farm, or invest in some means of production, thereby increasing their income and allowing them to work step by step towards self-sufficiency.

In 2015, the Ministry of Labour-Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA), the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched a Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and mobilize enterprises across Viet Nam to identify, prevent and handle sexual harassment in the workplace in both public and private sectors.

With the aim to constantly improve the lives and employment of women workers in industrial parks, myriad policies, programmes and projects have been executed, and businesses and stakeholders have been mobilized to participate. In 2015 the Prime Minister

¹² Decree 39/2008/ND-CP dated 11 March 2018 detailing some Articles in the SME Support Law.

¹³ Decision No. 939/QĐ-TTg dated 30 June 2017.

issued Directive 09/CT-TTg on accentuating the implementation of solutions to increase the availability of school and preschool classes in industrial parks. This is another illustration of the State's determination to resolve the pressing issues in industrial parks related to housing, day care and kindergartens. There has been some evolution in the implementation of the State policy of socialization on the resources for education, including non-public preschools, especially in cities, townships, densely populated areas, and industrial parks. The private classes taking care of children younger than 18 months are meeting some of the day care needs of parents working in industrial parks for relatively low fees. These classes offer flexible childcare times that are suitable for parents' working shifts or seasonal work, to allow for convenient pickup and transport arrangements. In 2018, lunch support policy is also available to preschool teachers (including principals and vice principals) working at private childcare settings and private preschools, which is similar to the lunch support given to public preschool teachers.¹⁴ The government also stipulates that employers shall install breast-milk extraction and storage rooms suitable for the given workplace conditions, for the needs of women workers and the employers' capacity, and that conform with the requirements for hygiene and privacy.¹⁵

In addition to the abovementioned policies, there is a wide range of models that provide support services for workers, and which are being implemented by organizations and agencies. These include the model titled *Club for women workers accommodated in lodging houses* in the residential clusters near industrial parks and export-processing zones, which is led by MoLISA, the VGCL and the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU), such as the club model named *When parents are away from home*, implemented by VWU.

Achievements

Currently in Viet Nam there are about 25,000 women-owned SMEs, which contribute to vocational trainings and job creation for millions of women labourers. In 2018, the rate of women among entrepreneurs across the country was 26.54 per cent, consisting of 31.6 per cent in urban areas and 18.7 per cent in rural areas.¹⁶ Viet Nam is the only country in Asia among the top 10 in the world in this index. It also ranked at number 33 in the index on women's opportunities and participation in the economy in 2017 and 2018, out of 144 and 149, respectively.¹⁷

The labour force participation rate of Vietnamese women workers is 71.2 per cent, compared with 61.1 percent across the East Asia and Pacific region, and 49.6 per cent worldwide. The rate of new job creation for women workers has consistently been more than 48 per cent for the last five years.

In recent years, much importance has been attached to vocational training and job creation for women workers, especially in rural areas. In those areas, more than 80 per cent of women workers who received training subsequently found jobs and earned stable incomes.

From 2016 to the present, each year, women have made up 35-40 per cent of the more than 100,000 Vietnamese overseas workers who are concentrated in Taiwan, Malaysia,

¹⁴ Article 8/5/2015/ND-CP of the Government.

¹⁵ Government Decree 85/2015/NĐ-CP.

¹⁶ 2018 Survey on Labour and Employment.

¹⁷ 2018 Global Gender Gap Report by WEF.

Korea, Japan and the Middle East. The large overseas labour market has contributed to job creation, income growth, and sustainable poverty reduction. But it has also created opportunities for women workers to learn, including experience assimilating industrial practices and disciplines relating to production and labour. These improved skills and capacities have improved the quality of women's labour on the labour market.

Difficulties and challenges

Although salary and wage regulations prohibit gender-based discrimination, in 2018 the average monthly salary of women was still lower than men. Additionally, a difference also persists in the *de jure* retirement age between men and women, which are currently 60 for men and 55 for women.

2.2. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

Laws, policies and implemented activities

In 2015, the government promulgated the National Target Programme on Sustainable Poverty Reduction for 2016-2020 to measure the changes poverty levels in the corresponding period and to ensure people will meet the minimum living standards and access to basic social services. In the same year, the government adopted a multi-dimensional approach to measure poverty. The Programme sets forth a target on sustainable poverty reduction and on reducing in the number of people falling back into poverty. The Programme contains provisions for poor individuals and households to have convenient access to basic social services, namely health care, education, housing, water and sanitation, and access to information. The target subjects are poor households, near-poor households and households that have just escaped poverty across the country. The Programme prioritizes poor ethnic minority households and women within poor households. In addition, policies, projects and programmes to support women in starting a business, accessing resources, and developing production and businesses have been developed focused on implementation during this period.

Social protection in Viet Nam includes a monthly social allowance and ad-hoc social assistance policies, including various caretaking services at social assistance facilities. Beneficiaries of social assistance policies are households or individuals who have fallen into disadvantaged situations, or have suffered misfortune, damage or loss to life and property due to natural disasters, floods, storms and other externalities. The social protection policies provide a minimum income for the affected people, contribute to stabilizing life, and improve risk reduction capacity for the target groups, including women and girls. There have been several relevant policies and activities during this period: Government Decree 136/2013/ND-CP, stipulating the establishment, organization, operation, dissolution and management of social assistance facilities, specifically defines documents and procedures for the establishment of social assistance facilities. These authorize the director of a social assistance facility to admit and help beneficiaries, including poor single women and orphaned girls, to be cared for in those social assistance facilities, while adopting solutions for those beneficiaries to gradually reintegrate into the community. In 2017 the Prime Minister approved the Target Programme for Development of the Social Assistance System for the Period 2016-2020. The Programme's Project 3 covers support for implementation of national

targets on gender equality, including activities on gender equality awareness raising and increasing women's participation in managerial and leadership positions, as well as elected bodies. It also stipulates support for gender equality at social work centres as well as provisions for gender-based violence prevention and response services.

In recent years, Viet Nam has enacted many policies to improve the health of women and girls, such as universal health insurance, basic health care and reproductive health care. The law amending and supplementing a number of articles of the Law on Health Insurance (2014) has presented the regulations to develop and expand health insurance coverage, towards the goal of universal health insurance. The Prime Minister's Decision 1167/QĐ-TTg dated 28 June 2016 adjusts the assignment of health insurance implementation targets for 2016-2020. This decision also stipulates that the groups of women and girls eligible for social protection will be supported in their payment of health insurance premiums by the state budget.

