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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN VIET NAM: MAKING INCLUSIVE GROWTH WORK FOR WOMEN

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UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports Member States in setting global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design the laws, policies, programmes and services required to implement these standards. UN Women stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on the following five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN systems works in advancing gender equality.

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TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN VIET NAM: MAKING INCLUSIVE GROWTH WORK FOR WOMEN

FOREWORD

Viet Nam has made remarkable achievements in economic growth and poverty reduction, and is on its way to transforming itself from an agriculture-based economy to a more diversified and globally integrated economy. Significant progress has also been made in socio-economic spheres, with a decline in many gender-related inequalities, particularly in girls' educational attainment and female labour force participation.

As Viet Nam is taking steps to integrate further into the global markets, it will be vital to continue paying attention to the possible gender implications of these economic developments. Further trade liberalization is likely to cause both gains and losses, and will affect different groups of women and men in different ways. This will require complementary and targeted policies to ensure that women can fully reap the benefits of new economic opportunities. Only a model of economic growth that is fully inclusive can create the foundation for the full realization of women's and men's rights.

Towards gender equality in Viet Nam: Making inclusive growth work for women is an ambitious effort to look at Viet Nam's economy through a gender lens. Drawing a comprehensive gender-disaggregated statistical picture of selected economic sectors, our analysis highlights the unequal distribution of productive resources across different groups of women and men, persisting gender segmentation in the labour market, and greater vulnerability in female workers' working conditions and pay. The study assesses Viet Nam's policy framework and provides recommendations to better realize women's potential and make their economic livelihoods more secure, be they small-scale farmers, domestic paid workers, or garment factory workers.

UN Women pays special attention to the relationship between the spheres of paid and unpaid work, and to the fact that policies should address these in an integrated way. Women typically spend disproportionately more time on unpaid care than men, and thus bear the double burden of productive and reproductive activities. Yet, there are a number of measures that could help reduce women's unpaid care burden and free up their time, such as targeted investments in physical and social infrastructures. Such measures should be leveraged to ensure that women can benefit from economic opportunities on equal terms as men.

Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment have been placed at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with targets covering the gender dimensions of poverty, hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment, safe cities and peace and security across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Viet Nam has pledged political support and determination in ensuring the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the global goals. If Viet Nam is to fulfil its commitments, now, more than ever, particular emphasis should be placed on those who are poorer and marginalized due to their gender, ethnicity and other sources of disadvantage. Securing livelihoods and the development of human capacities to all segments of the population is of crucial importance to build a modern, fair and just society that 'leaves no one behind'.

We hope that this study will serve as a reference publication for policy makers in Viet Nam and that it will encourage the adoption of a gender perspective more broadly and systematically across all Government's policies and programmes. Let us continue to work together towards the advancement of gender equality in Viet Nam; let's make inclusive growth a reality for all.



Shoko Ishikawa,
Country Representative, UN Women Viet Nam

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Within UN Women, the study was coordinated by Nguyen Kim Lan and Mariangela Linoci under the overall guidance of Shoko Ishikawa and with the support of Vu Phuong Ly and Tran Thi Minh Nguyet.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank	MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community	MOH	Ministry of Health
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women	NGO	Non-governmental organization
CGA	Country Gender Assessment	NTP	National Target Programme
CGE	Computable General Equilibrium	NTP-NRD	National Targeted Programme on New Rural Development
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CRWSES	National Centre for Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation	PICC	Performance Improvement Consultative Committee
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency	POWW	Progress of World's Women
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
FDI	Foreign direct investment	SNA	UN System of National Accounts
GDP	Gross domestic product	TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
GSO	General Statistics Office (Viet Nam)	TUS	Time use survey
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
IFGS	Institute for Family and Gender Studies	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ILSSA	Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
JAR	Joint Annual Review	VEPR	Vietnam Institute for Economic and Policy Research
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency	VHLSS	Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey
LFS	Labour Force Survey	VND	Vietnamese dong
LUC	Land use certificate	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	WHO	World Health Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goal	WTO	World Trade Organization
MICS	Monitoring Indicator Cluster Survey		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UN WOMEN, with support from the Government of Australia and the European Union Delegation in Viet Nam, commissioned the study ‘Towards gender equality in Viet Nam: Making inclusive growth work for women’ to contribute to the larger efforts of strengthening the evidence-based knowledge around gender equality concerns in Vietnam. This study builds on two Country Gender Assessments conducted in 2006 and 2011, which have been major reference documents on the status of women in Viet Nam, benefitting policy makers, development partners, civil society organizations and academic institutions.

THE GOVERNMENT OF VIET NAM is strongly committed to gender equality, as reflected in a number of national laws, its ratification of key international conventions such as Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and various policy papers supporting its five year Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP). The overarching objective of this study is to examine to what extent Viet Nam’s commitment to gender equality is reflected in its economic reforms and economic growth model, and to what extent these can be made more effective in terms of promoting gender equality. This question is motivated by the idea that only a model of economic growth that is inclusive can create the premises for the full realization of women’s (and men’s) economic rights. Inclusive growth is understood in this study as growth that offers opportunities for well-being and adequate standards of living to all segments of the population, with a particular emphasis on the poor and the marginalized due to their gender, ethnicity and other sources of disadvantage.

THE STUDY IS ORGANIZED in three main chapters. Chapter 2 discusses sex-disaggregated data with the primary aim of going beyond headline indicators and aggregate figures. It

builds a comprehensive statistical picture of the Vietnamese economy that exposes how productive resources are unequally distributed across different groups of women and men. It finds that in Viet Nam there are still significant differences in employment options and opportunities for lifetime earnings for different groups of women and men. These differences relate not to differences in the actual numbers of women and men who are in employment, which are fairly high for both genders, but to various forms of gender occupational segregation and discrimination. Importantly, the data also highlight that differences in access to decent jobs are based not only on gender, but also on place of residence, ethnicity, education and age.

Women, for example represent a much larger share of unpaid contributing family workers, particularly in agriculture, a pattern that has not changed much over the last decade. On average, female own-account workers tend to have lower earnings than male own-account workers, especially in rural areas. The gender gap in vulnerable employment increases substantially with age and is especially wide for workers in their fifties. Reliance on agricultural self-employment as the main source of livelihoods is considerably higher among ethnic minorities and more common in the poorest regions. The reason that agriculture displays very low levels of productivity and offers such meagre and insecure earnings to women in particular is related to female farmers’ restricted access to productive resources and their limited human capital. For example, more than half of the women whose primary occupation is in agriculture have barely completed primary education. There is also indication that there is a strong gender bias in access to land, credit and extension services, but regular and comprehensive sex-disaggregated data on these aspects are not easily available.

Wage employment seems to be more easily available for men than for women, but, for women in wage work, working conditions appear more favourable than for male wage workers. This is a reflection of the fact that female wage workers are more likely to be employed in either the public sector or the foreign direct investment (FDI) sector than in the domestic private sector. By contrast, men are more likely to be in unskilled wage jobs in non-tradable domestic industries such as construction and transport, where terms of work are often insecure.

Current economic policies are contributing to creating better opportunities for some groups of female workers in emerging sectors such as labour-intensive exports. However, it seems, they are failing to generate sufficient jobs of decent quality overall, and to offer more secure economic alternatives to women with low levels of formal education and from disadvantaged rural regions, in particular. From this point of view, the finding that in the last ten years the share of the employed population with technical training has fallen for women while it has risen for men is of great concern. All these issues are exacerbated in the case of women from ethnic minorities.

Women from poor households and from rural areas also face a double disadvantage because of limited availability of public infrastructure and services to reduce and redistribute their unpaid domestic and care work. Unpaid domestic work and care is where data gaps in Viet Nam are most severe, especially with regard to time use. It was not possible to provide an accurate assessment of how time burdens are distributed between genders across socio-economic groups, and whether/how these are changing over time. However, available data on access to both physical and social infrastructure show that households in the poorest quintile have markedly less access to sanitation and water infrastructure. Tap water at home in particular is a luxury that only a tiny fraction (6 percent) of households in the poorest quintile can afford. In addition, water collection and treatment remain a cumbersome activity,

especially for ethnic minority households. Certainly, all this renders the task of cooking, cleaning and keeping children healthy more strenuous for those family members responsible for these activities, who, as data clearly indicate, are largely women and girls. Much like access to basic physical infrastructure, differentials by socio-economic status in access to childcare services are considerable. For example, the data also show that attendance in organized early childhood education (ECE) centres is higher in rich households than in poor ones, because rich households are both more able to afford it and more likely to live in urban areas where childcare services are more available. Children's attendance in ECE centres is lower in rural areas than in urban areas, and in southern regions than in northern regions. There appears to be no sign that these gaps between rural and urban areas in terms of households' access to physical and social infrastructure have narrowed in the last few years.

Chapter 3 focuses on paid employment and considers the specific challenges and constraints facing three distinct categories of women workers: small-scale women farmers, domestic paid workers and garment factory workers. Its main objective is to examine policies that are currently in place and how they can be improved to better realize women's labour rights and make their economic livelihoods more secure. The chapter's main recommendation is to make tackling the socio-economic disadvantages of these three categories one of the highest priorities for policy, given the sheer number of women working in agriculture (about half of the total female labour force) and the fact that female small-scale farming is prevalent among ethnic minorities, in the poorest regions and in the poorest households.

Two key policy areas for improving the productivity and quality of women's agricultural employment are land and extension services. The number of rural women who are sole owners or joint owners of a land use certificate (LUC) has increased over the years, but gender gaps remain significant. A strategy for strengthening women's land rights

would entail, among others: increasing the quantity and quality of legal services offered to rural women; encouraging more rural women to register their land rights; and promoting outreach programmes and awareness campaigns that include men as well as women. Ethnic minority communities that practise patrilineal succession deserve special attention.

As concerns agricultural extension services, there is clearly the need to make them more gender-sensitive and easier to attend. This could be achieved by: ensuring that the training is organized in places and at times that are compatible with rural women's caring responsibilities; increasing the number of female extension services; and using participatory methods and teaching tools tailored to the needs of farmers who have no formal education.

As concerns paid domestic workers, the Government of Viet Nam has recently passed Decree No. 27, which defines, for the first time, key rights and entitlements for domestic workers and should be considered a clear achievement. However, implementation of these improved labour standards still remains a challenge. Measures to improve compliance with the law on domestic workers could include disseminating information on the new law to workers, employers and relevant local authorities as widely as possible and supporting civil society initiatives aimed at organizing and representing domestic workers.

Viet Nam's economic development strategy is increasingly centred around greater global integration and enhanced international competitiveness, and hence investing in the skills and productivity of the many women who work for a wage in export-oriented factories must be another key policy priority. This issue was already emphasized in previous Country Gender Assessments (CGAs), which made strong recommendations on the need to improve labour standards and overcome gender barriers in training and promotion for factory workers.

Wage employment in export-oriented production is a more secure form of employment for some segments of the female workforce, but the picture is uneven, depending on firm ownership and structure as well as workers' specific circumstances. Some progress has been made in recent years regarding the enforcement of labour standards, particularly in the foreign-owned segment of the garment sector. This has largely been due to initiatives such as the Better Work programme. However, not all wage workers in the export industry are able to benefit.

Measures to make wage employment in export-oriented factories more stable and better protected could include: addressing the lack of technical skills of the female workforce and ensuring a fairer treatment regarding promotions; supporting workers through adequate provision of social services; and paying particular attention to the plight of migrant workers by supporting them through quality health and childcare as well as easier access to other facilities. This latter measure would be of great significance since there are many new migrants to the cities, not only among export-oriented workers, but also among paid domestic workers.

In addition to ensuring that women in these three occupations enjoy more stable and secure conditions, the Government needs to put greater effort into facilitating women's access to a wider variety of decent jobs, with particular attention to enabling disadvantaged women to acquire the necessary skills and productive resources for entering non-traditional sectors. This recommendation was also put forward in earlier CGAs, which stress the importance of encouraging women's participation in training in scientific, engineering and technical fields. Both CGAs point to the highly gender-stereotyped vocational training on offer in Viet Nam and its failure to prepare women to pursue a wider range of labour market opportunities. They also suggest follow-up measures, such as a monitoring system to track cohorts of women (and men) in the labour market after they have completed training courses,

to ensure that the training achieve its objectives. These recommendations remain valid today.

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AT WORK

is not only a matter for labour, agricultural and educational policies; it also crucially depends on the range of public resources that governments make available to reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid domestic work and care. Chapter 4 discusses this aspect in detail. It finds that Viet Nam has made only limited progress on integrating gender and equality concerns in its Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) policies and its early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies.

The examination of policy documents and assessments related to WASH suggests, for example, that gender equality and social inclusion issues are at best acknowledged only as general goals. But there is no comprehensive analytical framework that clearly spells out how gender differences in time burdens, health and economic opportunities are linked with water and sanitation access and provision. Similarly, there are no detailed guidelines and mechanisms for implementing and monitoring WASH strategies in a gender-sensitive way. Donors' reports that make reference to the need to mainstream gender issues in the water and sanitation sectors seem to be concerned mostly with women's participation in WASH-related institutions. There is less concern with the goal of reducing women's burden of unpaid domestic work per se. The percentage of WASH committees with at least 50 per cent female members seems to be the only gender indicator target suggested for use in water projects. The inclusion of other indicators that capture, for example, the possible reduction in time spent on water collection and treatment would be desirable.

As regards the provision of ECEC services, the promotion over the past year of a few initiatives that target children under 18 months and attempt to respond to the increased needs of mothers working in industrial zones is a promising step. These initiatives should not remain confined to

urban areas, but rather, be extended to rural areas where the majority of poor women and children live and work.

The new programmes are mainly provided through subsidized private centres. Evidence from other countries suggests, however, that the best outcomes are achieved through ECEC services provided directly by the public sector; these usually tend to bring better quality, better working conditions for educators and a higher degree of equity in access. This approach would thus be particularly appropriate for Viet Nam, where services offered to children under three remain very limited, and attendance in rural areas and among poor households is especially low. It is when children are under three that the care burden is largest, which is especially so for mothers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, the greater availability of childcare for this age range and for low-income households, ideally free of charge, would meet important gender equality objectives. The further expansion of good quality public ECEC services could also contribute to the objective of gender equality by directly creating jobs for women, since ECEC staff tend to be mostly female. But it is important to ensure that these jobs are adequately protected and enjoy good working conditions and better salaries than currently is the case.

Drawing on the rich evidence presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, the concluding chapter again asks the original overarching question: Does Viet Nam's current economic growth model enable the Government to realize its commitment to gender equality? It provides a number of final policy recommendations that would help in facilitating Viet Nam's transition towards a more gender-equitable and inclusive growth model. These recommendations include policy areas such as skills and training, public investment in physical and social infrastructure, integrated agricultural policies, community participation and improved gender statistics. 🌐

1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. VIET NAM'S LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON GENDER EQUALITY

Viet Nam was one of the first countries to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), in 1980, and ratified it in 1982. Over the past decade, the country has made huge strides in reforming its legal and policy framework to guarantee equality and non-discrimination between women and men in line with CEDAW. The Law on Gender Equality (GEL) adopted in 2006 is considered a landmark legislation in this regard. It defines gender equality and gender-based discrimination for the first time and sets out specific measures for achieving gender equality. The Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, passed in 2007, is another significant piece of legislation acknowledging for the first time violence against women by partners as a punishable offence. In addition to the enactment of these laws that specifically concern women's rights, notable efforts are being made to ensure that gender equality is promoted in all other laws. For example, the revised Labour Code, which came into effect in May 2013, added new provisions on non-discrimination and women's labour rights such as: prohibition of sexual harassment; extension of maternity leave to six months; official recognition of the rights of paid domestic workers; and equal pay for work of equal value. The principle of substantive equality is now enshrined in Article 26 of the 2013 Constitution: "Male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields. The State shall adopt policies to guarantee the right to and opportunities for gender equality."

An important question is whether these achievements in gender equality before the law have translated into achievements in substantive gender equality. Over the last few decades, Viet Nam has indeed made significant progress in improving its population's well-being in general and reducing gender disparities in particular. As of today, headline indicators appear positive for women in many dimensions. For example, gender gaps at all educational levels have been closed. In the 2012-2013 school year, the ratio of girls to boys increased to 91 per cent at the primary, 94 per cent at the secondary, and 114 per cent at the upper secondary level, while the corresponding ratios in the 2000- 2001 school years were 91 percent, 89 per cent and 88 percent, respectively (UNDP, 2015). Women occupy 24 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly in the current term (2011-2016), which constitutes one of the highest female political participation rates in a national parliament in the Asian region (UNDP, 2015). The percentage of women's representation at the provincial level is also high and increased from 22 per cent in the term 1999–2004 to 25 per cent for the current term. Viet Nam also has a high rate of female labour force participation, at about 73 per cent in 2014 (GSO 2015). The gender gap in labour force participation is 8 per cent for the country as a whole but with wide variations between the north and the south.¹

These aggregate countrywide indicators however mask significant differences across regions, ethnic groups and social classes. There is also evidence that since 2008 Viet Nam's performance has been slowing down and that its underperformance is being more pronounced for human development than economic growth (UNDP, 2016).

¹ The gender gap in labour force participation ranges from 3 per cent in the Red River Delta region to 16 per cent in the Mekong River Delta region (GSO, 2015).

BOX 1.

VIET NAM'S NATIONAL STRATEGY ON GENDER EQUALITY

Viet Nam's gender equality commitments are also embodied in National Strategies and Action Plans put into place to promote gender equality and the advancement of women since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (1997-2000) was the first of this kind. It was followed by a National Strategy for the Advancement of Women for the 2001-2010 period supported by a second and third National Action Plan (2001-2005 and 2006-2010).

The current National Strategy for Gender Equality (NSGE 2011-2020) is a sectoral strategy that is part of the Government's primary planning document, the ten-year Socio-Economic Development Strategy and the five-year Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP). The NSGE sets as target that "by 2020, substantive equality between men and women is ensured in opportunity, participation and benefits in the political, economic, cultural and social domains, contributing to fast and sustainable national development".

The Strategy focuses on: promoting women's political participation and leadership; narrowing gender gaps in the economic domains; raising the education level of women; promoting gender equality in access to healthcare services; promoting gender equality in and through media and communication; ensuring gender equality in family life; and strengthening institutional capacity of the Government to effectively promote gender equality (National Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2011-2020).

Noting that "... even when gender-equal laws have been put in place, entrenched inequalities, discriminatory social norms as well as dominant patterns of economic development can undermine their implementation and positive impact" (UN Women, 2015: 12), Progress of World's Women 2015-2016 proposes a framework for action to achieve substantive equality for women and girls which includes three elements: (i) redressing women's socio-economic disadvantage; (ii) addressing stereotyping, stigma and violence; and (iii) strengthening women's agency, voice and participation (UN Women, 2015). This study focuses on redressing socio-economic disadvantage and on the patterns of economic development that are more conducive to this objective.