Decision No. 2348/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister dated 5 December 2016 approved the Scheme on Establishment and Development of the Grassroots Health Network for 2016-2025. The goal is to revise the organizational apparatus, operational mechanism, financial mechanism and human resource development to improve the supply capacity and service quality of the grassroots health network. The intention is to ensure an adequate supply of primary health care services. Decision No. 468/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister dated 23 March 2016 approved the Scheme on Control of Sex Imbalance at Birth for 2016-2025, with the aim to "Effectively control the increasing imbalance of sex ratio at birth, towards bringing it back to the natural balanced level."

The right to education and learning is one of the most important human rights. In Viet Nam, the State respects, acknowledges and ensures the right to education, and considers this an important driving force for the construction and defence of the country. The State has enforced a great variety of policies on equal access to education, especially for poor students, ethnic minority children and children in remote, hard-to-reach and mountainous areas. During 2014-2019, the State has promulgated many programmes and policies to support access to basic education and improve education and training for all, including women and girls. These include: the exemption of tuition fees for 5-year-olds attending kindergartens in areas with particularly difficult socio-economic conditions; universal preschool education for 5-year-olds; compensation for tuition fees for preschool, primary school education, vocational training and university education; tuition-fee reduction and exemption for male and female students from poor and near-poor households; support for meal and accommodation costs for kindergartners, secondary-school pupils (female and male), children from poor households, or children in semi-boarding schools in extremely disadvantaged communes; support for costs of meals and accommodation for semi-boarding female and male pupils in ethnic minority secondary schools; support for lunch costs for children aged 3 to 4 attending preschools; and preferential loan policies for students. Thanks to these policies, disadvantaged groups of women and girls such as those from poor households, ethnic-minority people, and residents of areas with special socio-economic difficulties have had opportunities for education, vocational training and improved qualifications. These in turn have improved their ability to find good jobs, to get out of poverty and to have a brighter

future.¹⁸ In addition, the Prime Minister has approved the Scheme to Support Children with Disabilities to Access Protection, Care and Education Services in the Community for 2018-2025. This sets a target for 2025 where all children with disabilities will have access to child protection, care and education services, giving them the ability to integrate into the community and to fully exercise their rights.¹⁹

Achievements

Viet Nam's poverty reduction achievements are outstanding within the region as well as worldwide. The proportion of poor households decreased from 9.88 per cent in 2015 to 5.23 per cent in 2018.²⁰ Disadvantaged women and girls are targeted beneficiaries within most poverty-reduction policies and programmes. Poverty-reduction achievements have been faster and more prominent among woman-headed households. Findings from the Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey show that the percentage of woman-headed poor households remains lower than that of male-headed poor households. Specifically, in 2016, woman-headed households accounted for 9.7 per cent of poor households, compared with 11.2 per cent for poor households headed by men. A number of supportive measures create favourable conditions for specific categories of girls and women to have better access and benefits.²¹

The government of Viet Nam is committed to allocating about 2.6 per cent of total annual GDP to social assistance policies and programmes for disadvantaged groups in society, including women and girls. Some social assistance policies have given attention to the specific needs of women (including women with disabilities) and girls. Specifically, when calculating the cost norms for caring for female beneficiaries in social protection centres, women's monthly hygiene costs have been considered. There are now separate bathrooms and toilets in social protection facilities installed for women and men. In 2018, more than 3 million people nationwide received monthly social allowances, including: more than 1.3 million people with disabilities; nearly 30,000 orphaned and abandoned children; about 92,000 poor single parents (mostly women); 5,800 people living with HIV in poor households, and nearly 1.6 million elderly people.

Support services for survivors of gender-based violence (including domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual abuse, and forced prostitution) have been the subject of much attention and development. In 2018, MoLISA issued temporary standards on minimum conditions for community shelters under the programme known as Reliable Addresses.²²

Viet Nam's health service system has been improved to meet citizens' needs. Specifically, by 2016: 98.4 per cent of communes had active health stations; 96.0 per cent of villages had active health workers; 80 per cent of communes had doctors working; 60.0 per cent of communes met the national criteria for commune health for 2011-2020; and more than 95 per cent of communes had obstetrical physicians or midwives. The proportion of female physicians and midwives was 18 per cent in urban areas and 26 per cent in rural areas.

¹⁸ UN Women, 2015.

¹⁹ Prime Minister's Decision No. 1438/QĐ-TTg dated 29 October 2018.

²⁰ MoLISA, 2018.

²¹ ILSSA, 2018.

²² Decision No. 1814/QĐ -LĐTĐXH dated 18 December 2018.

In addition, in the remote, hard-to-reach, mountainous and ethnic minority areas, the State has also formed a team of village midwives or female birth attendants, significantly contributing to improving the health of mothers and children in disadvantaged and ethnic minority areas.²³ In 2015, Viet Nam achieved the Millennium Development Goal on reducing maternal mortality to 49 per 100,000 live births, and on reducing neonatal mortality among children under 1 year old to 14.7 per 100,000. The rate of pregnant women who underwent three or more antenatal check-ups reached more than 90 per cent, and the rate of births delivered by trained health workers reached 98 per cent. In total 81 per cent of mothers and new-borns received postnatal care during the first week after birth.

Viet Nam has succeeded in expanding universal health insurance coverage. In particular, health insurance cards are provided free of charge to children under 6 years of age. A wide range of groups are supported in buying health insurance or provided with free health insurance cards. The proportion of ethnic minority people with health insurance and free health care cards increased from 8 per cent in 1998 to 100 per cent in 2016. As of 31 December 2016, there were more than 16 million poor and ethnic minority people, including women residing in remote, hard-to-reach areas, issued with health insurance cards. Health insurance covers the costs for women's antenatal care and delivery at health facilities.²⁴ The Household Living Standards Survey by the General Statistics Office found no difference between the proportion of women and of men with health insurance cards or cards for free medical examination and treatment, 69.7 per cent of people were holders of health insurance cards, more specifically 68.7 per cent of women and 70.7 per cent of men (2014).

Viet Nam has achieved the national standard for primary education and combatting illiteracy. Since 2000, 61 out of the 63 provinces and cities have achieved the standard for primary education universalization at the right ages of level 1. Opportunities to go to school are open to everyone, especially girls. By 2017, the rate of preschool universalization and the rate of attending primary schools at the right ages was more than 99 per cent, and the rate of attending secondary school at the right ages exceeded 93 per cent.²⁵ The gender gap in minimum education participation in Viet Nam has almost been eliminated.

Shortcomings

The rate of falling back into poverty is high and the risk of falling back into poverty is very significant in the context of repeated epidemics and natural disasters in association with the effects of climate change.

The sex ratio at birth is still high (In 2018, the ratio was 115.1 boys for every 100 girls nationwide). The maternal mortality rate was about twice as high in mountainous areas than the national overall rate, and about three times higher than in the delta areas.²⁶

The nationwide estimated abortion rate in 2016 was 14 per 100 live births.²⁷ Of these, 2 per cent were among minors. However, the situations of over-abortion and illicit abortion are

²³ MoH, 2017.

²⁴ MoH, 2017.

²⁵ MoET, 2017.

²⁶ Report No. 454/BC-CP dated 17 October 2017 of the Government on realization of national targets on gender equality.

²⁷ Results of the first 9 months of 2016, there were 173,504 abortion cases out of a total of 1,104,559 live births, accounting for 15.6 percent (down by 2.8 percent over the same period in 2015).

still going on at private health facilities. Children of migrant women have few opportunities to attend public schools.

2.3. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes *Laws, policies and implemented activities*

Following the Gender Equality Law (2006) and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (2007) as well as other relevant legal documents, the contents governing acts of violence in the sphere of gender and family have been incorporated into the Civil Code, the Civil Procedure Code, the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code (2015), and the Ordinance on Handling of Administrative Violations. The Family Development Strategy of Viet Nam to 2020, vision 2030, requires raising the awareness of roles, positions and responsibilities of families and community in adequately implementing the instructions, guidelines, policies and laws on marriage and family, gender equality, prevention and control of domestic violence, especially violence against women. In the National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2011-2020, the prevention of gender-based violence is one of the goals to ensure gender equality within the family.

The Criminal Procedure Code, amended in 2015, provides for some important changes to the protection of gender-based violence survivors as well as others involved in the proceedings, such as Chapter XXXIV on protection of denunciators of crimes, witnesses, victims and other participants in legal proceedings. In 2015, the Ministry of Justice conducted a policy review around the prosecution of sexual violence cases.

The Labour Code (2012) stipulates that “abuse and sexual harassment against workers in the workplace are prohibited,” and employers are also strictly prohibited from mistreating or sexually harassing domestic workers.²⁸ The current draft of the Labour Code, which is being revised, includes a clarified definition of sexual harassment in the workplace. It also requires employers to take measures to prevent such incidents and establish grievance mechanisms at their workplace.

Law on Children (2016) specifies child protection requirements; levels of child protection; responsibilities to provide, process information, report and denounce acts of child abuse; child protection service providers; alternative care; measures to protect children in the course of proceedings, handling of administrative violations, restoring and reintegrating into the community. The legal normative documents on child abuse prevention and response have been timely and sufficiently issued, creating a legal framework for child protection sphere, thus promoting better and better exercise of children's rights, especially the children's right to protection.

In 2016, the Prime Minister signed Decision No. 21/2016 stipulating multisectoral coordination in domestic violence prevention and control. Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MoCST), MoLISA, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Public Security issued an inter-ministerial circular guides the implementation of activities in educational institutions to promote behaviour change in the family, including the prevention and control

²⁸ Specific provisions of the Labour Code include: Article 8, sexual harassment is strictly prohibited; Article 37, workers have the right to unilaterally terminate the contract; Article 183, abuse and mistreatment are strictly prohibited; and Article 182, the obligation to report to the competent authority.

of domestic violence, under the aegis of the national educational system and regulates the roles and responsibilities of service providers related to domestic violence. The circular 24/2017/TT-BYT of the Ministry of Health stipulates procedures for receiving or providing medical care and statistical work, as well as for reporting by patients who are victims of domestic violence at health facilities.

The National Thematic Project on Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response from 2016 to 2020 with a Vision to 2030 was approved by the government on 22 July 2016 with the aim of: improving the mechanisms and policies for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence; enhancing law enforcement; and ensuring that services for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence are implemented simultaneously across the country, to move in the direction of a safe, equal, and non-violent society by 2030.

The National Thematic Project on Reducing Early Marriages and Consanguineous Marriages in Ethnic Minority Areas for 2015-2025 was approved by the Prime Minister in Decision No. 498/QĐ-TTg in 2015 with the aim to “reduce early marriages and consanguineous marriages in ethnic minority areas,” which will help to improve the living conditions of ethnic minority people.

Achievements

As of June 2019, the Hotline for National Child Protection and Human Trafficking Prevention (Call Centre 111) had received and provided counselling for 764 human trafficking cases, along with connecting to help rescue 16 victims. The authorities have made records and conducted procedures to support returned victims of trafficking in line with regulations. They have verified, rescued and received 137 cases of trafficked victims. All these cases received initial support, safe accommodation arrangements, psychological counselling, health care, and legal assistance when required. They were reunited with their families and referred to victim support facilities in a safe manner.

From 2016 to the present, the government has adopted several initiatives to raise awareness about gender equality and prevention of and response to violence against women. These initiatives include the National Action Month on Domestic Violence Prevention and Response held by the MoCST each June, and the Action Month on Gender Equality and Gender-based Violence led by MoLISA from November 15 to December 15 every year. The interventions taken through these initiatives include awareness raising campaigns for community members, local leaders and policymakers, as well as formulating educational and communication materials and intensifying the inspection and supervision of implementation of gender equality in localities. As a result, awareness of gender-based violence prevention and control activities in the localities has increased. In particular, people are now more aware of the roles and responsibilities of individuals in the prevention and control of gender-based violence.

Violence against women and domestic violence in localities have been increasingly addressed and are on the decrease. According to a review report on the 10-year implementation of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, the number of reported violence cases in 2016 was 14,790, decreasing to 13,221 in 2017. In 2018, with the technical and financial support from the Embassy of Australia and UNFPA, Viet Nam

conducted a second national survey on violence against women on 6,000 women from 63 provinces and cities directly under the central government. This demonstrated the commitment of the government to collecting information to understand the situation of violence against women and to formulate specific intervention policies. Viet Nam is the first country in the world to have conducted a second survey on violence against women. Preliminary findings show that the situation of violence against women has decreased: physical violence decreased from 31.5 per cent in 2010 to 26.1 per cent in 2018, while emotional violence experienced fell from 53.6 per cent in 2010 to 47.0 per cent in 2018.