1.2. FRAMEWORK AND KEY QUESTIONS

This study, 'Towards gender equality in Viet Nam: Making inclusive growth work for women' was commissioned by UN Women with support from the Government of Australia and the European Union Delegation in Viet Nam to contribute to strengthen the evidence-based knowledge around gender equality concerns in Viet Nam. The study builds on two Country Gender Assessments (CGAs) conducted in 2006 and 2011, which have been reference documents on the status of women in Viet Nam, benefitting policy makers, development partners, civil society organizations and academic institutions.

The overarching objective of this study is to examine to what extent Viet Nam's commitment to gender equality in law is reflected in its economic

growth model and to what extent economic reforms can be made more conducive to the promotion of gender equality.

Underlying these questions is the notion that only by adopting a model of economic growth that is inclusive and that promotes broadly shared well-being can create the premise for the full realization of women's (and men's) economic rights. Inclusive growth is understood in this study as growth that offers opportunities for secure livelihoods and the development of human capacities to all segments of the population, with a particular emphasis on the poor and the marginalized due to their gender, ethnicity and other sources of disadvantage; this is the "leave no one behind" principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015).

In order to meet this overarching objective, the study aims to answer the following questions:

- Is Viet Nam's strong commitment to gender equality in law also reflected in the country's current economic growth model?
- How can ongoing economic reforms be designed and implemented to promote the objective of greater equality between women and men, with particular attention to the most disadvantaged?

This is an ambitious task, which will only be addressed through a few initial steps, informed by a conceptual framework that takes as its starting point that the economy is a 'gendered structure' (Elson, Evers, and Gideon, 1997). The first step is to outline such structure in order to identify where gender-based gaps and bottlenecks are most pronounced. The second step is to examine a selection of policies to assess whether at present Viet Nam's economic strategy is contributing to reduce or intensify such gender gaps. Economic growth is itself an outcome of several policies. Understanding the impact of the prevailing economic model on gender equality therefore requires identifying the specific policies in question and choosing the relevant measures of gender inequality. The focus of this study is primarily on

aspects of public investment, trade liberalization, and agricultural and industrial policies. The relevant measures of gender inequality in the economic domain include both paid and unpaid dimensions.

Relative to the previous two Country Gender Assessments (CGAs), this study focuses more closely on economic aspects of gender inequality and takes an in-depth look at gender statistics and key nationally representative datasets. This responds to the call made both in CGA 2006 (UNDP, 2006) and CGA 2011 (World Bank, 2011) for a more systematic collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data as an essential condition for the effective design and implementation of gender equitable policies. The study also aims to take a longer-term perspective by looking at trends over approximately ten years whenever data are available. However, the time frame of the data analysis is not always consistent throughout the report, because access to various data sources has been uneven. The ultimate aim of the study is to provide recommendations on what kind of policy choices can best contribute to redress women's socio-economic disadvantage and strengthen the success of the new Social Economic Development Plan.

1.2.1. THE ECONOMY AS A GENDERED STRUCTURE

Looking at the economy of a country as a gendered structure entails identifying *gender-based distortions in the patterns of resource allocation* regarding jobs, income, other assets and time. These distortions act as barriers to economic and social development. For example, as a result of biases in labour markets, women have to work in a limited range of occupations and the earnings they receive tend not to fully reflect their contribution. This is not only a breach of labour rights, but it is also bad for the economy because it makes it harder for a country to build the productivity capacity of its current and future workforce.

An important step in looking at the economy through a gender lens is to render visible *unpaid domestic work and care* (such as cleaning, cooking, collecting water and fuel, as well as looking after children, the elderly and adults), which is vital for both people's well-being and the functioning of the market-oriented economy. The organization of unpaid domestic work is a key factor in determining the distribution of income, wealth and human capacities. Globally, this unpaid work is mostly undertaken by women, particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable women. This implies that women much more than men have the double burden of both paid and unpaid work, i.e. they are often more time-poor than men. This double burden has the effect of undermining women's position in the paid labour market and other markets, and to make them vulnerable within their own household. As will be argued in later sections, the state has an important role to play in supporting more equal arrangements for care provision.

Different groups of women face different vulnerabilities, depending on socio-economic status (e.g. income, education, migration status), race and ethnicity, stage in their life cycle (e.g. whether they are married with young children or are elderly widows) and other factors such as disability and place of residence. There are important gaps between groups of women in terms of their economic opportunities and livelihoods, which the study will expose.

1.2.2. ECONOMIC POLICIES CAN REDUCE OR AMPLIFY GENDER INEQUALITIES

Gender inequality is, to some degree, an outcome of macro-economic policies, whether intended or not. This is because the way that governments design and implement public spending, trade reforms or even monetary policy has the potential to reduce or amplify gender-based inequalities.

For instance, greater public investment in basic social services and infrastructure such as health, education, water and sanitation is likely to promote gender equality because they are critical to reduce the drudgery of women's unpaid work and can enhance their capacity to access paid work. What matters, however, is not only the aggregate level of social investment but also whether the public money allocated to programmes is actually spent, and whether these programmes are actually implemented according to gender equality and inclusiveness criteria. For example, to what extent does public provision of early childhood education take into account the needs of low-income working mothers and is it accessible to women regardless of their job or migration status? And to what extent is investment in improved sanitation infrastructure reaching the most remote communities? Since women and men have different roles and access to resources, the goal of inclusive growth and broadly shared improvements in well-being requires a gender-disaggregated analysis of policy effects. These are the kinds of questions that the study seeks to address.

As emphasized in the latest *Progress of World's Women* (POWW) and other recent literature, not all patterns of economic growth are likely to guarantee greater gender equality and better jobs for all (UN Women, 2015: chapter 4; Kabeer and Natali, 2013). On the contrary, some patterns of growth build on existing gender inequalities. Research has shown, for example, that the export strategy of a number of emerging economies in East and South-East Asia has focused on labour-intensive goods produced by cheap female labour, taking advantage of large gender wage gaps, and stimulated profits in the short term (clearly shown in Seguino, 2000 on the Republic of Korea). But this type of growth, based on enhancing global competitiveness by lowering labour costs, cannot be considered inclusive or sustainable. Only a more equitable approach aimed at reducing gender gaps in access to skills, capital and infrastructure, as well as in the responsibility for unpaid work can lead to higher and sustainable economic development in

the long term. This is further elaborated in the next section, which looks at the relationship between models of economic growth and care provision.

1.2.3. PATTERNS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH FROM A GENDER EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE: WHERE DOES SOUTH-EAST ASIA FIT?²

A way to look at economic growth from the perspective of gender equality is to examine the kind of growth model adopted by a country in connection with its prevailing institutional arrangements for care provision. These institutional arrangements are crucial for the sustainability of economic growth in that they determine the extent and distribution of the resources (both time and money) that are available to produce, maintain and invest in human capacities and the productivity of the labour force (Braunstein, 2015). The Government's ultimate goal is to promote a mix of policies that create synergies between economic growth, the development of human capacities and the achievement of gender equality, which is called a 'win-win' or also 'high road/wage-led' scenario in gender-aware economic policy debates (UN Women, 2015; Braunstein, 2015; Seguino and Grown, 2006).

As more fully discussed in Braunstein (2015), a win-win scenario is wage-led in that high wages for all stimulate domestic demand, which in turn stimulates output growth. The level of public investment is high. Women's labour market participation is not only high, but also accompanied by high female absolute wages and small wage gender gaps. A win-win scenario is also gender egalitarian, in that care is provided to an adequate level and the responsibility for its provision is equally shared between the state,

the family and other institutions. Here, there is a strong public support for care provision, and quality social services are affordable for all. This not only protects women against a squeeze in their time, but also enhances the overall development of human capacities in the context of higher incomes. Both the time and financial burdens of maintaining and investing in human capacities are spread among various contributors and do not just fall on women within families.

The opposite scenario is characterized instead by an economic growth model in which production is profit-led and is combined with a system of care provision that falls disproportionately on women's shoulders. This can be the case, for example, in a country that is heavily reliant on foreign investment and exports for its growth. In such a scenario, wages tend to be low overall and workers are exploited, particularly women (Braunstein, 2015). This is because, under these circumstances, firms are not willing to make the investment needed to enhance the productivity of workers in the country concerned and if wage costs appear to be increasing, they rather transfer production abroad in localities where they can employ cheaper labour. In the absence of an adequate system of care provision outside of the family (e.g. physical and social infrastructure as well as an extensive and high quality market care sector), when female labour market participation increases, women's care burden and overall total working time significantly also increase, with negative effects for both their well-being and that of their families. This growth model equates with a pronounced feminization of care responsibility, and by causing an underinvestment in human capacities, undermines gender equality and makes growth unsustainable in the long term (Braunstein, 2015).

Braunstein applies this gender perspective to economic growth to different groups of countries to assess whether their economies are on the path

towards the win-win scenario and what efforts can be made to encourage such a trajectory. A few insights from her analysis of semi-industrialized export-oriented economies (SIEOs) of East and Southeast Asia are reported here as a background to the discussion on Viet Nam that will be developed in the rest of the study.

The SIEOs of East and South-East Asia have successfully pursued an industrialization strategy mostly through export-led growth. The first generation of these countries include Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong SAR), Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan Province of China (henceforth Taiwan), and are now fully industrialized and high-income. The second generation is located in South-East Asia and includes Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Both groups of countries have in common a similar manufacturing-led path of development, although the levels of skill formation, social protection and state capacity of the second generation of SIEOs are much lower than the Republic of Korea, and foreign capital plays a more significant role in their industrial strategies (UNRISD, 2010).

Both these groups of economies, with the exception of Malaysia and Indonesia, have high female labour force participation rates by global standards, but, equally, their gender-based wage inequality is quite pronounced relative to other parts of the world, particularly in the first generation of SIEOs. This indeed reflects an important aspect of the SIEOs' development strategy: export success built on a low-wage, largely female labour force.

The evidence, however, also points to a defeminization of industrial employment in more recent years, in East Asia as well as Malaysia and Indonesia, while Thailand continues to feminize (Tejani and Millberg, 2016; Kucera and Tejani, 2014). This suggests that women may be the preferred labour force only in the early stages of industrialization but they tend to lose out when production becomes more capital-intensive and industries upgrade. This fact cannot be explained

by large gender educational gaps, which, on the contrary, have been rapidly closing at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in the whole region. This finding has important policy implications that need to be considered when other developing countries such as Viet Nam attempt to upgrade their products and processes in manufacturing.

Reviewing available evidence, Braunstein (2015) notes that the SIEO's model of social welfare provision can be characterized as a familialistic male breadwinner model with a traditional and rigid gender division of labour (Peng, 2010). Women and families are expected to provide care in the home, and co-residency among the elderly and their adult children is frequent (if declining). In the more advanced countries of the SIEO, public provisioning has been expanding in recent years in response to an ageing population and the push for greater gender equality at work and at home. Social welfare support for care is still limited, however, and the extra-familial options that are available are mostly provided by the private sector and mostly benefitting relatively well-off women (Peng, 2010; UNRISD 2010).

Because of the above characteristics, Braunstein argues that the export dependence of SIEOs exerts a strong pull towards a profit-led growth model. This characteristic is likely to be more dominant in the second generation of SIEOs than in the first generation. Due to the extensive investments in education and health, both public and private, associated with the East Asian developmental model, the first generation of SIEOs show instead a more pronounced emphasis on human capacities development.

In terms of the distribution of care provision, the strong structure of familial provisioning with little direct support from the state suggests a system of feminization of responsibility. Given the emphasis of many families on investments in children, higher incomes for women are likely to be associated with more human capacity development for the younger generation. However, options for replacing time when female wages and labour

² This section draws on Braunstein (2015) and provides a simplified illustration of Braunstein's taxonomy of macroeconomic models of growth in relation to social reproduction arrangements.

force participation increase are limited, making it problematic for women to combine market and non-market work, and hence eventually offsetting the positive effects on human capacities development. Braunstein observes how the recent sharp decline in marriage rates across the East and South-East Asian region, for example, is a clear manifestation of these tensions. These results push SIEOs closer to a growth model that is based on the exploitation of women's labour and human resources. Braunstein concludes her analysis by pointing out that, for a win-win scenario to prevail, SIEOs must address both their growth and care provision models, with particular emphasis on expansion of state support for quality and affordable social services.

1.3. WHAT HAS CHANGED SINCE THE LAST VIET NAM COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENTS?

1.3.1. FINDINGS FROM THE 2011 COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

The 2011 Vietnam Country Gender Assessment (World Bank, 2011) noted significant progress towards closing gender gaps in a number of dimensions such as school attendance, child and maternal health, and political representation. Achievements in these areas continue, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. However, CGA 2011 also pointed to a number of remaining challenges, including widespread gender-based violence and women's continuing under-representation in leadership positions at all levels. Even within education, some disadvantages persist such as women's under-representation in technical subjects and low and socially stratified participation rates in vocational education more in general (UNDP, 2016). This is currently one of the major contributing factors to gender-based

occupational segregation, which will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Specifically regarding the economy, which is a focus of this study, CGA 2011 highlights persisting gender segmentation of the labour market, with women concentrated in a fewer sectors and occupation than men. It also highlights female workers' greater vulnerability in working conditions and pay (World Bank, 2011: chap. 3), reflected for example in women's much higher share in unpaid family work. CGA 2011 also draws attention to the disproportionate time spent by women on unpaid work at home and recommends collection of better and more detailed data on various forms of unpaid work, given that systematic evidence on these activities is still sparse. Similar concerns were also expressed in the CGA 2006 (UNDP, 2006).

CGA 2011 notes that the structure of the Vietnamese economy has been changing rapidly over the last decades, as a result of liberalization and international economic integration. Moreover, it expresses concern as to whether women have been able to fully benefit from the new opportunities that these processes have generated. It also presents evidence suggesting that the 2008 global financial crisis might have hit women harder than men in terms of higher rates of unemployment and under-employment (World Bank, 2011: chap. 3).

This study examines whether these economic trends and gender-based inequalities continue and whether anything is changing and why.

1.3.2. RECENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

There appears not to have been any significant change in the broad orientation of the Government of Viet Nam's economic strategy in the years since CGA 2011 (UNDP, 2016). In 2010, Viet Nam reached lower middle-income country status, and the vigorous market-oriented

reforms and trade liberalization undertaken by the Government since the mid-1980s are being carried further forward. The overall development goal of the Government, as reiterated in its 2011-2020 Socio-Economic Development Strategy, is to become a "modern industrialized country by 2020" and to continue shifting labour from agriculture to industry and services. It is important to continue paying attention to the possible gender implications of this transition since the dynamics associated with the early stages of Viet Nam's structural transformation from agriculture towards manufacturing display strong gender patterns (World Bank, 2011; Jones and Tran, 2010).

STABILIZATION, STRUCTURAL REFORMS AND PUBLIC SPENDING.

The 2008 global financial crisis has indeed had repercussions. The manufacturing sector, the main driver of growth between 1997 and 2007, was hardest hit. The country managed to recover and, in the last few years, has been experiencing some growth but at a slower pace than the pre-crisis average of 7 percent. In one of its regular assessments on economic developments in Viet Nam, the World Bank commends the Government's efforts to stabilize the economy, but notes that much more emphasis must be placed on structural reforms: "But even as the economy has stabilized, growth has slumped. Without accelerating structural reforms, especially in the banking and state-owned enterprise (SOE) sectors, Viet Nam faces the risk of a prolonged period of slow growth" (World Bank, 2013). In relation to attempts to control the budget deficit and rationalize public spending (the core elements of stabilization), the World Bank stresses that it is of utmost importance that the Government of Viet Nam maintain a commitment to protect social safety nets. This point is further reinforced in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Viet Nam Human Development Report (2016), which states that it is important that prudent fiscal policy does not compromise social inclusion. It recommends that public expenditures be made more progressive with particular emphasis on higher and more effective investments in education, health and

social protection services (UNDP, 2016). This is key to prevent inequality from growing further and to support Viet Nam's shift to a more inclusive growth model. As already noted in sections 1.2.2 and 1.2.3, this emphasis is evidently also highly relevant for the objective of gender equality. This is precisely what could put Viet Nam on a gender egalitarian path of care provision according to Braunstein's definition. Ample evidence from other parts of the world demonstrates that well-designed social safety nets as well as adequate public provision of basic social services are vital for the advancement of women's opportunities (UN Women, 2015).

INTERNATIONAL TRADE. As regards the key drivers of the Viet Nam economy, the external sector continues to be a significant engine of growth. Export value in US dollar terms is estimated to have grown by about 14 per cent in 2014, outperforming other countries in the region (World Bank, 2015d). High-tech products such as cell phones and parts, computers, electronics and automobile parts are the largest and fastest growing export items but garments are also important exports, whereas agricultural exports are slightly declining. Noting that the quality of the Viet Nam labour force in general still constitutes a challenge, recent studies (World Bank, 2013a) point to enhancing the skills of workers through specialized training as a key ingredient for Viet Nam's increased international competitiveness. This point is a frequent focus of current debate in a number of policy circles (UNDP, 2016). It is crucial to ensure that women workers will be included in this process of skill upgrading on equal terms as men workers. Interventions in the areas of transport, infrastructure, and compliance with standards are too needed for improved competitiveness, and it is important that these too are designed in gender sensitive ways.

The establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community in early 2015 and the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in late 2015 represent important further steps towards Viet Nam's greater trade

integration. The country's participation in these two new trade agreements is likely to cause both gains and losses, with the net effects on national income distribution and gender equality highly dependent on the sort of reforms and complementary policies that the Government will be able to put in place. The analysis provided in the next chapters seeks to contribute inputs to inform the Government's efforts.

AGRICULTURE. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2012) notes that agriculture in Viet Nam remains the main source of livelihood for the majority of the poor, and hence investments in this sector are crucial for poverty alleviation, particularly in the most disadvantaged regions such as the Central Highlands and the Northern Midlands. This point is further stressed in Viet Nam's recent National Human Development Report (UNDP, 2016). Agriculture, and especially fisheries, have grown steadily in recent years but a number of constraints are still present. IFAD mentions, among others: low product quality; Viet Nam's lower prices than those of neighbouring countries for its rice, coffee, tea, rubber and aquaculture exports; inadequate agricultural knowledge systems; uneven transport infrastructure; weak farmer access to market information; and limited integration along value chains. Evidence from other countries shows that addressing these constraints is best achieved by taking into account their gendered dimensions (FAO, 2011b; FAO, ILO and IFAD, 2010).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC OUTCOMES. Viet Nam is likely to have achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The country is recognized as having made impressive progress on poverty reduction (MDG target 1). Progress in reducing malnutrition of children under five has also been significant, falling from 41 per cent in 1990 to 15 per cent in 2013 (UNDP, 2016). While the target of eradication of extreme poverty and hunger has been achieved ahead of the 2015 deadline, more than half of Viet Nam's ethnic minority groups, however, continue to live below the poverty line, and significant inequalities remain

along both ethnic and geographical lines. For instance, women and men from ethnic minorities tend to have fewer assets such as land, capital and education, and are almost twice as likely to work as self-employed in low-productivity agriculture (Jones and Tran, 2010; Chapter 2 of this study). Further, while maternal health has significantly improved on average, in remote and ethnic minority areas, maternal mortality rates remain very high and contraceptive use very low (UNDP, 2016).