By 2018, there were 9,024 models for the prevention and control of domestic violence nationwide, reaching 74.85 per cent of communes, wards and towns in the country.²⁹ There have been 33,192 community shelters established, known as reliable addresses, as well as 26,558 domestic violence prevention groups and 19,812 sustainable family clubs.³⁰ Plenty of models on gender-based violence and domestic violence prevention and response have been deployed and replicated by various different agencies and organizations. Particularly: (i) the implementation of the Model for Prevention and Minimization of Harm Caused by gender-based violence was guided by MoLISA with intervention activities such as the Club for Prevention and Minimization of Harm from gender-based violence; the gender-based violence prevention and control group and shelters in the community known as reliable addresses. To date, these models are being replicated in other localities; (ii) the Sustainable Family Club and Domestic Violence Prevention and Control Group have been established under the Domestic Violence Prevention and Control Models of the MoCST; (iii) The VWU has developed a model of domestic violence prevention and response and the Happy Families initiative; and (iv) the Model on Domestic Violence Prevention and Response and the Communication Model on Gender Equality and Gender-based violence Prevention and Response, developed and operated by the Farmers' Union.

Localities have facilitated 10,291 sex workers and people at high risk to benefit from the Models on Prostitution Prevention and Control, and supported sex workers to reintegrate into the community. The number of sex workers supported for harm reduction and reintegration into the community in 2016 was 4,504. In the first six months of 2017 it was 3,989 and in 2018 it was 1,194. Specific support activities such as medical assistance, health care, and provision of HIV prevention and control services, legal aid counselling, vocational training and loan support, job creation support, etc., are also available.

In addition, a large number of activities and intervention projects carried out by non-governmental organizations and international organizations have brought about tangible results in intervention and support to victims of domestic violence in particular and gender-based violence in general. A number of international and non-governmental organizations have been very proactive in activities on communication, interventions and response to help victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence, such as UN Women, UNFPA, UNODC, Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender - Family - Women and Adolescents (CSAGA), and the Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS).

²⁹ MoCST.

³⁰ MoCST, 2015.

Shortcomings and challenges

The number workers engaged in this work is insufficient and limited in capacity, funding is also limited, and sanctions appear to be ineffective. People's awareness of gender-based violence is limited. Information and data on domestic violence have not been systematically categorized.

The rate of marriage under the legal marriage age is still high. Some ethnic minority groups still maintain early marriage due to their custom.

The Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment at the Workplace was endorsed by MoLISA and relevant stakeholders but only encouraged for the implementation in the enterprises, so the implementation is quite limited. Viet Nam does not yet collect data on sexual harassment at work.

2.4. Participation, accountability and gender responsive institutions

Law, policies and implemented activities

To enhance women's participation in socio-economic life and decision-making processes, Viet Nam has continued to strengthen its legal institutions and to apply special temporary measures to ensure representation of women in this sphere. These efforts include the following specific initiatives:

Politburo Directive No. 21-CT/TW dated 15 January 2018 on further promoting women's work in the new situation was promulgated, requiring continuing strengthening women's work in the new situation as mentioned in Resolution No. 11/2007/NQ-TW. The goals set out in this Resolution include a 2020 target for the proportion of women to reach 35 to 40 per cent among the National Assembly deputies and People's Councils at all levels.

Prime Minister's Decision No. 800/QD-TTg dated 2 July 2018 on amendments and supplements to the National Strategy on Gender Equality in 2011-2020 includes the introduction of such specific solutions as: (i) formulating, approving and implementing human resource planning in association with the appointment, use, evaluation, and training of female staff, female civil servants and public employees into positions and titles of management and leadership at all levels in different State agencies and institutions based on concrete criteria and feasible solutions; (ii) conducting annual reviews, adjustments and supplements to human resource planning; and (iii) enabling capability building for female staff, female civil servants and public employees to enhance their representation in managerial and leadership positions and in people's elected bodies, especially among young female leaders and female ethnic minority leaders.

The Scheme on Measures to Ensure Gender Equality for Female Staff, Female Civil Servants and Public Employees in 2016-2020 is being implemented nationwide.³¹ The goal is to reduce the disparity regarding positions, roles and opportunities for capacity development between female and male staff, civil servants and public employees, with regards to human resource planning, training, appointment and use of staff in State agencies and institutions. The scheme aims to contribute to the formation and solid development of female staff, female

³¹ Decision 515/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister dated 31 March 2016 approving the Scheme on measures taken to ensure gender equality for female staff, female civil servants and public employees in 2016-2020.

civil servants and public employees, and improve their capacity to fulfil requirements and tasks in the era of industrialization, modernization and international integration.

To enhance the accountability of leaders in State agencies from central to local levels in exercising gender equality and the advancement of women, the Prime Minister issued Decision 178/QĐ-TTg in 2016 on the Plan for Implementation of the Conclusion Notification 196-TB/TW on the Scheme titled Enhancing the Party's Leadership in Gender Equality and for the Advancement of Women in the New Context. Decision No. 622/QĐ-TTg dated 10 May 2017 promulgated the National Action Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. One of the specific goals it identifies is, "Ensuring women's full, effective participation and equal opportunities in leadership participation at all levels of policymaking in political, economic and social life."

From 2016 to date, the Project on Support for Realization of National Targets on Gender Equality is being implemented nationwide, under the National Target Programme on Social Assistance System Development in 2016-2020. This programme is funded by the government and includes targets allocated to central ministries and sectors as well as 63 provinces and cities. These targets focus on; promoting women's participation in managerial and leadership positions and people's elected bodies; communication activities for agencies, institutions and individuals in charge of organizing; formulating and implementing the planning for female employees; capacity building training for female elected representatives, female managers and leaders at all levels, and female staff that are planned to be appointed. The training courses will equip the target women with knowledge on gender equality, management and leadership skills as well as other soft skills, in order to increase the proportion of women's participation in politics, management and leadership in areas with low rates of female representation. The courses will also develop fora and networks to connect female leaders to exchange experience among female National Assembly deputies, members of People's Councils and female leaders at all levels.

In addition to boosting legal institutions and applying measures to ensure a more balanced representation of women in politics, Viet Nam is focusing on stimulating the expression of women's opinions and their engagement in decision-making in the spheres of communications and information technology (IT). In 2015, the Ministry of Information and Communications introduced a set of gender indicators in communication products in Viet Nam with support from UNESCO and Oxfam. Media and press agencies were requested to adopt the indicators in their management of media content in Viet Nam. The indicators cover various criteria that apply to decision-making and communications content, ranging from news production, current news reports, to advertisement in organizations, associations, press and media clubs.

Achievements

On the basis of the aforementioned policies; various ministries, sectors and localities have organized training courses and workshops to enhance capacity for female leaders and managers and promote the participation of women at managerial and leadership positions and in elected bodies with the aim to ensure the active and quality participation in politic activities.

Women made up 27.06 per cent of National Assembly deputies in the legislature XIV,³² an increase of 2.66 percentage points compared with the previous legislature. Some localities with a high proportion of female National Assembly deputies were Bac Kan with 66.67 per cent, Bac Giang with 62.5 per cent and Quang Ngai with 57.14 per cent.

The percentage of female members of People's Councils for the term 2016-2021 at all levels increased from the previous term: 26.54 per cent for the provincial level (up 1.37 percentage points); 27.85 per cent for district level (up 3.23 percentage points) and 26.59 per cent for commune level (up 4.88 percentage points).

The proportion of ministries, ministerial-level agencies and government-attached agencies having key female leaders was 14 out of 30 (47 per cent). Remarkably, the three largest media agencies of the country, namely Viet Nam Television, Voice of Viet Nam, Viet Nam News Agency have women on their boards of directors to ensure the performance and participation of women in the decision-making process in the field of communications.

With regards to raising awareness of communications and gender equality, a variety of relevant events have been organized. In 2018, Viet Nam hosted a Seminar on Gender and Media Literacy on the sidelines of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women. This event aimed at boosting gender-sensitive communications, eliminating gender bias and highlighting the important role of media in addressing gender inequality, WikiGAP campaign to increase women's representation on Wikipedia and gender equality on the internet and in the social media.³³ A seminar on Gender in Sustainable Development was held by the Institute for Research on Development Communication (RED) in an effort to connect journalists with the community, as well as to receive journalists' feedback on the issues of sustainable development and gender equality.³⁴ From the school year of 2017-2018 to date, the Vietnamese Women's Academy has offered a specialized training programme on multimedia communications, with 90 per cent of students for each course consisting of women, contributing to an increased proportion of female leaders in the media sector in the future.

To improve accountability and strengthen gender responsive institutions, the government has continued to allocate budget for gender equality activities at central and local levels, to expedite the realization of national targets on gender equality under the National Target Programme for the Social Assistance Development System in 2016-2020, which has a total funding for the period of 180 billion VND.³⁵ From 2016 to 2019, the project's allocated budget reached more than 103 billion VND, about 57 per cent of the approved budget. The project's implemented activities have contributed to narrowing the gender gap in in the fields of politics, labour and employment, and to gradually reducing the number of gender-based violence cases, in part by raising awareness of gender equality. The activities have also helped in: providing knowledge on gender equality, management and leadership skills and soft skills; supporting the provision of gender equality support services; supporting women in job creation, and in starting and developing their business; supporting gender-based violence

³² There were 131 women out of 494 National Assembly deputies. Source: Website of the NA <http://quochoi.vn>.

³³ WikiGap is a global campaign initiated by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Wikipedia, organized over 50 countries, including Viet Nam to promote female representation on the Internet.

³⁴ <https://baoquocte.vn/truyen-thong-noi-lien-khoang-cach-gioi-74803.html>.

³⁵ Decision No 565/QĐ-TTg dated April 25th, 2017 of the Prime Minister approved the Programme on developing the system of social assistance in the 2016-2020 period.

survivors; and conducting additional training courses to provide more knowledge and working skills on gender equality.

Limitations and challenges

Some ministries, sectors, government agencies and localities still have no key female leaders. Compared with the previous term (2011-2016), Viet Nam still has only one female minister in the government. Gender stereotypes and the male-preference mindset persist in families and in society.

2.5. Peaceful and inclusive societies

Laws, policies and implemented activities

On 25 May 2014, the Scheme on the Vietnamese People's Army Engaging in UN Peace-keeping Activities in 2014-2020 and in the upcoming years was approved by the Prime Minister. In the process of realizing the Scheme and engaging in the peace-keeping activities of the United Nations, Viet Nam has affirmed the important role of women in peacekeeping, especially in dealing with gender issues, and protecting and promoting the exercise of women's and girls' rights. Being one of 125 member countries contributing forces in the UN peace-keeping corps in hotspots all over the world from 2014 to date, Viet Nam has shown proactive and effective engagement in UN peace-keeping activities. This applies especially to the force's role in supporting the roles of women in security and peace-keeping missions in each nation, in the region and worldwide. Viet Nam has a strong history of proactively participating in the open discussion at the UN Security Council on women, peace and security.

As a member of UN Human Rights Council for the 2014-2016 term, Viet Nam has carried out a number of initiatives to boost the protection and enhancement of human rights and put forward various initiatives to mitigate the impacts of climate change on human rights, which includes the recommendations and promoting the Resolutions with the aim of ensuring the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children and people with disabilities.

Viet Nam has joined other ASEAN member countries to formulate and adopt the Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in ASEAN (2017) and the Joint Statement at the 2019 26th ASEAN Regional Forum on Promoting WPS in ASEAN. With a view to implementing the 2017 Joint Statement, Viet Nam and ASEAN member countries have established a list of WPS experts.

Domestically, Viet Nam is also striving to expedite the One Strategic Plan 2017-2021 between Viet Nam and the United Nations, which focuses on supporting the government to execute the Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016-2020 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with regard to the following prioritized fields: investment in human resources; assurance of climate change adaptation and sustainable environmental development; promotion of prosperity and partnership; enhancement of justice; peace and inclusive governance; and gender mainstreaming. These should all be considered cross-cutting issues.