In a special report on inequalities (World Bank, 2014), the World Bank states that

... despite progress towards achieving universal health insurance coverage, approximately 34 million people are not covered by any type of health insurance, most of whom are concentrated among the near poor, farmers, and dependents of workers... There is still a significant share of the population at risk of financial hardship due to out-of-pocket health expenditures... and richer households receive higher quality health care than poorer households.

The same World Bank report also notes that children from poor households are far less likely to have access to sanitation facilities and healthcare, and attend secondary school, and much more likely to be malnourished. These inequalities in opportunities are likely to have significant long-term consequences on the ability of these groups of Vietnamese children to succeed in life. Generally, an emerging common view, supported by a growing body of evidence, is that social inequalities, including but not limited to those based on income, are on the rise, as are perceptions of inequity. Although Viet Nam has achieved impressive expansion in the absolute coverage of education and health services, it is argued that a greater emphasis on the accessibility and quality of education and health services is now much needed to ensure that Viet Nam moves toward a more equitable and inclusive path of economic development (London 2011, Duong, 2015). As

noted in the earlier section on public spending, in line with this view and in the light of further evidence on continuing limited inclusion of low income groups, ethnic minorities and migrants in both educational and health services, UNDP calls for a more active role of the State in funding and delivering social services (UNDP, 2016).

Another important issue likely to have considerable socio-economic implications and important gender dimensions relates to Viet Nam's rapidly ageing population. Women are overrepresented among the very elderly (80 years or older) but are less likely to have a pension or other forms of social protection than men (UNFPA, 2011). Old women's vulnerable position is accentuated by their longer life expectancy and their earlier statutory retirement age (55 vs 60 years). The issue of elderly care is expected to be given attention to in the Social-Economic Development Plan for 2016-2020 (UNFPA, 2011).

One of the main aims of this study is indeed to expose the gender, spatial and ethnic-based differences that are often masked by headline socio-economic indicators such as those used in the context of the MDGs and thereby contribute to the debate on how to make the new Sustainable Development Goals Agenda more inclusive and transformative in practice.

1.4. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Reflecting the conceptual framework and general approach outlined in section 1.2, the study is organized in three main chapters. Chapter 2 deals with quantitative data and its main aim is to go beyond a few headline indicators and aggregate figures. It builds a comprehensive statistical picture of the Viet Nam economy that exposes how resources are unequally distributed across different groups of women and men. The objective of this exercise is twofold: assembling together and thoroughly analysing existing gender statistics to

identify key constraints, patterns and interactions; and highlighting remaining data gaps. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 deal mostly with policies and issues of implementation. Chapter 3 focuses on paid employment and considers the specific challenges and constraints facing three distinct categories of women workers: small-scale women farmers, domestic paid workers and garment factory workers. These three occupations were chosen after consultations with various stakeholders because they all represent occupations dominated by women and each is characterized by different types of vulnerability. Its main objective is to examine policies that are currently in place and to explore how they can be improved to better realize women's labour rights and make their economic livelihoods more secure. This includes, among others, more equitable and effective ways to organize care provision to support working women. Chapter 4 returns again to the issue of care, informed by the premise that the goal of reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work is to be understood as an across-the-board concern involving a wide spectrum of programmes and interventions. It examines in particular basic infrastructural investments in water and sanitation, which have the potential to reduce the drudgery of unpaid work, as well as provision of childcare, which has the potential to support working mothers by redistributing some unpaid work away from them. It attempts to assess how far the Vietnamese Government has been willing to incorporate gender and equality concerns in these policies. Chapter 5 concludes by situating Viet Nam's current overall economic growth model in the context of other economic development trajectories in South-East Asia and offering final policy recommendations.

1.5. METHODOLOGY

The study uses a range of different methodological approaches, including both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Chapter 2 provides a detailed quantitative analysis of a range of datasets, mostly various rounds of nationally representative surveys

such as the Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS), the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Monitoring Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

Chapters 3 and 4 cover desk reviews of policy papers, government documents and academic literature; key informant interviews with government officials, both at national and provincial levels, and other development actors; and primary field research. A series of workshops and consultations with various stakeholders have been carried out in both the early and final stages of the project to solicit ideas on key themes and priority areas for the study. 🌐

2

THE VIETNAMESE ECONOMY AS A GENDERED STRUCTURE

CHAPTER 2. THE VIETNAMESE ECONOMY AS A GENDERED STRUCTURE

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The economy of a country is a gendered structure in that economic resources such as jobs, assets, infrastructure and time are not equally distributed between women and men. These gender-based distortions in the distribution of resources are resistant to change, but not unchangeable. They are a significant barrier to economic and social development, which the Government has an important role to play in redressing.

Gender biases can be found in the labour market, where women often work in a narrow range of sectors and occupations, and their earnings do not always reflect the full extent of their contribution. Gender biases are also found in the sphere of household-based domestic work and care, which are overwhelmingly carried out by women and girls, with only limited support from male family members and public institutions. This household work, which involves many hours of unpaid labour spent on cooking and cleaning, collecting water and fuel, and taking care of the children, the elderly, as well as ill and able-bodied adults, is vital to ensure the effective functioning of the market-oriented economy, through its impact on the well-being and productivity of the labour force (Elson, 1991; UN Women, 2015). The burden of combining productive (mostly paid) and reproductive (unpaid) responsibilities limits women's access to decent jobs, often increases their stress levels and has

an impact on power dynamics within households. Thus, understanding the interdependence between the market sphere and the non-market (unpaid) sphere, and the gender division of labour within them is the necessary premise for any economic analysis aimed at promoting gender equality and inclusive growth.³

Gender intersects with different sources of disadvantage such as a lack of income or education, place of residence and ethnicity, and it is also important to expose biases in the distribution of economic resources and opportunities along these lines. Planning for inclusive economic growth must involve special attention to those groups of women who are further marginalized because of where they live, their background or the stage in their life cycle. A major challenge in many parts of the world is the growing gap between women whose economic and personal status has improved, and those who are further disadvantaged as inequalities widen (ILO, 2015; Seguino, 2013; Kucera and Milberg, 2007).

Applying this analytical lens, the main objective of Chapter 2 is to examine available statistics that help in identifying key gender patterns in various domains of economic opportunities and access to resources, and to relate these patterns to the structure of the Viet Nam economy.

³ Conventional economic analysis still mostly concerns housework as an activity with limited repercussions on the rest of the economy. However, alternative approaches that recognize the contribution that the unpaid provision of care makes to the productivity of the labour force, and hence to the healthiness and sustainability of the economic system, are gaining ground, as described in Chapter 1.

A wide range of data is necessary to adequately paint such a statistical picture. Assembling all the required sex-disaggregated data together is an arduous task and requires a careful review of many sources and surveys. But it is an important necessary step to enable a rigorous assessment of the distributional implications of any economic reform in Viet Nam, whether it be related to greater trade integration (e.g. World Trade Organization accession, a fuller involvement in the ASEAN Economic Community, and participation in the TPP) or government budget policies (e.g. public investment allocations). Without regular data collection and monitoring over a range of gender and inequality indicators, policies cannot be designed and implemented equitably and effectively.

Distributional effects are likely to occur through many channels and to involve interactions between the paid and the unpaid economy. Therefore, gender statistics would need to include a variety of aspects such as: hours of both unpaid and paid work; employment status; working conditions; skills and asset ownership; and access to social and physical infrastructure. Differences between regions, economic sectors and household groups also need to be highlighted. In Viet Nam, some of these statistics are available but not systematically reported in official reports. Other statistics are still missing. Gender economic data gaps seem to be especially acute with respect to measuring time spent on unpaid domestic work and care, the agricultural sector, asset ownership and women's access to public services.

⁴ Another important source of nationally representative statistics in Viet Nam is the Rural Agricultural and Fishery Census. It could not be examined first hand due to limited time and resources. It would be essential, however, to thoroughly review this census from a gender perspective since agriculture is one of the areas where gaps in gender statistics remain most acute. Reference to findings from a 2010 FAO Gender Profile drawn from the 2006 Rural Census is made in Chapter 3.

⁵ More specifically, the study relies on the LFS 2014 for the most up-to-date picture of aspects of employment quantity and quality, but uses mainly the VHLSS for analysis of patterns over time. While various rounds of the VHLSS over an eight-year period (from 2004 to 2012) were made easily available, the most recent 2014 VHLSS, was not yet ready to be shared with users. Raw data from the Labour Force Survey were restricted to 2014, the most recent round. An advantage of the LFS is that it conforms to international conventions in definitions and classifications of employment statistics, while this is not always the case for the VHLSS. Yet, the VHLSS includes a wider range of questions and dimensions than the LFS, and this enables the researcher to explore more closely workers' circumstances in relation to a number of relevant socio-economic characteristics. The study relies on MICS 2014 and 2011 to examine more specialized issues such as child care provision and WASH, which are treated in the MICS in greater detail than in the VHLSS. Ideally one would want to have easy access to all of these datasets over a long time period. Greater harmonization of all these surveys and easier access to their raw data would greatly enhance the capacity of the Government, and research centres, to produce and use sound and timely evidence for policy formulation.

A thorough search of nationally representative surveys and other data sources was undertaken for this study. The analysis presented here combines findings mostly from the Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS), the LFS and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).⁴ The main focus here is on data from the latest year available (usually 2014 or 2012), but patterns over the last decade are also described whenever possible to offer a perspective of how inequalities may have changed over time.⁵

This exercise will help to demonstrate that there are already many useful gender-relevant economic statistics in Viet Nam, but that they need to be made more accessible and more compatible with each other. It will also help to identify areas where improvements in data collection are most urgent.

The following pages start from a few aggregate numbers but then gradually move on to more detailed disaggregations, by zooming into a number of likely determinants of disadvantage. After presenting the findings on labour market outcomes, the chapter follows with an analysis of dimensions related to the distribution of unpaid housework and care.

2.2. PATTERNS OF INEQUALITY IN THE LABOUR MARKET

This section starts by presenting a broad brush picture of the gender structure of the Viet Nam economy through basic aggregated statistics on output and employment. It then follows with a socio-economic profile of workers in agriculture, who constitute a significant share – about half – of the total Vietnamese workforce as well a high share of vulnerable employment. Later, the section also describes employment trends in non-agricultural sectors and in relation to export trends as well as gender patterns in various aspects of job quality such as working conditions and earnings.

2.2.1. THE AGGREGATE PICTURE OF OUTPUT AND EMPLOYMENT

KEY MESSAGES

- The last decade has seen little change in the structure of the gross domestic product (GDP), but a substantial change in the structure of employment, away from agriculture and towards manufacturing and services, which suggests slow growth in labour productivity in these sectors.
- When considering the country as a whole, women and men are leaving agriculture at a comparable pace, but there are significant regional differences.
- Agriculture remains the employer of about half of the labour force and is by far the main source of livelihoods for ethnic minorities. This is in contrast to many of Viet Nam's South-East Asian neighbours including Thailand and Indonesia, where the share of the female (and male) labour force in agriculture is smaller.
- Female employment in manufacturing is growing at a faster pace than male employment. Low labour productivity in this sector has gender connotations.

- The share of female employment in services has slightly declined.

Table 1 compares output and employment by the four key broad industrial sectors in 2004 and 2012. The structure of Viet Nam's gross domestic product (GDP) seems to have altered only slightly in the last ten years, with more substantial changes having occurred in the earlier decade.⁶ A more significant structural shift can be observed in employment, away from agriculture and towards manufacturing and services. This change is consistent with the goals of the Government's 2011–2020 SED Strategy, which is about "making Viet Nam a modern industrialized country and shifting labour from agriculture to industry and services by 2020". The increase in the share of manufacturing in employment without a commensurate increase in the share of manufacturing in GDP suggests, however, limited improvements in labour productivity in this sector. This aspect is of concern to the Vietnamese Government and is frequently the object of current policy debates. Greater attention to the gender dimensions of this low labour productivity would contribute to the formulation of more effective measures to address the problem. More broadly, it is important to understand better the dynamics associated with this transition, and to pay particular attention to those workers and households who are most at risk of being left behind.

As shown in Table 1, since 2004 there has been a 10 per cent decline in the share of workers, both females and males, who report agriculture as their primary source of employment. In 2012, about 47 per cent of women and 42 per cent of men worked in agriculture, compared to 56 per cent of women and 51 per cent of men just eight years earlier.⁷ These data suggest that women and men are leaving agriculture at a comparable pace, and that therefore Viet Nam as a whole is not experiencing

⁶ The contribution of agriculture to GDP declined from almost 40 per cent in 1990 to about 21 per cent in 2003, while at the same time the contribution of industry increased from 23 per cent in 1990 to 37 per cent in 2003. Industry is defined here to include construction and mining as well as manufacturing. Services have also grown over the years, but at a slower pace than industry (World Bank, World Development Indicators, various years).

⁷ These are figures from VHLSS 2012. LFS 2014, two years later, seems to broadly confirm these patterns (48 per cent of the total female labour force and 45 per cent of the total male labor force), although clearly VHLSS and LFS data are not strictly comparable.

Table 1. Output and gender patterns of employment by aggregate industrial sector, 2004 and 2012

Industrial Sector	GDP (%)		Total employment (%)		Female employment (%)		Male employment (%)		Female intensity (%)	
	2004	2012	2004	2012	2004	2012	2004	2012	2004	2012
Agriculture	20.0	19.7	53.7	44.5	56.4	46.8	51.0	42.2	52.3	51.7
Mining and Construction	18.7	21.2	6.5	8.1	1.5	2.4	11.5	13.7	11.2	14.2
Manufacturing	18.7	17.4	12.7	16.3	13.4	18.1	12.0	14.5	52.4	54.7
Services	42.5	41.7	27.1	31.1	28.8	32.7	25.5	29.6	52.8	51.7
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0		

Source: Employment shares calculated from VHLSS, various years, and GDP shares from World Bank World Development Indicators, various years.

NOTES:

'Agriculture' also includes Fisheries and Forestry.

'Mining and Construction' also includes Utilities.

'Female intensity' is defined as the percentage of the female labour force in a specific sector. A share higher than 50 per cent indicates that the sector is female-intensive.

Here, 'Employment' follows the standard ILO definition of 'employed persons aged 15 and over in the survey reference week'.

a 'feminization of agriculture' unlike some other countries in the South Asian region, for example. The proportion of agricultural workers who are female has remained stable over the last years and agricultural sector workforce actually seemed to be slightly less female-intensive in 2012 than in 2004, as illustrated in Figure 1. Other data later in this chapter are used to investigate whether there have been other changes within agriculture that are relevant for understanding gender dynamics, but are not visible at this aggregate level.

It is important to keep in mind that, despite this shift out of agriculture, agriculture remains the principal source of employment for about half of the labour force. This is in contrast to many of Viet Nam's Asian neighbours, not only the Republic of Korea or Malaysia, which are now fully industrialized countries and where the proportion of the female (as well as total) employed population in agriculture is below 10 percent,

but also other ASEAN partners such as Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, where such a share is less than 40 per cent (ILO and ADB, 2014; Chapter 5 of this study). The continuing prominent role of agriculture as a source of jobs, combined with the fact that the majority of people in Viet Nam still live in rural areas (about 70 per cent of households), indicates that improving the productivity and earning capacity of these women (and men) who remain in agriculture must remain a high policy priority, at least as much as boosting manufacturing and services growth.

Unlike other South-East Asian economies, such as the Republic of Korea and Malaysia, that have experienced a recent decline in the importance of manufacturing in employment creation, including for women (see Tejani and Millberg, 2010), Viet Nam has seen growing employment shares in manufacturing over the last ten years, more so for female workers than for male workers. This relates

BOX 2.

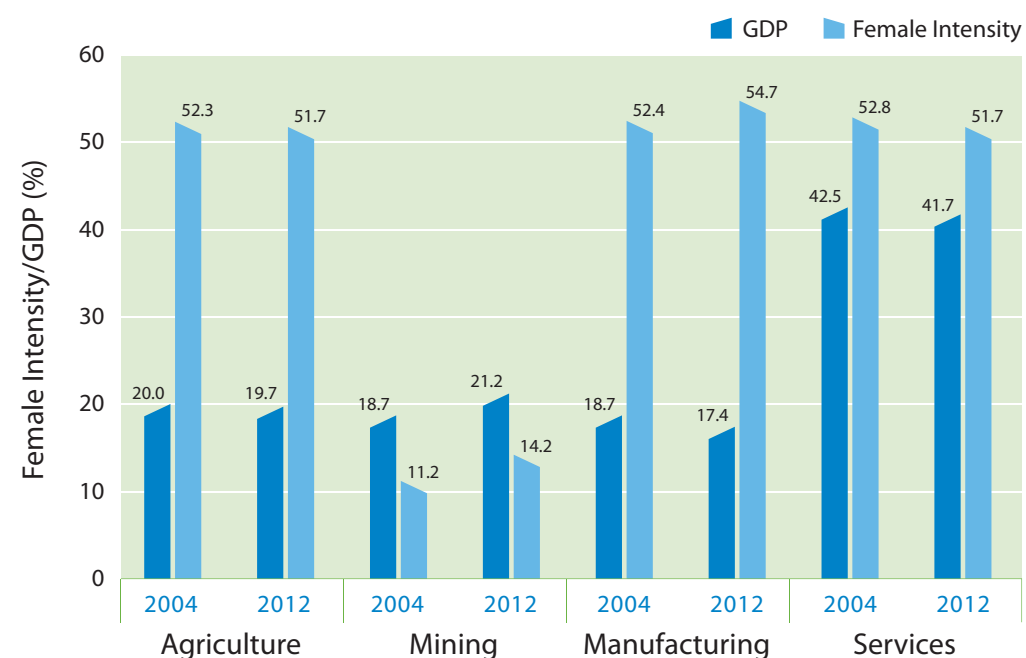
WHAT IS MEANT BY THE 'FEMINIZATION OF AGRICULTURE'? AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO GO BEYOND HEADLINE INDICATORS

Since the 1990s, a number of studies on gender and rural employment have been pointing to the 'feminization of agriculture' in a number of developing regions and countries. The term 'feminization of agriculture' can mean different things and should be used with caution. It refers broadly to women's increasing presence (or visibility) in the agricultural labour force, whether as own-account producers, unpaid contributing family workers or agricultural wage workers. Others use the term to indicate deterioration in the quality and productivity of agricultural employment, which affects women farmers to a greater extent than men farmers (e.g. Standing, 1999).