Regarding the elimination of discrimination and violations of girls' rights, Decree No. 56/2017/ND-CP of May 9, 2017 on the implementation of some articles of the Law on Children, specifies the process of receiving, coordinating to process, verifying information,

announcing and denouncing acts of child abuse; supporting process and intervention for cases of abused children; intervening in case children need urgent protection; intervening and temporarily isolating children from their parents or caregivers when their parents or caregivers are the ones who abuse the children. The Prime Minister issued the Directive No. 18/CT-TTg dated May 16, 2017 on strengthening measures to prevent and combat violence against children and child abuse. In which, the Directive includes directing and making specific recommendations to ministries, agencies, organizations and individuals involved in the process of carrying out responsibilities, strengthening measures to prevent and promptly handle cases of violence and child abuse, and minimising the damages to children.

In the period of 2015-2019, the Government has issued many programs and projects to ensure children's rights and create opportunities for children to speak up, listen and respond to opinions and recommendations for children, including girls, namely: Program to promote children's participation in children's issues in the period of 2016-2020; Project on mobilizing social resources to support children of poor communes in ethnic minority and mountainous areas in the period of 2019-2025; Project on care for the comprehensive development of children in the first years of life at home and in the community for the period of 2018-2025; the Scheme on Minimizing Child Marriages and Consanguineous Marriages in Ethnic Minority Areas for 2015-2025, approved by the Prime Minister, aims to prevent and reverse such marriages by 2025.

Achievements

In 2017, the first female officer of Viet Nam People's Army participated in the UN peacekeeping activities in South Sudan. She completed her assignment and received two UN medals for peace and stability and for extraordinarily excellent accomplishment of all missions. Since October 2018, 10 female military personnel have been on mission at a level-2 field hospital of Viet Nam in South Sudan, accounting for 17 per cent of the 63-military staff in the hospital. Viet Nam is now one of the member countries dispatching the highest numbers of females participating in peacekeeping activities.

Viet Nam has a rising number of female heads of diplomatic missions abroad, currently accounting for 15.3 per cent. During the period 2014-2019, Viet Nam has had five female generals in the police and four in the army. This achievement contributes to boosting women's leadership and representation as well as their participation in decision-making in the sphere of social order and national defence and security.

2.6. Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

Law, policies and implemented activities

The 2014 Law on Environmental Protection stipulates the principle that environmental protection must be applied in harmony with economic development, social security, the protection of children's rights, the promotion of gender and development, biodiversity conservation, and responses to climate change, to ensure people's right to live in a healthy environment.

The National Target Programme on Sustainable Poverty Reduction and the National Target Programme on Rural Development for 2016-2020 require the inclusion of gender

mainstreaming into annual and five-year implementation plans of these target programmes. The target programmes also specify several spheres where climate change and disaster risk reduction should be considered when determining the objectives, roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders.

Viet Nam always implements seriously the international commitment on Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation, including gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women in preventing and responding to climate change. For example, on the implementation of Paris Agreement (2016) with 68 tasks, including the integration of climate change adaptation based on ecological system and community through the development of ecological system, protection of the diversified ecosystem, utilization of indigenous knowledge and giving priorities for the most vulnerable communities. In the NDC Report submitted by Viet Nam to the UN in 2015, the importance of gender equality in climate change adaptation by 2020 was emphasised, specifically: CC adaptation must go hand in hand with sustainable development, towards a low-carbon economy and ensure uniformity, inclusiveness, intersectoral, interregional, gender equality, hunger elimination and poverty reduction. The 3rd National Report submitted by Viet Nam to UNFCCC Committee (2018) also dedicated a part assessing on gender equality, including clear specification of CC impacts on women while proposing a number of responding measures. At the same time, in 2016, Viet Nam kicked off an initiative and approved the Hanoi Proposal to boost gender mainstreaming during the implementation of the Sendai Framework (2015-2030) for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Hanoi Declaration introduced necessary measures to promote gender equality and women's leadership capacity in the Four Priorities for Action under the Sendai Framework, namely: understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience; and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The Hanoi Recommendations were incorporated into the two-year Regional Plan that was approved at the Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi, in November 2016. Accordingly, the first eight communal plans on disaster prevention and control in 2016 were formulated with the participation of over 600 people (50 percent are women). Various gender responsive activities and measures were identified by local women and men to address the vulnerability of women and men and to take advantage of women's capacity.

In 2016, the Centre for Disaster Management within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development led the development of the Guidelines on Gender Mainstreaming in the Community-based Programme on Disaster Risk Management. In 2016, the VWU developed an Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation for 2017-2021. This Plan provided the VWU with a systematic approach to disaster risk reduction and work related to climate change adaptation with relevant stakeholders and enhanced its role in this area.

One example was the promotion of gender equality in protecting the low-stream waters of the Mekong River using biological water-filtering membranes and planting of *Moringa oleifera* along riverbanks and canals. implemented by the Ben Tre Creative start-up group.

Achievements

Viet Nam executed interventions to facilitate women to monitor water quality in several provinces, especially in the Mekong River Delta. In 2019, Viet Nam commemorated the World Ocean Day (8 June) and Viet Nam Sea and Island Week 2019 to explore different dimensions of gender in the relationship between humans and oceans. The events hosted a call for everyone's responsibility and obligation to take care of the planet's oceans by connecting, creating spill-over effects and spreading inspiration towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls worldwide in all oceanic domains.

Women play an increasingly significant role in climate change adaptation activities: over the past 10 years, women have played significant role in agricultural production. In agricultural production, women have decision voice in family and have been practicing new skills related to soil improvement, crop productivity and crop resilience, reducing investment costs.

Women's capacity for activity implementation has been strengthened with regards to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation (CCA). The Project entitled, Strengthening Women's Capacity in Disaster Risk Management and Reduction to Cope with Climate Change in Viet Nam, has helped foster knowledge and skills on gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction and community-based disaster risk management as well as in gender-sensitive disaster preparedness plans. Some models and initiatives to promote the participation and leadership of women in the process of developing and implementing environment and climate change-related activities in Viet Nam have been expedited. These include the Programme on Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises (FLOW/EOWE), which supports women-owned agricultural production and business facilities in the value chain of rice and upland crops, along with reinforcing climate-smart agriculture in 20 agricultural cooperatives. Another is the project Harnessing Climate Change Mitigation Initiatives to Benefit Women, which has supported the increase of women's business opportunities in technology such as clean stoves and biogas digesters; the project 'Partnership for Equitable Resilience to the Impacts of Climate Change of the Coastal Communities in Deltas of Viet Nam (PRC)' supported initiatives at the local level in five provinces and achieved increased climate resilience for more than 50,000 people in mostly coastal communities, half of whom were women; the project, Enhancing Capacity in Forest Management, implemented by the Centre of Research and Development in Upland areas (CERDA) in 2017 in Thanh Hoa, women received training on the rights and obligations of citizens, women's rights, the rights and obligations of forest owners, and climate change; the project on strengthening the access to solar energy that helps women save time doing housework and increases their educational opportunity and access to information.

Limitations and challenges

Implementation of gender mainstreaming in preventing and controlling disaster risks and climate change has been quite limited.

In the agricultural production, there is high rate of male headed households benefiting from the greater application of science and technology in production than female headed households.

SECTION 3

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCEDURES

3.1. National mechanisms and organizations for gender equality

The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) performs the function of state management on gender equality nationwide. It undertakes functions, tasks and powers as stipulated by applicable laws and regulations, including the provision of guidelines for the implementation of gender equality. MoLISA also participates in evaluating the mainstreaming of gender equality issues in the formulation of legal documents. Further, the ministry summarizes, consolidates and reports to competent agencies on the implementation of gender equality in accordance with laws and regulations.³⁶ Ministries and ministerial-level agencies coordinate with MoLISA to perform the state management on gender equality within their respective ministries and sectors. People's Committees at all levels perform the state management function on gender equality in alignment with the decentralization of power.

The Gender Equality Department advises the minister of MoLISA to perform the state management function on gender equality on a nationwide scale.³⁷ A number of ministries and sectors have assigned a specific unit to be in charge of gender equality work. For example, the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) assigned this task to the Department of Ethnic Minority Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) has designated the General Affairs Department for this function, and the MoCST has assigned it to the Family Department.

Joint Circular No. 37/2015/TTLT-BLĐTĐBXH-BNV dated 2 October 2015 of MoLISA and MoHA guides the functions, tasks, powers and organizational structure of the Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DoLISAs) under the People's Committees of provinces and centrally run cities and Offices of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (OoLISAs) under People's Committees of rural districts, urban districts, towns or provincial cities. It specifies that the DoLISAs are both state management agencies for gender equality and standing bodies of the Committee for the Advancement of Women (CFAW) at the provincial level. As of the end of 2018, in line with the requirement of restructuring the organizational structure in the direction of streamlining, learning, increasing effectiveness and efficiency, all 63 localities have combined gender equality work and children's work or Children - Gender equality - Social protection under DoLISAs with the task of guiding the mainstreaming of gender equality issues in the formulation and implementation of local socio-economic development strategies and plans. The DoLISAs also advise on measures to promote gender equality in line with local socio-economic conditions (only Quang Ninh province has retained a Gender Equality Office).³⁸

³⁶ Government Decree No. 14/2017/ND-CP dated February 17, 2017 defining the functions, tasks, powers and organizational structure of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs.

³⁷ Decision 1246 / QĐ-LĐTBXH dated August 19, 2017 of the Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs on defining the functions, tasks, powers and organizational structure of the Gender Equality Department.

³⁸ Joint Circular No. 37/2015/TTLT-BLĐTĐBXH-BNV dated 02 October 2015.

The National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Viet Nam (NCFAW), an intersectoral collaboration organization of the government, was established in 1993. It has been promoting its role on researching and coordinating to handle intersectoral issues with regards to the advancement of women nationwide. MoLISA is the standing agency of the NCFAW and the MoLISA minister has been appointed chair of the NCFAW to ensure close linkages between the state management agency on gender equality and the intersectoral collaboration organization for the advancement of women, in an effort to facilitate the execution of tasks on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment nationwide. Members of the NCFAW consist of 18 vice ministers and officials of equivalent titles from various ministries and central agencies. The CFAW system was established in 42 ministries, sectors, ministerial-level agencies and agencies under the government as well as in all the 63 provinces and cities directly under the central government.

In 2017, the Prime Minister decided to establish the National Committee for Children to strengthen multi-sectoral coordination and cooperation in dealing with child-related issues, ensuring children's rights, including girls' rights.³⁹ The President of the Committee is a Deputy Prime Minister; there are three Vice Presidents of the Committee, including the Minister of MoLISA being the standing Vice President, and 18 Members from relevant ministries, organizations and central agencies.

The VWU is a socio-political organization in the political system which operates at four levels from central to the grassroots level, with 17 million members. The VWU has a legal status and represents the legal and legitimate rights and benefits of all strata of Vietnamese women, striving for women's development and gender equality. Performing its representative function of safeguarding legal and legitimate rights and benefits of all strata of women and its sub-organizations, the VWU has been actively engaged in implementing state laws and policies as well as social mobilization on gender equality.

3.2. Procedures for execution, supervision and monitoring of the implementation of national mechanisms and organizations for gender equality

Viet Nam has been diligently performing the implementation and supervision procedures in cooperation with stakeholders during the execution of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. MoLISA is the focal agency responsible for guiding the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) is the agency in charge of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During this process, ministries, sectors and social organizations shall jointly participate in the implementation and consultation for the periodic reports of the two documents. In particular, the VWU has made practical contributions in the process of accelerating the implementation as well as the preparation of national reports.

The aforementioned priority is also guaranteed in the execution of the Gender Equality Law, the Law on Laws and other relevant legal documents. Implementing Article 25 of the Gender Equality Law and Article 13 of the Law on Oversight activities of the National Assembly, on a yearly basis, the Government always reports to the National Assembly on the

³⁹ Decision No. 856/QĐ-TTg dated June 15, 2017 of the Prime Minister

implementation of national targets on gender equality. The Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs also prepares a verification/legislative review report on the Government's report to send to National Assembly deputies.

In order to ensure a smooth undertaking of the process, the Government of Viet Nam is executing the National Action Plan for Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁴⁰ This Plan specifies content on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls as the key priority in implementing the 17 SDGs of Viet Nam up to 2030, including 115 targets.