Evidently, the terms and conditions under which women are involved in agricultural employment matter for gender equality and poverty outcomes – the 'feminization' of unpaid contributing family work indicates an increase in vulnerability for women, while the 'feminization' of farm management might be an opportunity for improved livelihoods and emancipation, provided that the female farmers concerned are adequately supported through agricultural public policies. For policy purposes, it is therefore more fruitful to look at gender patterns of employment status in agriculture rather than simply counting the numbers of women and men who work in it.

The limited data available for Viet Nam clearly show women are mostly involved in agriculture as unpaid family workers at the low end of the productivity spectrum, and that agriculture is where the gender earnings gap is most pronounced. However, there are still many knowledge gaps that urgently need to be filled.

Figure 1. Output and female intensity by aggregated industrial sector, 2004 and 2012



Source: Calculations from VHLSS data.

NOTE: Agriculture and mining are defined as in Table 1.

to the fact that Viet Nam is at an earlier stage of industrialization. The percentage of female workers in the manufacturing sector as a whole increased from 52 per cent in 2004 to 55 per cent in 2012. As shown in Figure 1, although relatively few women work in mining and construction, their presence in this sector has also risen, from 11 per cent in 2004 to 14 per cent in 2012, while their presence in services has slightly declined.

2.2.2. THE AGGREGATE PICTURE OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS

KEY MESSAGES

- More women than men are in vulnerable employment. This is mostly due to a much larger share of women in the category of 'unpaid family workers'.
- The gender gap in vulnerable employment is particularly high for older workers.
- The proportion of women in the 'unpaid family worker' category has declined in the last five years, while the proportion of women in the 'wage worker' category has increased.
- The proportion of 'wage workers' without social insurance is substantially higher among men than among women due to male workers' higher representation in the domestic private sector.
- Vulnerability and informality are highest among ethnic minorities, reflecting their strong presence in agriculture.

Table 2. Employed population by sex and employment status, 2014

Employment Status	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)	Female intensity (%) (2009)	Female (%) (2014)
Employer	1.2	2.9	2.1	32.6	28.4
Own-Account Worker	41.6	40.1	40.8	51.1	49.7
Unpaid Family Worker	26.6	16.5	21.4	64.1	60.4
Wage Worker	30.6	40.5	35.6	40.1	41.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	48.7	48.6

Source: Calculated from GSO (2014) Labour Force Survey data.

NOTES:

The category 'members of cooperatives' has been omitted from the original data because the figures were negligible. Female intensity is defined as the percentage of the labour force in a specific sector that is female. Data in the last column are from GSO, 2014, Table 2.10.

This initial snapshot reveals little about differences in the quality of jobs available to different groups of women and men. A good way to gain a first impression about the quality of employment is to look at gender differences in employment status. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines workers in vulnerable employment as the sum of own-account workers and unpaid family workers. As in many other low- and middle-income countries, women in Viet Nam are more likely than men to be in vulnerable forms of work.

Table 2, constructed with most recent LFS data, shows that in 2014, 68 per cent of women workers were in vulnerable employment compared with less than 57 per cent of men workers. It is significant that this gap is mostly explained by a much larger share of women in the category of ‘unpaid family workers’ (27 per cent of women compared with 16 per cent of men are in this group), while the female and male shares of ‘own-account workers’ are similar (42 per cent and 40 per cent of the total employed population for women and men respectively). It is also instructive to note that the gender gap in vulnerable employment appears to increase substantially with age: from only two percentage points difference between women and men in the 15-24 age bracket to 20 percentage points in the 55-59 age bracket (details of this are shown in Table A1).⁸ As concerns other categories, only about 1 per cent of employed women are ‘employers’ and about 31 per cent are ‘wage workers’ (the corresponding figures for men are 3 per cent and 41 per cent respectively). Importantly, the proportion of women in the ‘wage worker’ category has increased in the last five years, while the proportion of women in all the other categories

has declined (see last two columns of Table 2). This is most certainly a reflection of the increased presence of women in manufacturing described earlier, since wage work is a more common form of employment in this sector. By contrast, and as might be expected, agriculture tends to have higher shares of unpaid family workers and own-account workers than other industries (FAO, IFAD and ILO, 2010).

The 2014 LFS usefully asks whether workers are covered by social insurance, a lack of which is what constitutes ‘informal employment’ according to the official ILO definition, as pointed out in Box 3. Informal employment defined this way seems extremely high, and with almost equal shares for men and women: only 19 per cent of employed females and 18 per cent of employed males are covered by social insurance,⁹ or 81 per cent of female workers and 82 per cent of male workers are in informal employment.¹⁰ As shown in Table 3, it is not only the totality of own-account workers and unpaid family workers (i.e. the employed classified as ‘vulnerable’) that has no social insurance, but also about half of all wage workers. As seen in Table 2, the proportion of women in vulnerable employment is higher than that of men, but the proportion of wage workers without social insurance is substantially higher among men (58 per cent) than among women (39 per cent). This is most likely due to male wage workers’ over-representation in domestically owned private enterprises, where social insurance coverage is much lower than in either the public sector or the foreign-owned sector.¹¹ Similar patterns, although less pronounced than in Viet Nam, can be observed in the East and South-East Asian region as a whole, where women constitute a larger

⁸ One of the factors explaining the higher gender gap in vulnerable employment for workers in their fifties is that the official retirement age for women is at 55, i.e. five years earlier than for men, may be one of the factors explaining the higher gender gap in vulnerable employment for workers in their fifties.

⁹ The corresponding figures for the East and South-East Asian region as a whole are 22 per cent of employed females and 21 per cent of employed males (UN Women, 2015)

¹⁰ These figures are consistent with findings in Cling et al. (2011), who report similar total shares for both 2007 and 2009, but do not calculate any gender breakdown.

¹¹ According to 2014 LFS data (2014 GSO Report on the LFS, Table 2.9) men are 57 per cent of workers in domestically owned enterprises and only 34 per cent of workers in foreign-owned enterprises.

BOX 3.

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS ON VULNERABILITY AND INFORMALITY: WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO GO BEYOND HEADLINE INDICATORS

INTERNATIONALLY AGREED DEFINITIONS

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines workers in vulnerable employment as the sum of own-account workers and unpaid family workers (also called ‘contributing family workers’). These workers are more likely to have inadequate earnings (if at all), low productivity and difficult conditions of work that undermine their livelihoods and rights. The category of own-account workers tends to be heterogeneous and can include entrepreneurial activities with relatively secure earnings as well as activities at the margin of survival. By contrast, an unpaid family worker faces indeed the most vulnerable conditions as her status implies no independent access to income. As in many other low and middle-income countries, in Viet Nam more women than men are in vulnerable forms of work.

Statistics on the informal economy is a relatively new area for data collection, but progress has been made since 1993, when the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) recommended a statistical definition of the informal sector, and since 2003, when it added a statistical definition of informal employment covering employment both inside and outside the informal sector. The 1993 ICLS definition of informal sector captures employment that takes place in unincorporated enterprises that are unregistered or small. However, there is also informal employment outside informal sector enterprises: notably, ‘all persons who are not covered by social protection through their work’, including some employees in formal enterprises as well as many domestic workers, most casual day labourers and all unpaid contributing family workers. The 2003 ICLS definition includes informal wage employment outside informal enterprises as well as employment in the informal sector. This broader concept is referred to as informal employment.

Since 2007, the Viet Nam’s Labour Force Survey asks the question of whether workers are covered or not by social insurance through their work. This permits measurement of what constitutes informal employment according to the official ILO definition. Official statistics in Viet Nam indicate that, by this definition, the shares of women and men in informal employment are similar, and very high as shown in Table 3.

BEYOND HEADLINE INDICATORS

For policy purposes, it is important that these different components of informal employment are understood and singled out, and that gender patterns across these different components are highlighted. Both women and men can be informal workers, but the circumstances of women informal workers may differ from the circumstances of men informal workers. The understanding of these differences is crucial for the formulation of well-targeted policy interventions to promote decent work. In Viet Nam, many more women than men are in vulnerable employment, which mostly results from their large presence in the category of unpaid contributing family workers in agriculture. But as concerns wage employment, more male wage workers than female wage workers are in jobs providing no social insurance coverage. It is also possible that yet another fraction of informal workers – domestic paid workers and other casual day labourers, many of which are likely to be women – continue not to be adequately counted in official statistics. Each of these groups of workers would require to be supported through a different set of policies and interventions. It is important that progress continues to be made in the regular collection of comprehensive and inclusive employment statistics.

share of informal self-employment, particularly in agriculture, and men constitute a larger share of informal wage employment (POWW, 2015, Figure 2.10). The gender gap in social insurance coverage appears to vary with age, partly mirroring the pattern already observed for vulnerable employment. It is highest, and in favour of women, in the 18-24 age bracket, but is in favour of men in the 45-64 age bracket: only 8 per cent of female workers who are older than 45 years are covered by social insurance, compared with 14 per cent of men of similar age and with 31 per cent of women in the 18-24 age bracket. This is probably indicative

of younger women clustering in more secure forms of employment than older women.

Informal employment is also higher among ethnic minorities, mostly a reflection of their greater reliance on subsistence agriculture as source of livelihood, as will be shown in the next paragraphs. On average, 93 per cent of women and 94 per cent of men belonging to ethnic minorities are in informal employment compared with about 78 per cent of Kinh women and 80 per cent of Kinh men.

Table 3. Employed population covered by social insurance, by sex, employment status, firm ownership, age and ethnicity, 2014

	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
TOTAL	19.1	17.6	18.3
Economic activity			
Agriculture	0.6	0.9	0.8
Non-agriculture	36.2	31.0	33.5
Employment status			
Employer	6.5	9.7	8.8
Own-account worker	0.2	0.2	0.2
Unpaid family worker	0.4	0.4	0.4
Wage worker	61.4	42.3	50.3
Firm ownership			
State-owned enterprises	93.0	88.1	90.4
Private domestic enterprises	5.9	6.4	6.2
Foreign-owned enterprises	90.5	90.6	90.5
Age group			
<18	8.4	2.8	5.1
18-24	31.3	18.3	24.2
25-44	25.5	22.1	23.8
45-64	8.0	13.7	10.9
65+	0.4	1.5	0.9
Ethnic group			
Kinh	21.7	19.8	20.7
Ethnic minorities	6.6	6.4	6.5

Source: Calculated from GSO, 2014, Labour Force Survey data.

2.2.3. WHO IS LEFT BEHIND IN AGRICULTURE?

KEY MESSAGES

- There are significant spatial and ethnic inequalities by gender in Vietnamese agriculture.
- Agriculture is a more important source of employment for women than for men in the north but not in the south.
- There are many more women (and men) in agriculture in the poorest regions than in the two river delta regions.
- In the Northern Midlands and the Central Highlands, three quarters of women work in agriculture. This compares with only one quarter of women in the South-East.
- The incidence of agricultural self-employment is much higher among women from ethnic minorities, by a factor of more than two.
- Women farmers are older and less likely to have any formal education than women in other occupations.
- None of these disparities has changed since 2008.
- Due to low productivity, poor earnings and seasonality, a considerable share of women farmers must rely on multiple jobs for survival. This share is highest in the poorest regions.

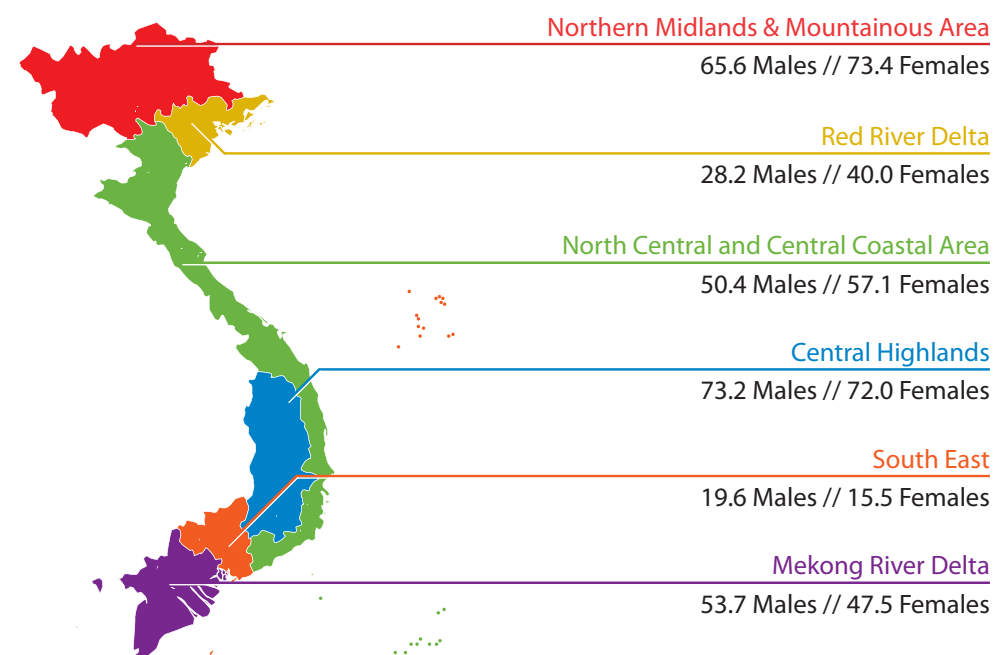
SPATIAL AND ETHNIC INEQUALITIES BY GENDER

The aggregate national shares for the agricultural female and male labour force mask important differences by region in terms of both the overall significance of agriculture as a sector of employment and the gender composition of its labour force, which is illustrated in Figure 2. For example, there are stark differences between the Northern Midlands and the Central Highlands, where agriculture provides employment to about 73 per cent of working age women, and the South-East, where only 15 per cent of women work in agriculture. In the northern regions of Viet Nam, the share of the employed female population in agriculture is larger than the share of the employed male population, while the reverse is true in the central and southern regions. For

example, in the Red River Delta region, 40 per cent of the female employed population and only 28 per cent of the male employed population works in agriculture while in the Mekong River Delta the corresponding figures are 47 per cent for women and 54 per cent for men. The Northern Midlands and the Central Highlands are also the two regions with the highest level of total vulnerable employment and the Red River Delta region is where the gender gap in vulnerable employment is highest (67 per cent of women in this region are in vulnerable employment compared with only 51 per cent of men, as illustrated in Table A1). Not surprisingly, the Northern Midlands and the Central Highlands are the poorest regions, while the South-East is where the bulk of FDI is concentrated, as documented for example in Chaponnière and Cling (2009) and Cling et al. (2009).

Ethnicity also matters. According to the 2012 VHLSS survey, the incidence of agricultural self-employment is much higher among ethnic minorities. The differential is enormous – by a factor of more than two: 80 per cent of ethnic minority women of working age are in agricultural self-employment (either as own-account workers or unpaid family workers) compared with only 38 per cent of Kinh and Chinese women (Rodgers background paper, 2015). The differential between men are similarly large (76 per cent of ethnic minority men are self-employed in agriculture compared with 32 per cent of Kinh and Chinese men), and neither of these disparities have narrowed since 2008 (Rodgers and Menon, 2010).

In terms of education and skills, official statistics indicate that almost no woman working in agriculture has received any technical or vocational training (according to data reported in Table A4, 97 per cent of them has none): about 26 per cent of them has no formal education at all, and another 30 per cent has only completed primary school. As illustrated in Table 4, this is significantly lower than the educational attainment of female workers in other sectors, where about 70 per cent of the

Figure 2. Regional differences: Employment shares in agriculture by sex (percentage)

Source: Calculated from GSO, 2014, Labour Force Survey data; Viet Nam's map adapted from MICS Report, 2015.
NOTE: The boundaries and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

female labour force has secondary education or higher.¹²

RELIANCE ON MULTIPLE JOBS, PARTICULARLY AMONG WOMEN

Agriculture has the lowest earnings of all sectors and the highest gender earning gap (GSO, 2015; Rodgers, 2015); it is also the sector in which seasonality matters most. It is therefore no surprise that many female workers whose primary occupation is in agriculture have to take on more than one paid job to ensure a decent living. According to 2014 LFS data reported in Table 5, 37 per cent of women who work in agriculture

as their primary source of income also work in at least a second job compared with 29 per cent of men.¹³ The share of workers having to take on multiple jobs is considerably smaller in industries other than agriculture. It is instructive to note that the highest share of women with at least a second job and the highest difference in percentage points between women and men in this respect are found in the poorest regions such as the Northern Midlands and the North and Central coastal areas. In these two regions, more than half of those women whose primary occupation is agriculture has at least a second job. By contrast, only about

¹² A similar disaggregation for the male population is reported in the Annex. It shows a similar pattern by educational attainment and by industry, but the share of males with no education in agriculture is smaller than the share of females (about 20 per cent for males compared with 26 per cent for females).

¹³ These data cannot fully capture the intensity of work, for which a comprehensive time use survey would be needed, but may be taken as a good indication of the precariousness of work for some groups. The reason that so many more workers whose primary occupation is in agriculture have second jobs is also related to the seasonal nature of agricultural work.

Table 4. Employed population by sex, aggregate industrial sector and education, 2014

Industrial sector	Female employment (% of total female employed)	No education* (% of sectoral female employed)	Completed primary education (% of sectoral female employed)	Completed secondary education** (% of sectoral female employed)	College or higher education (% of sectoral female employed)
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	48.1	25.8	29.8	43.2	0.9
Industry, Mining and Construction	17.5	9.0	21.4	62.5	7.0
Services	34.4	9.9	18.4	47.1	24.4
TOTAL	100.0	17.4	24.4	47.9	10.0

Source: Calculated from GSO (2014) Labour Force Survey data
NOTE: * Includes 'not completed primary'; **Includes 'secondary vocational schools and training'.

Table 5. Employed population who have at least a second job, by sex, industrial sector, and region

	Agriculture		Industry and Construction		Services	
	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
TOTAL	36.6	29.3	12.3	10.5	10.3	9.7
Region						
Red River Delta	24.1	21.3	19.3	11.8	12.2	8.6
Northern Midlands and Mountainous areas	50.9	41.2	20.3	13.2	15.6	12.3
North Central and Central Coastal areas	58.0	45.0	22.6	17.7	17.8	15.5
Central Highlands	12.6	10.2	11.6	10.3	7.4	11.5
South-East	7.5	7.5	0.9	1.1	2.0	2.5
Mekong River Delta	20.9	22.9	8.1	11.7	8.2	13.8
Main cities						
Hanoi	7.1	5.0	13.9	6.4	5.1	3.7
Ho Chi Minh	4.1	1.4	0.2	0.1	0.6	0.7

Source: Calculated from GSO, 2014, Labour Force Survey data.

3 per cent of both women and men work in additional jobs in the South-East.

2.2.4. FINER SECTORAL DISAGGREGATION OF MANUFACTURING AND SERVICES, MORE MARKED GENDER EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

KEY MESSAGES

- Gender segregation tends to be marked in both manufacturing and services, with modest variation over the years. Women cluster in garments and footwear in manufacturing; and trade, hotel and restaurants, education, and paid domestic work in services.
- In the last ten years, manufacturing employment growth has been faster in sectors where export production has increased.
- The main export-oriented sectors in manufacturing are largely female-intensive sectors. They were either female-intensive to start with in the mid-2000s (garments), or have become so in the process (electronics and vehicle parts). The data available do not permit an assessment of whether the newly created female jobs are mostly unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.

For sectors other than agriculture, it is usually possible to obtain employment data breakdowns by sex at a finer level of detail. This further sectoral disaggregation exposes more marked gender patterns than data for broad industrial sectors, showing how women tend to be clustered in different sectors than men. Table 6 shows that in 2014, the main sectors of employment for women after agriculture are, in order of significance: manufacturing (16 per cent of total

female employment), trade (15 percent), hotel and restaurants (6 percent) and education (5 percent). Paid domestic services is by far the most female-intensive sector in the whole economy (93 per cent of the total employed in this sector is female),¹⁴ whereas construction and transport are predominantly male (less than 10 per cent of the employed in these sectors are female). Within manufacturing, women are heavily concentrated in the textiles and apparel sectors (employing about 6 per cent of the total female labour force and where about 80 per cent of labour is female), while sectors such as basic metals, motor vehicles and other transport equipment are male-intensive (employing about 30 per cent or less of the female labour force), as illustrated in Table 7.

2.2.5. LINKING GENDERED PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT AND EXPORTS

Knowing the gender composition of employment at this level of sectoral detail, or preferably at a finer level, e.g. three-digit International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) code) is needed to predict the distributional effects of structural changes in the economy likely to be associated with Viet Nam's greater outward orientation. Trade leads to some sectors expanding and some sectors contracting, and it is important to know whether the expanding/contracting sectors in Viet Nam employ a large share of women, and on which terms. A recent study by the ILO and the Asian Development Bank (ILO and ADB, 2014) uses a regional Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model¹⁵ including six ASEAN countries (Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam) to simulate the effects of a number

of ASEAN-based economic integration initiatives on different categories of workers grouped by occupation and skill. It finds that in Viet Nam, under all scenarios, women are likely to experience employment gains more than men, but these gains mostly result from an increase in unskilled jobs. This type of analysis is very welcome but continues

to be hampered by the lack of comprehensive gender statistics.

The aim of this study is more modest than that of Plummer, Petri and Zhai (2014), since building a fully developed, gender-aware CGE model for Viet Nam would be too complex within the

Table 6. Gender patterns of employment at one-digit level industrial disaggregation, 2014

Industrial sector	Female Intensity (%)	Female Employment (% of total female employment)	Male Employment (% of total male employment)
A. Agriculture, forestry and fishery	50.7	48.1	44.6
B. Mining and quarrying	22.2	0.2	0.7
C. Manufacturing	53.3	15.8	13.2
D. Electricity, gas, steam and hot water supply	16.1	0.1	0.5
E. Sewage, refuse disposal and distribution of water	45.8	0.2	0.2
F. Construction	9.8	1.2	10.6
G. Wholesale and retail trade	57.9	14.8	10.2
H. Transport and storage	9.8	0.6	5.1
I. Hotels and restaurants	69.6	6.2	2.6
J. Information and communications	35.0	0.4	0.8
K. Financial intermediation, banking and insurance	53.1	0.7	0.6
L. Real estate	46.4	0.3	0.3
M. Professional, scientific and technical activities	35.2	0.3	0.5
N. Administrative activities and supporting services	36.2	0.4	0.6
O. Communist party, public administration and defence	27.2	1.8	4.6
P. Education and training	71.1	5.2	2.0
Q. Human health and social work	61.7	1.2	0.7
R. Recreation and sport	49.1	0.5	0.5
S. Other services	45.0	1.3	1.6
T. Paid domestic services	93.0	0.7	0.1
U. International organizations and agencies	77.4	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	48.8	100.0	100.0

Source: Calculated from GSO, 2014, Labour Force Survey data.

¹⁴ The current figures on the share of paid domestic workers in the total Vietnamese labour force (about 1 percent) are likely to be underestimated as some paid domestic services take place under very precarious terms and conditions and hence are not captured by statistics. As will be analysed in Chapter 3, the majority of workers in paid domestic services have only verbal contracts or none at all. It would be useful to support a special survey on paid domestic workers and find better ways to record their contribution in official data.

¹⁵ A computable general equilibrium (CGE) model describes the functioning of a whole economy, including details for sectors of production, employment categories and household types. Multi-country CGE models, which represent the interactions between a group of countries in terms of goods, prices and employment, are a useful tool to assess the distributional effects of regional trade agreements. However, many of these models are based on very strong assumptions and few of them incorporate gender dimensions.

Table 7. Gender patterns of employment in manufacturing at two-digit level industrial disaggregation, 2014

Industrial sector	Female Intensity (%)	Female Employment (% of total female employment)	Male Employment (% of total male employment)
Total manufacturing	53.3	15.8	13.2
Food products	52.1	2.2	2.0
Beverages	52.0	0.4	0.3
Tobacco products	45.0	0.0	0.0
Textiles	63.4	0.6	0.4
Wearing apparel	79.4	5.4	1.3
Leather and related products	73.3	2.4	0.8
Wood and of products of wood and cork, except furniture	47.1	0.8	0.8
Paper and paper products	49.8	0.3	0.3
Printing and reproduction of recorded media	42.7	0.1	0.2
Coke and refined petroleum products	36.3	0.0	0.0
Chemicals and chemical products	45.6	0.2	0.2
Pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products	48.1	0.1	0.1
Rubber and plastics products	40.1	0.3	0.4
Other non-metallic mineral products	35.3	0.6	1.0
Basic metals	29.5	0.1	0.2
Fabricated metal products, exc. machinery and equipment	11.3	0.2	1.7
Computer, electronic and optical products	69.2	0.6	0.3
Electrical equipment	45.5	0.2	0.2
Machinery and equipment	33.0	0.0	0.1
Motor vehicles; trailers and semi-trailers	39.4	0.1	0.1
Other transport equipment	25.1	0.1	0.2
Furniture	24.7	0.7	1.9
Other manufacturing	64.5	0.3	0.2
Repair and installation of machinery and equipment	9.1	0.0	0.4

Source: Calculated from GSO, 2014, Labour Force Survey data.

Table 8. Employment growth and female intensity in formal manufacturing*

Industrial sector	Employment annual growth (female and male) (%)	Female intensity (%)	
		2005	2013
Total manufacturing	7.5	58.6	60.0
Computer, electronic and optical products	27.9	58.0	78.9
Motor vehicles; trailers and semi-trailers	12.3	31.7	57.8
Wearing apparel	10.5	82.6	81.3
Repair and installation of machinery and equipment	9.8	14.6	15.4
Rubber and plastics products	9.6	45.2	47.1
Fabricated metal products (except machinery and equipment)	9.1	26.9	28.3
Machinery and equipment	8.3	20.6	34.3
Other manufacturing	8.3	69.4	71.0
Basic metals	7.7	20.1	19.7
Leather and related products	7.2	82.0	79.4
Electrical equipment	7.2	63.9	60.3
Paper and paper products	7.1	37.1	42.0
Pharmaceuticals, medicinal, chemical and botanical products	6.7	55.2	52.8
Chemicals and chemical products	6.1	33.9	31.5
Printing and reproduction of recorded media	5.5	46.1	44.3
Coke and refined petroleum products	5.1	57.9	20.1
Food products	4.3	59.5	51.4
Furniture	4.2	43.4	42.2
Wood and of wood products (except furniture)	4.1	48.4	41.2
Beverages	4.0	37.8	34.3
Textiles	3.2	65.7	56.0
Other non-metallic mineral products	3.1	32.2	31.7
Other transport equipment	3.0	22.1	27.2
Tobacco products	-1.7	50.5	38.1

Notes: Employment annual growth is calculated as compounded annual growth over the 2005-2013 period.

For the purpose of this survey, the GSO defines formal enterprises as "business which is registered and regulated by the law" (GSO, personal communication, December 2015).

resources available. The focus here is on an ex-post analysis of historical data rather than ex-ante simulations. Descriptive statistics are used to try to link patterns in key exports with changes in the gender composition of the sectoral labour force over approximately the past ten years. For this exercise, different data sources than in earlier sections are used. In particular, these are employment data from the Vietnam Enterprise Survey of the General Statistics Office (GSO) of Viet Nam, because employment data in this survey are disaggregated by sex according to the two-digit-level industrial classification and were easily available for the entire 2005-2013 period. This classification does not correspond perfectly with the classification of manufactures' export data and only refers to employment in formal enterprises,¹⁶ but it is the best match that could be found. Export data are from the General Department of Customs and were provided by the World Bank.

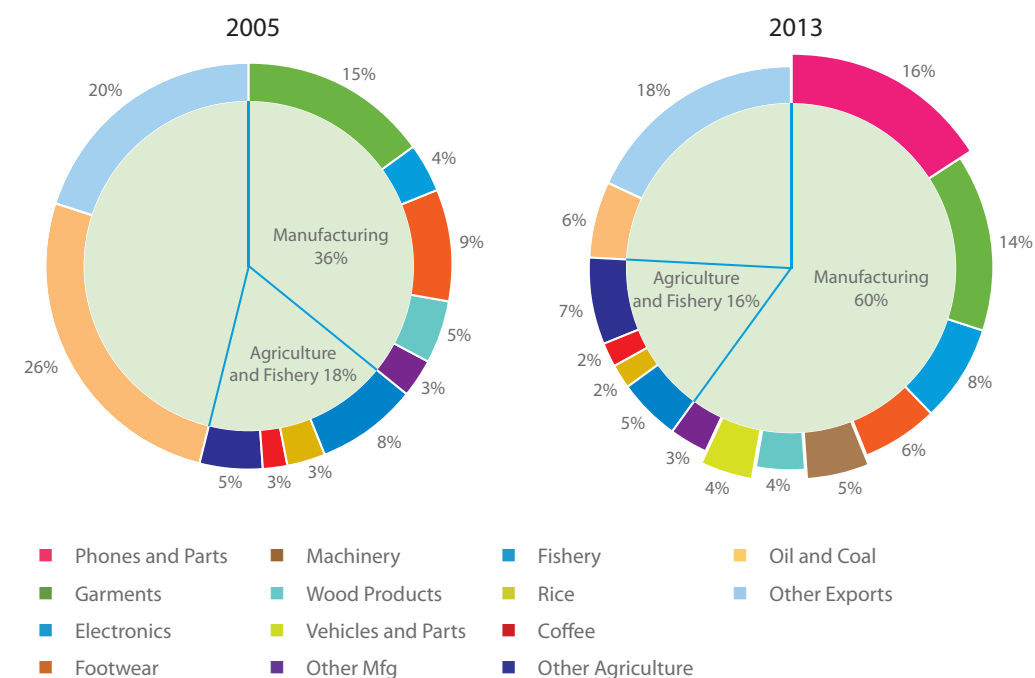
Figure 3 shows Viet Nam's top ten exports in 2013 compared to its top ten exports in 2005.¹⁷ The rapid growth of a few products such as phones, electronics, machinery and vehicle parts – some of which were not at all part of Viet Nam's export basket ten years ago – is especially notable. These items together constituted about 33 per cent of total exports in 2013 compared with a share of less than 5 per cent in 2005. Garments and textile exports continue to be the second top export, at about 14 per cent of total export value, but experienced some fluctuation and decline, particularly at the time of the global financial crisis. Agricultural and fishery exports constituted altogether about 16 per cent of total export value in 2013 compared with a share of about 18 per cent in 2005. They continue to be

dominated by fishery products, coffee and rice but also include new products such as cassava and black pepper. In sum, these patterns point to fairly fast changes in the composition of Viet Nam's merchandise exports, towards a growing share of manufacturing exports – mostly of the low value-added kind but with some high value-added products making inroads.

Table 8 provides information on concomitant changes in the gender composition of employment in manufacturing.¹⁸ The sectors are arranged in descending order, according to the annual rate of their employment growth over the 2005-2013 period. Two important observations should be made: employment growth has been faster in the sectors where export production has increased; and these sectors are largely female-intensive. They were either female-intensive sectors right from the beginning of the period such as garments (also called 'wearing apparel'), or have become so in the process. It is especially notable that the female intensity of employment in electronics has increased from 58 per cent in 2005 to 79 per cent in 2013. Even the motor vehicles sector seems to have shifted from being a relatively male-intensive sector in 2005 to a relatively female-intensive sector (58 per cent) in 2013.¹⁹

Are workers benefitting from greater outward orientation? If so, this points to some possible gender-equalizing effects that may result from Viet Nam's greater trade openness and could be seen as a promising pattern in terms of employment opportunities for women in new dynamic sectors. But these trends need to be assessed with some caution. First, the Enterprise Survey does not provide breakdowns by workers'

Figure 3. Viet Nam Top Exports, 2005 and 2013



Source: Calculated from General Department of Customs data, various years; see also Table A4.

skills, so it is not possible to know whether women are employed in these sectors as unskilled workers or semi-skilled workers, and what opportunity they have to be trained and promoted. Second, these emerging manufacturing sectors are still small and therefore their capacity to absorb female labour remains limited (computer and electronics, the fastest expanding sector, amounted to less than one per cent of total female employment in 2014 as shown in Table 7). Moreover, employers in these sectors, particularly the higher value-added ones, are likely to require at least some level of technical skill as a condition for hiring, thus ruling this out as a viable employment option for the considerable share of the female workforce who has only primary education or less.

An interesting finding from the 2012 VHLSS is that women with little or no schooling are obviously at a disadvantage in obtaining wage jobs compared to women with more schooling,²⁰ but this gradient

is not as steep for men. Only 13 per cent of women with no schooling have access to wage employment compared to 48 per cent of women with upper secondary education, while 22 per cent of men with no schooling are in wage employment compared with 49 per cent of men with upper secondary education (reported in Rodgers, 2015, Table 3.6). This suggests that women may face a higher standard in gaining access to wage employment and/or that men are more likely to be in unskilled wage jobs in non-tradable domestic industries such as construction and transport, where terms of work are insecure and formal education not a condition for entry. Generally, it is evident that, for both women and men, higher levels of education greatly facilitate access to jobs that are decent according to the ILO definition. This issue is explored further in the next section.

¹⁶ The survey covers more than 100,000 firms and its sample has been growing over the years. A drawback is that it only covers firms in the formal sector and does not provide breakdowns by workers' skills. For the purpose of this survey, the GSO defines formal enterprises as "business which is registered and regulated by the law" (GSO, personal communication, December 2015).

¹⁷ The full set of data on which this figure is based is presented in Table A5.

¹⁸ Full data used in the calculations can be found in the Vietnam Statistical Yearbook, various issues. The table only focuses on the manufacturing sub-sectors (for both 2005 and 2013, to show the extent of change).

¹⁹ 'Computer and electronics' also comprises phone and parts, i.e. phone and parts is classified as ISIC 263 'manufacture of communication equipment' and hence included in the ISIC 26 category.

²⁰ This clearly puts women from ethnic minority groups, who tend to have lower than average levels of education, in an especially disadvantageous position.

2.2.6. OTHER GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT

KEY MESSAGES

- Wage employment offers comparatively more favourable conditions to women workers, in particular if they are employed in the public sector or foreign-owned enterprises.
- More female wage workers than male wage workers are likely to have a written contract.
- Having a technical qualification increases the likelihood of a written contract.
- More female wage workers than male wage workers are paid by the piece.
- When overtime is paid, the proportion of workers is highest in garments, footwear and electronics, and female and male wage workers are paid equally.
- The gender earning gap has widened over the last ten years and this applies to both wage workers and the self-employed.
- The gender earning gap is partly explained by the fact that women tend to cluster in low-paid occupations, but there is also a significant proportion of this gap that remains unexplained.
- Only a small percentage of the employed population, both males and females, has some type of technical qualification.
- It is of concern that over the last ten years the share of the employed population with a technical qualification has fallen for women while it has risen for men.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CONTRACTS AND MODE OF REMUNERATION OF WAGE WORKERS

The picture that is gradually emerging from the data analysis in this chapter is one in which wage employment seems to offer comparatively more favourable conditions to women workers, in particular if they are employed in public or foreign-owned enterprises. This point is further corroborated by other findings from the 2014 LFS on the nature of contracts and the mode of remuneration of wage workers, which are presented below.

Tables 9 and A6 show that more female wage workers than male wage workers have a written labour contract (71 per cent of females compared with 52 per cent of males); verbal agreements are more frequent among male workers; and only about 7 per cent of wage workers do not have any type of contract. Not surprisingly, written contracts are much more frequent in non-agricultural sectors. In terms of the duration of the contract, about 45 per cent of female wage workers and 35 per cent of male wage workers have open-ended contracts, while only 4 per cent of female wage workers and 2 per cent of male wage works have short-term contracts of less than one year. But there is considerable variation in these shares depending on the type of firm ownership. In the public sector, 88 per cent of women and 85 per cent of men have open-ended contracts while in the foreign-owned sector, a fixed contract of 1-3 years duration is the most common arrangement (53 per cent of workers, both females and males, hold this type contract). A verbal agreement is the most common form of 'contract' in the domestic private sector, particularly for men (57 per cent).

Education, and in particular a technical qualification, increases the likelihood to have more secure employment arrangements (i.e. to have a contract) for both female and male wage workers. More than 90 per cent of female and male workers with secondary vocational school or any other higher qualification has a labour contract. At this skill level, the difference in contract arrangement between the two genders is minimal. This is a reflection of the fact that workers with higher qualifications and technical skills are more likely to be employed in sectors with more formalized labour relations such as the public sector or the FDI sector. By contrast, only 54 per cent of female wage workers and 32 per cent of male workers with no technical qualification have a written labour contract.

Gender differences in payment modalities are described in Table 10. In 2014, 60 per cent of female wage workers in the non-agricultural sectors were paid a fixed salary compared with 51 per cent

Table 9. Type of contract for wage workers by technical qualification and firm ownership, 2014

Type of contract	Definite term		Verbal agreement		No contract	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
TOTAL	52.5	71.6	38.1	22.3	9.4	6.2
<i>Qualification</i>						
No technical qualification	32.3	54.4	54.7	36.1	13	9.5
Vocational training	68.4	88.4	24.6	7.3	7.0	4.2
Secondary vocational school	91.7	94.1	5.4	4.1	2.8	1.7
College	91.9	95.7	5.9	2.9	2.2	1.4
University and above	98.0	98.5	1.1	0.8	0.9	0.7
<i>Firm ownership</i>						
State-owned enterprises	97.0	98.5	0.9	0.6	2.1	0.8
Private-owned enterprises	30.3	45.3	56.6	43.4	13.1	11.3
Foreign-owned enterprises	97.7	98.1	1.2	1.0	1.1	0.9

Source: Calculated from GSO, 2014, Labour Force Survey data.