SECTION 4

STATISTICAL WORK ON SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA IN VIET NAM

4.1. Achievements and challenges

In the last five years, statistical work on sex-disaggregated data in Viet Nam has made significant progress. In an effort to provide actual status on gender equality, the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) has taken the lead in issuing publications and conducting studies and surveys, in collaboration with MoLISA and other ministries, sectors and international organizations. Specifically: (i) the publication entitled Facts and Figures on Women and Men 2015-2016 (MoLISA as the lead agency in coordination with UN Women Viet Nam); (ii) since 2018, publication of annual facts and figures on women and men (conducted by the General Statistics Office (GSO) – MPI); (iii) organizing the 2nd Survey on Violence Against Women and Girls in Viet Nam in 63 localities with the participation of 6,000 women aged between 16-64 (conducted in 2018-2019 by MoLISA in coordination with MPI and UNFPA); (iv) implementing the 2015 Law on Statistics. Regarding the latter, by the end of 2018, ministries and sectors had enacted sectoral statistical indicators on gender equality, including statistical indicators on gender equality or mainstreaming of gender equality-related content.⁴¹ Furthermore, there are major surveys every year providing disaggregated data on geographic locations, income, sex, age, education, such as the annual Survey on Labour and Employment, the annual Survey on Population Changes, or the Household Living Standards Survey.

Implementing the Statistical Law, and under the government's instructions, the MPI issued Circular No. 10/2019/TT-BKHDT dated 30 July 2019 regulating the national set of gender development indicators. This is a collection of many indicators that reflect the important characteristics, nature and main linkages on gender development in Viet Nam. It is the basis for monitoring and evaluating the situation of gender development and the advancement of women and gender equality in all fields of life, economy and society. It aims to meet the need for gender statistical information of relevant agencies, organizations and individuals. The 78 indicators are broken into six groups, namely: (i) population and

⁴⁰ Decision No. 622/QĐ-TTg dated May 10, 2017 of the Prime Minister.

⁴¹ The government's report on the implementation progress of national targets on gender equality 2018.

demography; (ii) labour, employment and access to resources; (iii) leadership and management; (iv) education and training; (v) health and related services and (vi) gender-based violence and social safety. The new gender statistics indicators will make the collection and reporting of gender statistics more feasible than the previous period, thus meeting the current needs for using gender-related data in Viet Nam.

Viet Nam has also paid attention to strengthening coordination mechanisms between producers and users in performing action plans on gender statistics in the future, specifically regarding the collection of gender statistics from national and international reports; consistency in sex-disaggregated data between state management agencies and national statistical agencies (National Strategy on Gender Equality and related policies), and regarding enhancements to officers' capacity to use and collect statistics.

Nevertheless, although a national mechanism is available to ensure the performance of gender statistical work, the implementation still encounters various difficulties and shortcomings. Specifically: (i) limitations in the use of sex-disaggregated data sources, for example when original data are available but either not publicly released or hard to access; (ii) limitations in the coordination and sharing of statistical information, especially among ministries and sectors; and (iii) insufficient numbers and expertise of human resources working on gender statistics.

4.2. The national set of indicators to monitor the implementation progress of SDGs of Viet Nam

Besides the implementation of the national indicators pursuant to the 2015 Law on Statistics, Viet Nam has issued and executed a set of statistical indicators on sustainable development, including the list and description of statistical indicators. The list of statistical indicators on sustainable development of Viet Nam is composed of sequential numbers, codes, corresponding codes of national statistical indicators, objectives, names of indicator, and implementation roadmap. The description of statistical indicators on sustainable development of Viet Nam covers: concept, calculation methodology, main disaggregation groups, publicizing periods, data sources, and the various agencies in charge of data collection and consolidation (Pursuant to Circular No. 03/2019/TT-BKHĐT stipulating the Set of Statistical Indicators on Sustainable Development of Viet Nam issued by MPI). This set of 158 indicators is related to 17 general goals and 115 specific targets of Viet Nam as specified in Decision No. 622/QĐ-TTg, of which:

(1) 38 indicators fall under the national statistical indicator system issued in association with the 2015 Law on Statistics;

(2) 103 indicators were built upon global indicators on sustainable development;⁴²

(3) 18 statistical indicators follow Roadmap B and are to be collected and consolidated from year 2025.

⁴² The remaining indicators are not specified in the set of statistical indicators on sustainable development of Viet Nam because: some are qualitative indicators; some are calculated on the global scale only and by international organizations; some are not relevant to the socio-economic situation in Viet Nam; and some apply to specific areas only.

To ensure the effective and efficient implementation of Circular No. 03/2019/TT-BKHĐT in practice, the MPI has worked out solutions, including the following:

(i) Regarding data and sources of data:

Continue collecting, consolidating and drafting the indicators for which the baseline statistics are available, through mainstreaming into current surveys, current statistical reporting line and the use of administrative data for statistical purposes; develop and complete statistical surveys (mainstream statistical indicators into existing statistical surveys, and is done by reviewing the annual survey programme and the national statistical survey programme, as well as through newly designed surveys); develop and strengthen national statistics to monitor the SDGs; study and develop and complete the statistical reporting regime to collect statistical indicators on sustainable development; conduct research and draft new indicators in line with new information sources such as big data and administrative data and boost the application of information and communication technologies into statistical activities from collecting and synthesizing to publicizing information.

(ii) Regarding resources:

Continue to improve the relevant legal environment to address policy gaps and facilitate SDG implementation in Viet Nam. Raise awareness and actions of the whole society about sustainable development and Viet Nam's SDGs. Mobilize the participation of the entire political system, ministries, sectors, localities, agencies, business community, mass organizations and associations, population communities, and development partners in SDG implementation. Promote coordination among stakeholders, especially between government agencies, businesses, socio-political organizations, socio-professional organizations and the international community in the implementation of sustainable development. Maintain and expedite the coordination and collaboration mechanisms among stakeholders to periodically monitor and evaluate the outcomes of implementing the Action Plan, and to put forwards solutions, to share initiatives and good practices to achieve the SDGs that Viet Nam has committed to. Strengthen the leveraging or mobilization of domestic and foreign financial sources, especially resources from the private sector, for realization of national SDGs. Mainstream SDGs into the process of formulating annual socio-economic development plans, development strategies, policies and planning of ministries, sectors, localities and agencies. Undertake appropriate mainstreaming of SDG targets and indicators into periodic national statistical survey programmes and other survey programmes. Foster international cooperation to reinforce financial and technical support and transfer for SDG implementation. Ensure adequate statisticians and increase the number of training courses to ensure statisticians have sufficient understanding and knowledge to perform their work effectively.