Table 10. Payment modalities for wage workers by firm ownership, 2014

Type of contract	Fixed salary		Per worked day/hour		Paid per piece		Other	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
TOTAL	55.9	46.4	25.1	41.0	18.3	11.5	0.7	1.1
<i>Economic sector</i>								
Agriculture	7.4	11.9	74.5	56.3	17.1	26.6	1.0	5.2
Non-agriculture	60.2	50.7	20.6	39.2	18.4	9.6	0.8	0.5
<i>Firm ownership</i>								
State-owned enterprises	92.2	91.2	2.7	3.3	4.3	4.8	0.8	0.7
Private domestic enterprises	37.6	28.6	36.5	56.3	25.0	13.8	0.9	1.3
Foreign-owned enterprises	41.7	45.3	33.2	38.8	24.9	15.4	0.2	0.5

Source: Calculated from GSO, 2014, Labour Force Survey data.

of male workers. More male than female workers were paid per day or hour (39 per cent of males compared with 21 per cent of females) and more female than male workers were paid by the piece (18 per cent of females compared with only 10 per cent of males). Again, it is instructive to look at the breakdown by firm ownership. In the public sector, the vast majority of employees receives a fixed salary and no gender difference in this regard is discernible. In privately owned enterprises, the proportion of workers with a fixed regular salary is much lower (about 32 percent); more male workers than female workers are paid by the day/hour (56 per cent of males compared with 37 per cent of females), but more female workers than male workers are paid by the piece (25 per cent female workers compared with 14 per cent of male workers). A similar pattern can be found in foreign-owned enterprises, except that here, more male than female workers receive a fixed regular salary (45 per cent of males compared with 42 per cent of females). Once again, differences between female and male workers with regard to payment modalities reflect their different distribution across the public, private domestic and foreign sectors. Piece-rate work tends to be common in the garment, leather and footwear industries (ILO, 2014a), where many women are employed. Remuneration at the piece rate or by task work could lead workers to work long hours to earn the minimum wage, which is equivalent to performing unpaid overtime work. Some countries have adopted specific piece-rate national legislation to protect workers from abusive piece-rate practices. For example, in Cambodia, a new law stipulates that pieceworkers' wages must be fixed at a level that "enables a wage earner with mediocre skills and normal output to receive, for the same length of work, a salary at least equal to the guaranteed

minimum wage" (ILO, 2014a, Minimum Wage Systems, ILC 103rd session: 81).²¹

Payments for overtime appear to be rare in either the public sector or the domestic private sector but are common in the foreign-owned sector where about half of the female and male labour force seems to benefit in equal measure. Not surprisingly, the proportion of workers paid for overtime is highest in garments, footwear and electronics, i.e. the most export-oriented sectors with a high presence of foreign firms (see Table A7).

THE GENDER EARNING GAP

Earnings are another important dimension of employment quality. Table 11 is adapted from the most recent LFS Report (GSO, 2015) and describes average monthly earnings of wage workers by one-digit level industrial disaggregation. These data show that agriculture is by far the lowest paying sector for women, followed by paid domestic services and hotel and restaurants. Agriculture is also where the gender wage gap is most pronounced. The financial intermediation and banking sector seems to be the one where women earn the highest wage and face no gender wage differentials. However, it is useful to remember that less than one per cent of the total female workforce is in this sector.

Table 12 shows earnings from a broader perspective, not just wages for wage workers, and is taken from the 2012 VHLSS. It disaggregates earnings data by employment status rather than by industry, distinguishing between self-employed workers and wage workers.²² It also disaggregates by place of residence and ethnicity. These data confirm that agricultural self-employment is the least well-paid occupation, especially for women,

²¹ Viet Nam's labour law does not provide clear regulations on compensation for piece rate workers nor does it offer detailed guidelines on how to calculate their salary. The current provision under the law is that "workers under normal working conditions, including piece rate workers, be paid a minimum wage set at the regional level" (Decree 122/2015). In the garment industry, the common practice is to pay an additional compensation to pieceworkers whose output is low in order to ensure that their salary is equivalent at least to the minimum regional wage (Better Work staff, personal communication, 17 February 2016).

²² More precisely, it is constructed with VHLSS 2012 data and includes all individuals of working age earning some positive cash income, for further details see Rodgers, 2015

Table 11. Average monthly earnings of wage workers by sex and industrial sector, 2014

Industrial sector	Average monthly earnings (thousand VND)			Gender differential (%)
	Total	Male	Female	
TOTAL	4 489	4 662	4 250	91
A. Agriculture, forestry and fishery	2 795	3 100	2 222	72
B. Mining and quarrying	5 930	6 151	5 059	82
C. Manufacturing	4 364	4 768	4 034	85
D. Electricity, gas, steam and hot water supply	5 760	5 895	5 010	85
E. Distribution of water, management and processing activities of sewage and waste	4 497	4 806	4 052	84
F. Construction	3 961	3 984	3 750	94
G. Wholesale and retail trade	4 487	4 635	4 264	92
H. Transport and storage	5 340	5 380	5 094	95
I. Hotels and restaurants	3 759	4 425	3 366	76
J. Information and communication	6 442	6 659	6 047	91
K. Financial intermediation, banking and insurance	7 507	7 348	7 643	104
L. Real estate activities	6 733	6 995	6 366	91
M. Technological, scientific and specialized activities	6 610	6 937	6 129	88
N. Administrative activities and supporting services	4 922	5 160	4 466	87
O. Communist Party, public administration and defence	4 980	5 171	4 467	86
P. Training and education	5 470	6 048	5 237	87
Q. Health and social work	5 474	5 957	5 193	87
R. Recreational cultural and sporting activities	4 381	4 625	4 059	88
S. Other service activities	3 296	3 408	3 183	93
T. Paid domestic services	2 785	2 553	2 797	110
U. International organizations and agencies(*)	8 911	7 655	9 253	120

Source: Calculated from GSO, 2014, Labour Force Survey data.

NOTE: Gender wage differential in the last column calculated by the author as F/M*100.

(*) The U sector accounts for a very small share of the survey sample, and hence statistical reliability is low.

Table 12. Average annual earnings by employment status, location and ethnicity, 2012 (thousand VND, real)

Employment status	Female			Male		
	Wage worker	Agric. self-empl	Non-agric. self-empl	Wage worker	Agric. self-empl	Non-agric. self-empl
TOTAL	14 832	5 054	10 917	19 248	7 392	11 567
<i>Location</i>						
Rural	12 135	5 049	10 358	15 557	7 482	11 413
Urban	17 303	5 103	13 605	22 961	5 746	12 612
<i>Ethnic group</i>						
Kinh/Chinese	15 058	5 684	10 727	19 602	8 201	11 939
Ethnic minorities	9 834	3 531	13 012	11 881	5 074	8 564

Source: Reproduced from Rodgers, 2015; Rodgers' data calculations from GSO, 2012, Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey.

in contrast to male wage work in urban areas, which is the best paid occupation. As shown in Table 13, on average, a rural woman in agricultural self-employment earns only 22 per cent of what an urban man in wage work earns. Individuals from ethnic minorities who live in rural areas, both women and men, have the lowest earnings of all.

Gender gaps in economy-wide earnings may be due to various reasons such as the fact that women tend to cluster in lower-paying sectors – what is often called ‘horizontal gender segregation’. This is certainly the case in Viet Nam: a glance at Table 6 and Table 11 side by side quickly reveals a positive association between sectors employing large numbers of women (e.g. agriculture, hotel and restaurants, and paid domestic services) and low pay. Another reason may be that women also cluster in lower-paying occupations (within a sector), whereas men are able to more easily reach higher paying positions—what is called ‘vertical gender segregation’. For example, according to 2012 VHLSS data, while 40 per cent of all male workers were skilled production workers, just

28 per cent of female workers belonged to this occupational category. In contrast, just 11 per cent of male workers held jobs as sales and services workers – an occupation category that pays less than skilled production work – compared with 18 per cent of female workers. The gender gap in the proportion of skilled production workers as well as in the proportion of sales and services workers seems to have widened since 2004 (Rodgers, 2015).

Gender gaps in earnings may also be due to the fact that women tend to undertake paid work for fewer hours than men. In Viet Nam, 14 per cent of all female wage workers worked part-time in 2012, compared with 10 per cent of men, a gap that has not changed since 2004 (Rodgers, 2015).

In order to assess the role of these factors in determining Viet Nam's gender earnings gap, some regressions and a decomposition analysis were run to identify the portion of the gender earnings gap explained by differences in workers' measured productivity characteristics and the

residual portion attributable to other forms of discrimination.²³ The sample used in the regression analysis initially includes data for all individuals aged 15-65 with positive annual cash earnings, i.e. both wage workers and the self-employed, over the 2004-2012 period.

The main findings of the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition for such sample are that in Viet Nam, the overall female/male earnings ratio has declined from 87 per cent in 2004 to 80 per cent in 2012, i.e. the gender earning gap has widened over time. The residual (or unexplained) portion of the earning gap has remained very high over the years. In 2012, only just above 20 per cent of the total earnings gap could be explained by observable characteristics. Most of the gender pay gap that is explained by observable characteristics is attributable to gender differences in the distribution of occupations and industries, followed by gender differences in hours of paid work, hence confirming the earlier hypothesis in this study. The gender earning gap is due to various forms of gender-based discrimination: some of the discrimination relates to the occupations and industries into which women tend to be channelled, while other discrimination takes place through mechanisms that are more difficult to measure but are nonetheless very persistent.

Findings from a recent ILO Vietnam study on gender-based discrimination in recruitment and promotion practices confirm these observations (ILO Vietnam, 2015). More specifically, the ILO review finds that up to 83 per cent of management job postings indicating a gender preference required male applicants. All of the director posts were exclusively for men and a similar bias was found across other management positions such as ‘managers’ and ‘supervisors’, where 78 and 87 per cent of job advertisements, respectively, only accepted male candidates. The findings of this review thus suggests that these practices are still widespread despite contravening the law that

stipulates that job advertisements should avoid any mention of gender.

Regressions were also run for a smaller sample including only wage workers. The results are similar to the previous ones in pointing to a widening of the gender gap, but the portion of the gap that can be explained is higher for this category of workers (above 35 per cent). Full results of the Oaxaca-Blinder decompositions are provided in Table A9. The large unexplained portion of the gender gap in both regressions should be of concern to policy makers. It demonstrates that the Government needs to find more effective and innovative ways to address continuing and pervasive gender stereotypes about ‘suitable’ occupations for women and girls.

TECHNICAL SKILLS OF THE FEMALE LABOUR FORCE

The persistence of occupational segregation is usually attributed to several factors: gender differences in education and training; discrimination; the unequal distribution of unpaid work; and deeply ingrained stereotypes about gender differences in aptitudes. Women's equal access to quality technical and vocational training can be even more important than formal education in reducing occupational segregation. As highlighted in Chapter 1, Viet Nam has made significant progress in reducing the gender gap in formal education but as far as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is concerned, in 2014 only 16 per cent of the female workforce and 21 per cent of the male workforce had some kind of technical qualification (Annex table A4). It is of concern that data from various rounds of the VHLSS suggest that since 2004, the share of the employed population with technical qualifications has fallen for women while it has risen for men (Rodgers, 2015). This is a cause for concern given the emphasis placed on

²³ Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, is widely used in wage regression analysis. Further technical details on the regressions are provided in Rodgers (2015).

Table 13. Average annual earnings by employment status and location, 2012

Employment status	Female			Male		
	Wage worker (%)	Agric. self-empl (%)	Non-agric. self-empl (%)	Wage worker (%)	Agric. self-empl (%)	Non-agric. self-empl (%)
<i>Location</i>						
Rural	52.9	22.0	45.1	67.8	32.6	49.7
Urban	75.4	22.2	59.3	100.0	25.0	54.9

Source: Calculated from Table 12.

NOTE: Earnings as a percentage of male wage worker earnings in urban areas.**Table 14. Workforce development: Major fields of study in tertiary education, 2008-2013**

2008	Female distribution (%)	Male distribution (%)	Percent female (%)
General programmes	3.7	3.5	50.2
Education	28.5	20.4	57.2
Humanities and arts	5.6	2.6	67.6
Social sciences, business, and law	40.8	26.1	59.8
Engineering, manufacturing, construction	10.6	29.2	25.6
Agriculture	5.7	7.2	43.1
Health and welfare	3.7	3.4	50.8
Services	1.4	7.6	15.1
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	48.8

2013	Female distribution (%)	Male distribution (%)	Percent female (%)
General programmes	2.9	2.3	51.0
Education	28.0	20.0	55.0
Humanities and arts	4.2	3.6	50.0
Social sciences, business, and law	35.0	27.5	52.0
Engineering, manufacturing, construction	17.7	29.7	34.0
Agriculture	5.7	5.8	46.0
Health and welfare	5.2	4.9	48.0
Services	1.4	6.1	17.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	44.1

Source: Reproduced from Rodgers, 2015, drawn from UNESCO, 2015.

NOTE: Distributions are in percent.

technical training in the Government's workforce development strategy and among donors.

Of serious concern is also that the distributions in fields of study still show marked gender patterns. Since the 2012 VHLSS, unlike the earlier waves of the VHLSS, did not ask respondents about field of study;²⁴ Viet Nam's data from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015) were used instead. Table 14 shows that among students enrolled in tertiary education, men are considerably more likely to specialize in engineering, manufacturing, construction, and services, while women are more likely to specialize in social sciences, education, humanities and the arts. No significant change can be observed between 2008 and 2013. This gender segregation in the field of study can be further reinforced by discriminatory practices in the labour markets such as those described in ILO Vietnam (March 2015).

A recent assessment of the likely distributional impact of Viet Nam's integration into the ASEAN Economic Community, which came into effect in January 2016, predicts a further increase of the gender wage gap within a ten-year time frame. This is due to the fact that both male and female wages will increase, but male wages will increase comparatively more (UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and FES, 2015). It should be noted that these predictions are based on the assumption that current working conditions and practices in Viet Nam will remain the same. There is evidently scope for labour, educational and other policies to be strengthened, and hence prevent this gap from widening.

2.3. PATTERNS OF INEQUALITY IN UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK AND CARE

Globally, responsibility for food preparation, housework, water and fuel collection as well

the care of persons, falls disproportionately on women's shoulders. This is documented, among others, in a comparative study of six countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia (UNRISD, 2009). For example, the study shows that in the Republic of Korea, women spend on average more than four hours (263 minutes) every day doing housework and childcare, while men spend only 47 minutes on both, i.e. less than one fifth of women's time. It is important to keep in mind that these averages mask further differences between women and men in households of different income and life circumstances: time for care increases when small children or ill family members need to be looked after, and the task is more onerous if households lack tap water on their premises or access to labour-saving devices. The unequal distribution of unpaid domestic work and care, especially its drudgery component, has an income-poverty dimension as well as a gender dimension, and an awareness of this must be at the centre of equitable policy planning.

2.3.1. A PREAMBLE: DEFINITIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES IN MEASUREMENT

In conversations between policy makers, activists and researchers, there is still confusion at times about what is meant by 'unpaid work' and the measures to be taken. Both women and men (but women more than men) engage in all forms of unpaid work, and it is useful to distinguish these different forms, for both analytical and policy purposes.

DEFINITIONS OF UNPAID WORK. The concept of 'unpaid care and domestic work' used in this study refers mostly to unpaid activities that are outside the UN System of National Accounts (SNA) production boundary, and hence are not included in the measurement of GDP. These activities include preparing and serving food, cleaning the house, washing clothes, looking after

²⁴ The 2006 VHLSS was the last wave of the survey that asked respondents about field of study in tertiary schooling.

children, sick family members and the elderly, and can be further distinguished between activities that mostly involve interpersonal nurturing and are expressions of care for family and friends, and other activities that are mainly drudgery.²⁵ In terms of policy, supporting the relational aspects of care and a fairer sharing of caring responsibilities would require interventions such as: public financing of childcare services; adequate parental leave; promotion of daycare centres and health clinics; and strengthening of community services for the elderly and various other forms of social protection (i.e. a focus on ‘redistribution’ away from households and to public and private sector providers). Addressing the drudgery of unpaid work, by contrast, would mostly call for well-targeted public investment in physical infrastructure and affordable labour-saving technology (i.e. a focus on ‘reduction’).²⁶ Indeed, as noted in Chapter 1, a gender egalitarian system of care provision would be one in which both the time and financial burdens of maintaining and investing in development of human capacities are spread among various institutions, and do not just fall on women within households.

Yet another form of unpaid work involves women’s (more often than men’s) help on the family farm or in small business enterprises without receiving direct remuneration for the output they have contributed to generate. This type of work is classified as ‘unpaid, or contributing, family work’ and included within the SNA production boundary. This aspect of unpaid work is routinely measured, although often under-reported as part of the gross domestic product (GDP) of a country and in employment statistics. Sex-disaggregated statistics on unpaid family workers were analysed in section 2.2. This section examines unpaid domestic work and care.

GOOD PRACTICES IN MEASUREMENT. The study by Budlender (UNRISD, 2009) was made

possible by the growing availability in developing countries of large-scale time use surveys (TUSs). TUSs document how women, men, girls and boys spend their time in a given day or week, allowing measurement of all forms of work, particularly unpaid domestic work and care, which are otherwise not captured in other surveys. The strength of TUSs lies therefore in providing evidence of the gendered division of labour within households and the interdependence of women’s and men’s paid and unpaid work. TUSs generally measure unpaid domestic work and care at a fine level of detail—for example, distinguishing food preparation from food shopping, and physical care of children from reading to, or playing with, them. TUSs also record a range of socio-economic characteristics for the people surveyed, such as whether they live or not in remote areas, their type of dwelling and the level and sources of their income. This level of detail is essential for linking findings from TUSs to concrete spheres of policy action. Aggregate estimates of hours spent on housework as a whole can be used for generic advocacy on the magnitude of the problem and its gender connotation. However, it is only a comprehensive documentation of the specific components of unpaid domestic work and care, and its variability across socio-economic groups that can inform the formulation of national sectoral policies and improve the targeting of specific interventions such as physical infrastructure investment.

Ensuring accuracy in time use reporting across different physical as well as cultural environments is crucial, but not easy to achieve. The literature points to the ‘diary approach’ as the methodology producing least biased results (Esquivel et al, 2008). This involves asking household members to each keep a record of the duration of all daily activities performed over a period of time covering at least a few days in the reference period (usually a week), and ideally for more than one round in

a year to account for seasonality. The diary can be self-administered or managed through an interview approach, and should always be based on a fairly disaggregated list of activities.

2.3.2. UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK AND CARE IN VIET NAM

KEY MESSAGES

- It is evident that in Viet Nam, women bear responsibility for unpaid domestic work and care more than men, and this starts from an early age.
- Time use data are still very sparse. Those available are neither accurate nor regularly collected, and hence of little help for gender-aware policy analysis. Time use data must become a priority area in future data collection.
- Data on household access to basic infrastructure and care services provide useful insights into the unequal distribution of unpaid work by both wealth and place of residence.
- Access to water and sanitation infrastructure, particularly safe tap water at home, is especially limited among poor households and in rural areas.
- Water collection and treatment still constitute a cumbersome activity for disadvantaged households, especially for ethnic minority households.
- Not much progress in addressing these inequalities is discernible over the last few years
- Access to early childhood education services is more limited among the poorest households and in rural areas.
- Fathers are more likely to be involved in learning activities with their children in households that are wealthy and where both mothers and fathers have high levels of formal education.
- The rapidly ageing population is increasing the burden of unpaid domestic work and care, with important gender implications.

Viet Nam does not yet have a nationally representative TUS. The Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey used to ask about time spent on ‘housework’, but this relate to unpaid domestic work in aggregate (without any distinction between sub-categories of activity) and excluded any care of persons.²⁷ Even more problematic is the fact that respondents were asked to recollect ‘how many hours per day they spent on housework on average during the previous 12 months’, without the use of a diary or any other approach to reduce the risk of errors in reporting over such a long period of time. Indeed, this way of collecting information on unpaid domestic work suffers from both excessive activity aggregation and likely bias due to the choice of recollection method. The 2008 VHLSS is the last round of the survey containing the question on housework, which appears to have been dropped in the 2010 VHLSS and 2012 VHLSS questionnaires. Given these limitations, the approach here is to very briefly summarize findings from the 2008 VHLSS by only paying attention to broad patterns and using caution in interpreting what they might suggest. Other statistics and sources are relied upon instead. More specifically, evidence on household infrastructure and care provision modalities taken from the 2012 VHLSS and the 2014 MICS is examined in great detail. These statistics are not specifically about time use but can indirectly provide useful information about the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic work across income groups, locations and ethnicity.

The development of a nationally representative detailed time survey in Viet Nam would be highly desirable.²⁸ TUSs offer clear benefits for national fiscal planners wishing to promote gender-equitable development. The disaggregated data that TUSs offer can play an important role in supporting the monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

²⁵ Although water and fuel collection has officially been included within the SNA production boundary since 1993, it is rarely measured as such in practice. Hence, it may make sense to still count it as part of (the drudgery of) unpaid domestic work.

²⁶ Elson, 2008.

²⁷ More specifically, according to the specification in the questionnaire, the 2008 VHLSS definition of ‘housework’ comprises: cleaning, shopping, cooking, washing clothes, collecting water and wood, and performing repair work in the house.

²⁸ ActionAid is currently supporting the collection of new data on unpaid work. Their project is very valuable and carefully designed but limited to only a few locations.

particularly, but not only, SDG 5 on eliminating gender inequality, which includes a target on unpaid care and domestic work.²⁹ This point will be further elaborated in the final recommendations on strengthening Viet Nam's gender statistics in section 2.5.

TIME SPENT ON UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK: INSIGHTS FROM VHLSS 2008 AND SMALL-SCALE SURVEYS

Consistently with findings in other countries, housework in Viet Nam is still the primary responsibility of women. According to VHLSS data, in 2008, on average about 79 per cent of women and 56 per cent of men did housework. Among respondents doing housework, women reported to be spending about 132 minutes per day on it while men reported to be spending about 90 minutes.³⁰ Both in urban and rural areas, the excess housework performed by women relative to men was most pronounced among women in their prime child-bearing and-rearing years (25-34 and 35-44 years age brackets). Gender differences in the take-up of housework responsibilities seemed to begin even earlier, however: in the 11-14 age bracket, more than half of the girls were already involved in housework, while still two thirds of boys were doing no housework at all (Rodgers, 2015).

The gender gap in hours of housework seems not to have changed over the 2004-2008 period (Lee, 2004; 2006), and is unlikely to have changed in the last years since 2008. As Thu and Efroymsen (2008) note, a more 'modern' perception regarding

housework as a shared responsibility between wives and husbands might be emerging in some urban areas of Viet Nam. It nonetheless remains a minority's view in the context of strong traditional gender norms that consider a propensity for domestic and care work as "an important defining feature of the 'ideal wife'" (Thu and Efroymsen, 2008: 13). This point is further supported by Vu (2015), who analyses information on household appliances (provided in the 2008 VHLSS) to show that women's relatively heavier burden of housework persists even in households with labour-saving technology such as microwave ovens and gas cookers. However, these appliances seem to lead to a reduction in time spent by men's housework but not in women's housework.

Other findings from the VHLSS 2008 such as that rural residents spend a slightly lower average number of hours of housework per day compared with urban residents, and that relatively more hours of housework per day are performed by women in high income households compared with women in poor income households (Rodgers, 2015), appear somewhat counter-intuitive and not consistent with evidence from other countries. It is usually women of lower income and education who tend to do more domestic work, especially of the 'drudgery' kind.³¹

Another small-scale survey conducted in Ha Tay Province around the same period as the VHLSS 2008 indeed distinguishes between different unpaid domestic work and care activities such as food preparation, cleaning the house, washing clothes, and household repairs. It even includes caregiving as a separate activity (reported in Thu and Efroymsen,

2008).³² It finds that husbands on average only spend one third as much time on household tasks as their wives. Care for family members is the activity that takes most of both women's and husband's time (about two hours per day for women and one hour for men). The largest gap between wives and husbands is in activities related to food preparation and nutrition (men spend one ninth of the time women spend on these activities). Also, it appears that men in urban settings spend more time on housework than men in rural settings.³³ Finally, women who have at least one child under six years of age have the heaviest housework burden (more than six hours a day). These findings offer helpful insights, but given the size and design of the survey sample, are not generalizable.

HOUSEHOLD INFRASTRUCTURE

Basic infrastructure such as electricity, water and sanitation is an important factor contributing to household well-being. When access to this infrastructure is restricted and earnings are low, this is likely to translate into longer hours of unpaid work for those family members responsible for housework. This unpaid housework may be the only way to ensure that the whole family maintain adequate levels of health and functioning. Data on differential access to basic infrastructure by income, location and ethnicity can thus provide useful insights as to which households are likely to be most overburdened with the drudgery of unpaid work. Although these data do not reveal how this burden is shared between different family members, it is plausible to assume that this is borne mostly by

women and girls. Paradoxically, they are often also the ones who would need to receive care the most because, for example, they often suffer from poorer nutritional levels than men and are vulnerable during pregnancy and childbearing.

With the exception of connection to the national electricity grid, Viet Nam's disadvantaged groups have markedly less access to basic infrastructure and sanitation services, as shown in Figure 4.³⁴ Access to improved sanitation shows a substantial gradient by socio-economic status. Around 95 per cent of households in the top expenditure quintile benefit from adequate sanitation services, compared to only 37 per cent of households in the poorest quintile. The proportion of households with access to improved sanitation is even lower (only 26 percent) among ethnic minorities who are often doubly disadvantaged because they live in remote areas and have more limited earning opportunities than other groups.³⁵ Similarly, rubbish collection is more available for richer households than for poor ones, and in urban areas than in rural areas.

Access to improved sources of water is more widespread but a similar bias by socio-economic status can be discerned in that virtually all households in the top quintile but only 74 per cent of households in the poorest quintile had access in 2014 (MICS 2014, Table WS.1). Improved water supply according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) definition (UNICEF and WHO, 2012) includes a range of sources such as protected dug wells or springs, boreholes, public standpipes

29 Target 5.4 aims to "Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate".

30 The VHLSS definition excludes childcare, hence this is likely to be an under-estimation. Also, the figures for the Republic of Korea should be recalled, which were 263 minutes a day for women and 47 minutes for men.

31 One possible explanation for the Viet Nam findings is that women of higher socio-economic status (in the highest expenditure quintile) may see housework differently from women belonging to poor households. Richer and better-educated women are likely to spend more time on 'developmental' or 'fulfilling' forms of housework such as cooking elaborate meals or reading to their children, and are also more likely to report these to the survey interviewer. Women in poorer households may not even identify what they do as '(house)work' and cannot certainly afford to spend time on 'pleasant' housework. But this remains a speculation, particularly given the low quality of the data.

32 This survey was undertaken in one rural locality and one urban locality in Ha Tay Province (close to Hanoi) in 2007. It was administered to 300 households and involved not only a time-use questionnaire, but also a qualitative analysis of women and men's perceptions about housework.

33 The explanation offered for this pattern is that in urban areas, a higher number of both women and men work as civil servants, and when working schedules are fixed and regular for both wife and husband, couples may be more inclined to share household work.

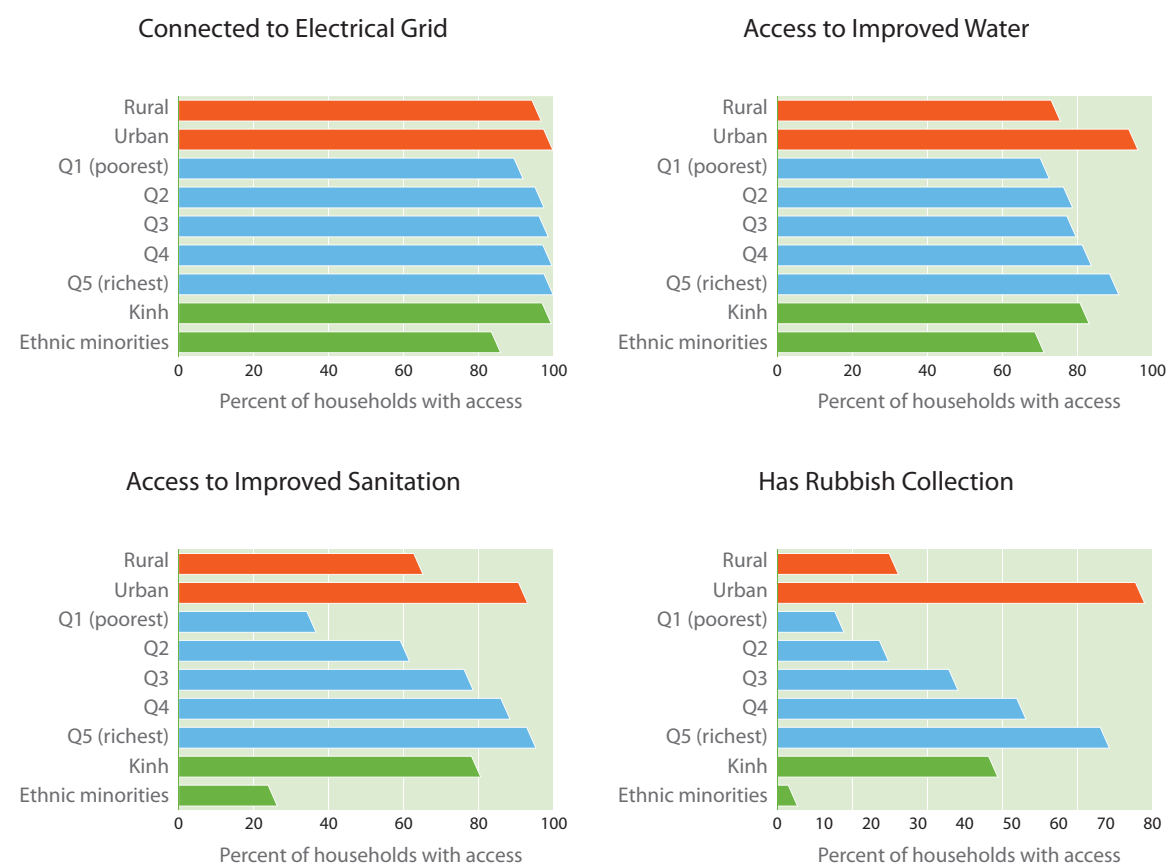
34 The data on which this figure is based are provided in Annex Table A8.

35 2014 MICS data, which just released at the time of writing, largely confirm these patterns (GSO, 2015b; 2014 MICS, Table WS.7). Overall, there appear to be minor discrepancies between VHLSS findings and MICS findings on household access to water and sanitation infrastructure, but these are mostly attributable to differences in definitions and sampling techniques. Comparison between 2011 MICS data and 2014 MICS data, however, seems to suggest that the proportion of households in the poorest quintile with access to improved sanitation facilities may have declined from 42 per cent in 2011 to 32 per cent in 2014, a worrying finding if confirmed by other evidence.

and rainwater collection. Many of these sources would still require time for collecting and treating water before domestic use. For this reason, if one is concerned about time burdens, it is more appropriate to focus on the availability of piped water on domestic premises only. As shown in Figure 5, differences by residence and income are once again marked: only 11 per cent of households in rural areas has piped water into own dwelling or yard compared with about 59 per cent of households in urban areas; and while

68 per cent of households in the richest quintile enjoy piped water on premises, only 6 per cent of households in the poorest quintile does. According to MICS data, improvements in the availability of piped water were modest relative to 2011, and more noticeable in urban areas than rural areas (10 per cent and 53 per cent of rural and urban households, respectively, had piped water on premises in 2011: MICS 2014 Table WS.1 with MICS 2011 Table WS.1). This suggests that public investment in water infrastructure has not been

Figure 4. Household access to basic infrastructure by residence, expenditure quintile and ethnicity, 2012 (percentage)



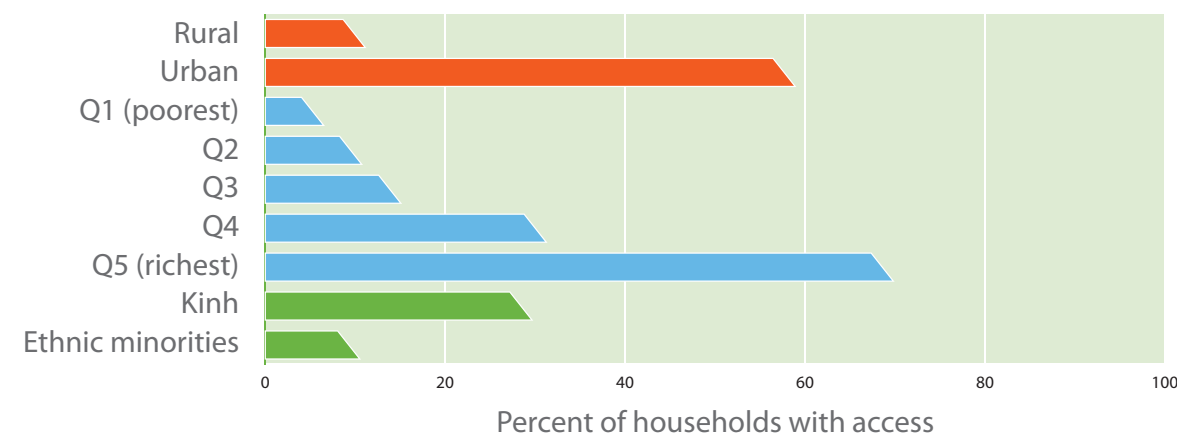
Source: Rodgers' calculations from 2012 VHLSS data, Rodgers, 2015.

effective to date in targeting those areas where accessible and affordable water sources should be high priority, including from a gender equality perspective. It also appears that, regardless of the source they have access to, the vast majority of Vietnamese households still need to purify their water: boiling it is the most widely used treatment method (practised in 81 per cent of households), followed by using a water filter (practised in 18 per cent of households). Using a water filter – presumably a less time-consuming but more expensive method than boiling and likely to be associated with having tap water at home – is much more frequent among well-off households: 36 per cent of households in the top quintile compared to only 3 per cent in the poorest quintile use them (MICS 2014, Table WS.2).

In sum, what all these data seem to suggest is that, although water collection and treatment

in Viet Nam may not be as time-consuming as in other low-income countries, it still constitutes a cumbersome activity for disadvantaged households. According to 2014 MICS data, water collection is a daily and time-consuming activity, at times requiring more than 30 minutes per trip, for 20 per cent of ethnic minority households. This compares to a national average of less than 4 per cent households with a similar burden (MICS 2014, Table WS.3). As in many other parts of the world, water collection in Viet Nam is a female task: the person usually collecting water is a woman in 65 per cent of cases and a girl in 2 per cent of cases (2014 MICS, Table WS.4). The shares for ethnic minorities are once again higher than the national average: in their communities, the person collecting water is a woman in 74 per cent of cases and a girl in 5 per cent. No change in these patterns can be observed relative to 2011.

Figure 5. Household access to piped water on premises by residence, wealth quintile³⁶ and ethnicity, 2014 (percentage)



Source: Drawn from MICS 5, 2014, Table WS.1.

³⁶ Data from MICS are grouped by wealth quintile, while data from the VHLSS are grouped by expenditure quintile. The two groupings are correlated but are not the same. The expenditure quintiles are calculated, as the name suggests, based on information relative to household expenditure only; the wealth quintiles are calculated taking into account a range of factors such as household infrastructure, ownership of durable goods and ownership of land. The preference in this section is to use MICS data whenever possible.

It is important to also highlight that access to basic infrastructure varies geographically, with the less economically developed regions, especially the Northern Midlands and Mountainous areas and the Central Highlands, reporting relatively fewer households with access to improved water and sanitation services. Figure 6 shows that, for example, only 12 per cent of households had piped water into own dwelling or yard in the Central Highlands compared with 38 per cent in the South-East and 36 per cent in the Red River Delta region.

Data on household labour-saving appliances can also offer insights on the extent of unpaid housework burdens. According to VHLSS data, about 45 per cent of households owns a gas cooker, 31 per cent has a fridge and only 12

per cent has a washing machine. This suggests that a significant proportion of households, especially in the poorest quintile, still lives without these appliances and hence is likely to have to endure longer hours of unpaid work.³⁷

CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS

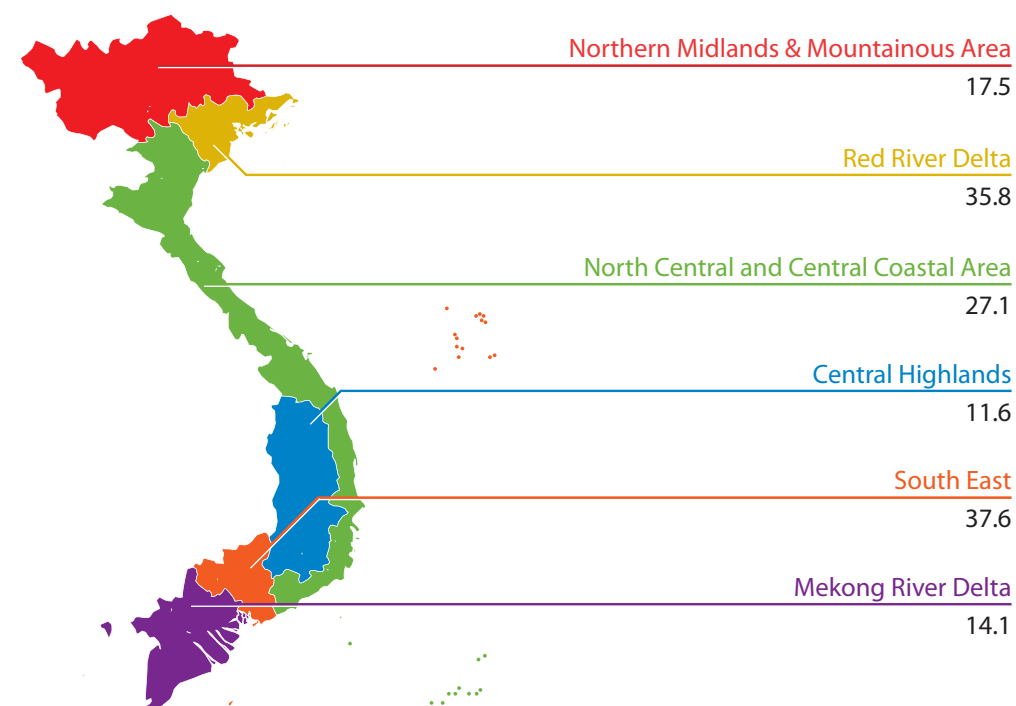
Taking care of children can be a very time-consuming activity, especially when children are not yet attending school (under five or six years old, depending on the country) and is usually a mother's main responsibility. The presence of a child under five is in fact one of the most important predictors of heavy unpaid domestic work and care burdens in many countries (Budlender, 2009), and one of the main reasons cited by women (but

not by men) for not being in paid employment (Eurostat, 2014 cited in UN Women, 2015). Public provision of affordable childcare is a much needed policy response to alleviate such burdens. Data from MICS 2014 have been examined to see what could be learned about current childcare arrangements in different types of households in Viet Nam.

The main finding is that differentials by socio-economic status in access to childcare services are substantial, much like access to household infrastructure. As shown in Figure 7, in 2014, pre-school attendance was significantly higher in the richest households than in the poorest ones (86 per cent of children in the top quintile attended

pre-school compared with only 53 per cent of children in the bottom quintile). Moreover, overall attendance was lower in rural than in urban areas (68 per cent of children attending in rural areas compared with 80 per cent of children in urban areas, MICS 2014, Table CD 1). This difference between rural and urban areas became more pronounced relative to 2011, when 71 per cent of rural children and 76 per cent of urban children were in pre-school (MICS 2011, Table CD 1). Regional differences are also significant in that attendance in preschool is higher in the North relative to the South, with the highest attendance level in the Red River Delta region with 86 per cent of children enrolled in pre-school and the lowest attendance in the Mekong River Delta, with only

Figure 6. Regional differences: Proportion of households with piped water on premises, 2014 (percentage)

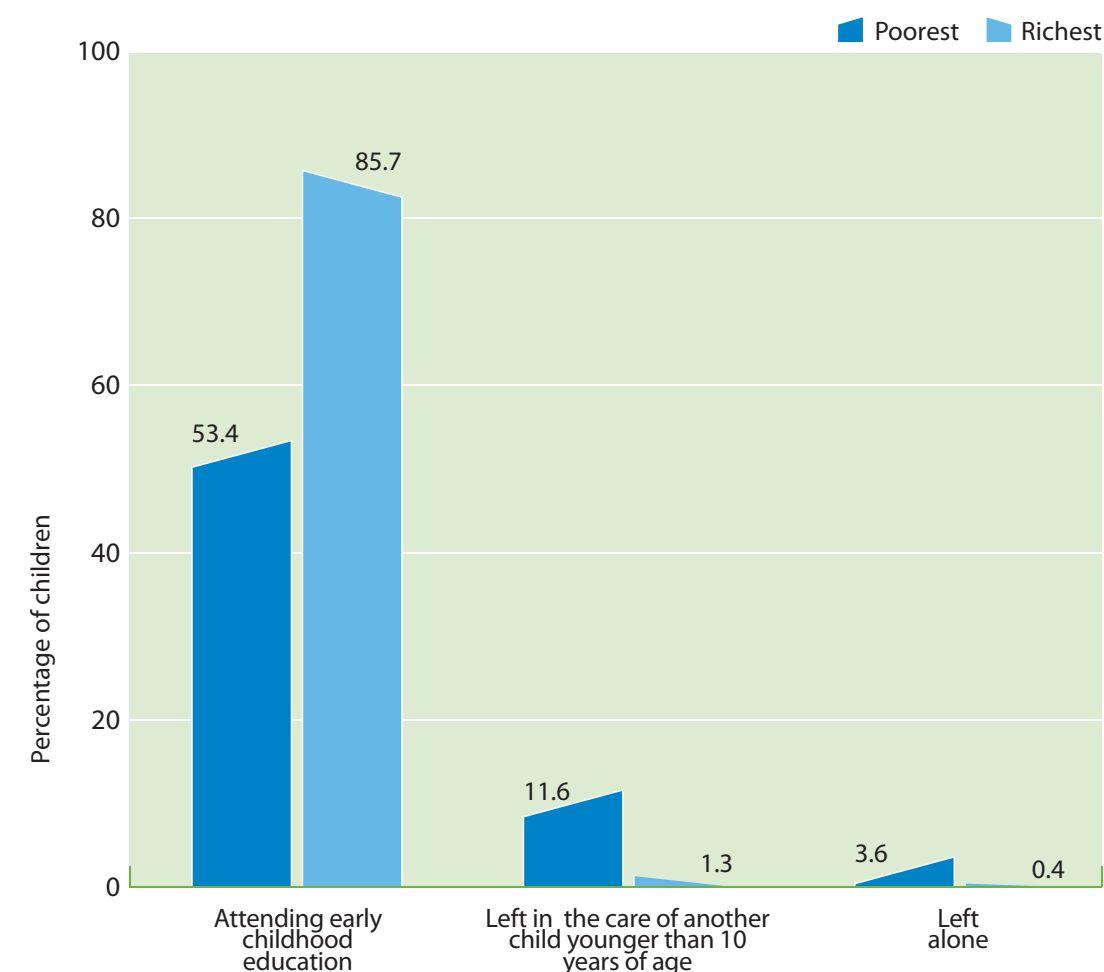


Source: Adapted from MICS 5, 2014, Table WS.1.

NOTE: The boundaries and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

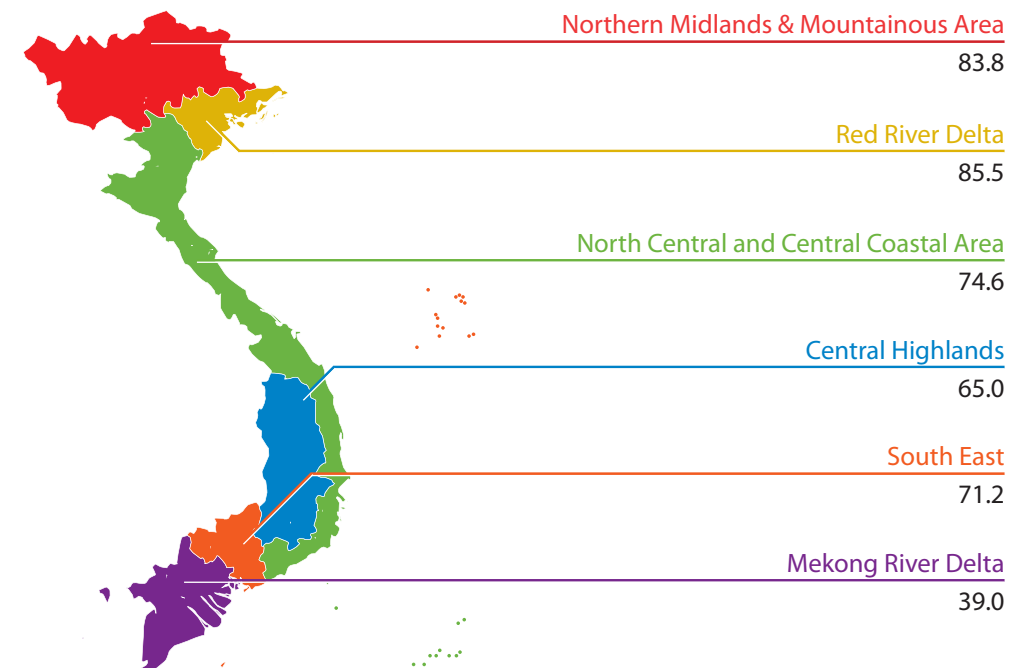
³⁷ Access to these data could only be made available for 2008, but more up-to-date information from the VHLSS 2014 should be available soon.

Figure 7. Childcare arrangements for children under five, by wealth quintile, 2014



Source: Drawn from MICS 5, 2014: CD Tables: CD1, CD4.

Figure 8. Regional differences: Proportion of children attending early childhood education, 2014 (percentage)



Source: Adapted from MICS 5, 2014, Table CD.1

NOTE: The boundaries and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

39 per cent of children, as shown in Figure 8. This appears to be a significant decline relative to 2011, when more than 47 of children attended pre-school in the Mekong River Delta region (MICS 2011).

As concerns other forms of childcare arrangements, on average, a small proportion of children is left alone or in the care of another child under ten years (about 8 per cent of children in 2014 compared with 11 per cent in 2011), but this proportion is higher for children in poor households and living in rural areas. However, the currently available data do not allow a full mapping of childcare arrangement including, for example, whether child minding is mostly carried out by the mother herself, siblings or relatives, neighbours, a paid domestic worker, the father, or any organized childcare. This information could be really useful for future policy research, for example, enabling

analyses of the correlation between availability/affordability of childcare and type of paid employment mothers of young children can take on (if any at all).

An interesting question asked by MICS is whether fathers (and mothers) engage with their own child in activities that promote their learning. This obviously does not provide any information about the actual time that fathers (or mothers) spend with their children. However, it may help in gaining insights into gender norms about childcare and whether any socio-economic characteristics of the household is associated with more equal sharing between parents. As illustrated in Figure 9, fathers' involvement in activities that promote their children's learning indeed appears to be strongly correlated with income and also with the educational level of both mother and father. More than 80 per cent of children in the richest

quintile are reported to have fathers who engage with them while this is true for only 50 per cent of children in the poorest quintile (the corresponding figures in 2011 were 79 per cent and 55 percent, respectively). There is also a marked urban/rural divide: in urban areas, 69 per cent of children are reported to have fathers engaging with them compared with 59 per cent of children in rural areas. It is instructive to note that when the question is whether fathers engage with four or more learning activities with their children (rather than just 'at least one'), the percentage of children who enjoys their fathers' engagement drops significantly, from 62 per cent to 15 percent. The corresponding figures for children reported to have mothers involved in 'at least one activity' and 'four activities or more' are 82 per cent and 45 percent, respectively.

In keeping with the focus on intersecting socio-economic inequalities, it is important to also highlight differences between mothers' involvement across different income groups: in the rich households, 74 per cent of children are reported to have their mothers engaged in four or more activities with them compared to only 24 per cent of children in the poorest households. This may suggest that having the time to spend 'developmental time' with children is somewhat a 'luxury' that only mothers in wealthier households and who are also likely to be better educated can afford.

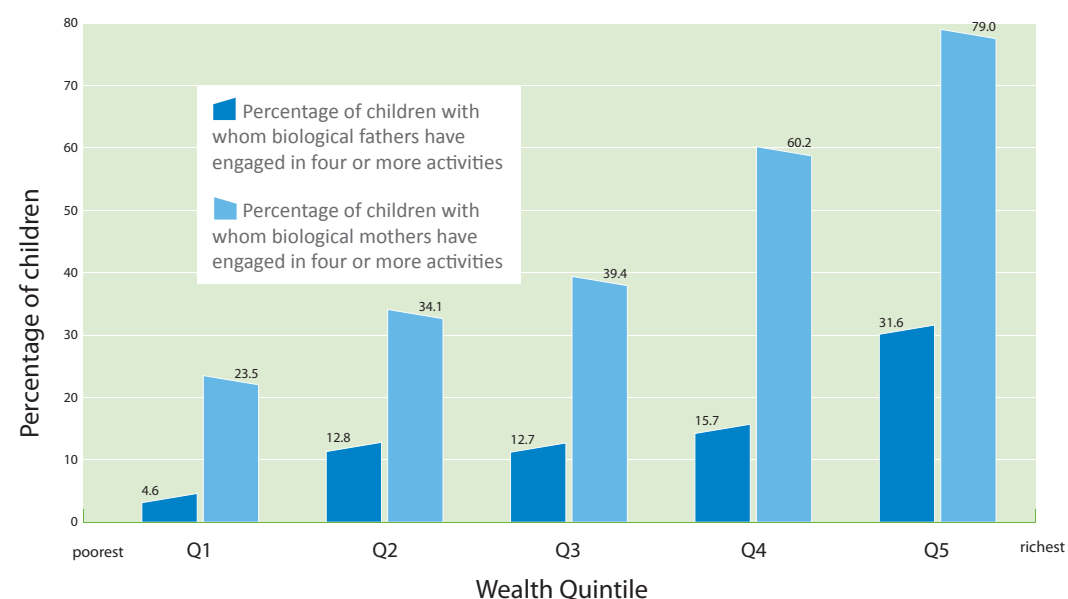
It would be also useful to analyse a breakdown of childcare arrangements and parenting styles by type of paid employment mothers engage in. The fact that so many women, especially among the poorest, have to mind their children influences the kind of paid work that they can do as well as the quality of care that their children receive. It is important to highlight this connection between paid and unpaid work, which would make it evident that affordable and quality childcare is important for both children's development and their mothers' access to more secure forms of employment.

ELDERLY CARE

As already noted in the previous 2011 CGA, the population of Viet Nam is ageing rapidly. According to GSO projections (GSO, 2015a), Vietnamese people who are 60 years old and over already reached 10.2 per cent of the total population in 2014 and are forecasted to reach 23 per cent in 2040. The oldest group among the elderly (80 years and older) includes twice as many women as men, and is also increasing fast (UNFPA, 2011). The issue of elderly care, which is included in the Social-Economic Development Strategy for 2011-2020, needs therefore to be taken as an important policy priority, and special attention must be given to its gender dimensions.

As with childcare, it is mostly women who provide some form of unpaid care to the elderly. In some cases, unpaid care providers are themselves elderly-- for example, daughters in their sixties looking after parents in their eighties. The elderly in Viet Nam are also often taking care of young children, as witnessed by the increased number of 'skip-generation' families in which only grandparents live with their grandchildren (UNFPA, 2011). These 'skip-generation' families tend to be poorer and with more housework borne by the elderly than in other households (Evans et al, 2007; UNDP, 2008).

Unpaid care from family members is often the main (or even sole) form of care that the elderly, particularly in rural areas, can rely on, since the available organized elderly care and elderly-friendly public facilities appear to be very limited and of low quality (UNFPA, 2011). Without more detailed and systematic sex-disaggregated data on both elderly care needs and their use of available facilities, it will be difficult to design and implement adequate policy responses.

Figure 9. Mothers' and fathers' involvement in their children's learning, by wealth quintile, 2014

Source: MICS 5, 2014, Table CD2.

2.4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND INITIAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

2.4.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This initial exploration of statistics has exposed significant differences in employment options and opportunities for lifetime earnings for different groups of women and men. These differences relate not to differences in the actual numbers of women and men who are in employment, which are fairly high for both genders, but to various forms of gender occupational segregation and discrimination. Importantly, the data have also highlighted that differences in access to decent jobs are based not only on gender, but also on place of residence, ethnicity, education and age. For example, women account for a much larger share of unpaid contributing family workers, particularly in agriculture, a pattern has not changed much over the last decade. Moreover, on average, female own-account workers tend to have lower earnings than male own-account

workers, especially in rural areas. The gender gap in vulnerable employment increases substantially with age and is especially wide for workers in their fifties.

Moreover, reliance on agricultural self-employment as the main source of livelihoods is considerably higher among ethnic minorities, and is also more common in the poorest regions. The reasons that agriculture displays very low levels of productivity and offers such meagre and insecure earnings to women in particular, are related to female farmers' restricted access to productive resources and their limited human capital. For example, more than half of the women whose primary occupation is in agriculture have barely completed primary education. There is also indication that there is a strong gender bias in access to land, credit and extension services, but regular and comprehensive sex-disaggregated data on these aspects are not easily available.

Wage employment seems to be more easily available for men than for women, but for those women who are in wage work, working conditions appear more favourable than for male wage

workers. This is a reflection of the fact that female wage workers are more likely to be employed in either the public sector or the FDI sector than in the domestic private sector. By contrast, men are more likely to be in unskilled wage jobs in non-tradable domestic industries such as construction and transport, where terms of work are often insecure.

Current economic policies are undoubtedly contributing to create better opportunities for some groups of female workers in emerging sectors such as labour-intensive exports. However, it seems that they are failing to generate sufficient jobs of decent quality overall, and to offer more secure economic alternatives to women with low levels of formal education and from disadvantaged rural regions, in particular. From this point of view, the finding that in the last ten years the share of the employed population with technical training has fallen for women while it has risen for men is of concern. All these issues appear to be exacerbated in the case of women from ethnic minorities.

The data examined in this chapter suggest that women from poor households and from rural areas also face a double disadvantage because of limited availability of public infrastructure and services to reduce and redistribute their unpaid domestic and care work. Their heavy burden of unpaid work is indeed one of the main factors constraining their access to more remunerative forms of paid employment as well as their participation in community decision-making.

Unpaid domestic work and care is where data gaps in Viet Nam are most severe, especially with regard to time use. It is not possible, therefore, to provide an accurate assessment of how time burdens are distributed between genders across socio-economic groups, and whether/how these are changing over time. However, available data on access to both physical and social infrastructure offer insights into which households may be facing heaviest unpaid housework burdens and where care needs are more likely to remain unfulfilled.

These data show, for example, that households in the poorest quintile have markedly less access to sanitation and water infrastructure. Tap water at home, in particular, is a luxury that only a tiny fraction (6 percent) of households in the poorest quintile can afford. In addition, water collection and treatment remain a cumbersome activity especially for ethnic minority households. This is most certainly making the task of cooking, cleaning and keeping children healthy more strenuous for those family members responsible for these activities, who, as the data clearly indicate, are largely women and girls.

Much like access to basic physical infrastructure, differentials by socio-economic status in access to childcare services are considerable. The use of organized early childhood education appears to be higher in rich households than in poor ones, presumably because rich households are both able to afford it and likely to live in urban areas where childcare services are more easily available. Children's attendance of ECE centres is lower in rural areas than in urban areas and in southern regions than in northern regions.

There appears to be no sign that these gaps between rural and urban areas in terms of households' access to both physical and social infrastructure have narrowed in the last few years.

2.4.2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This broad-brush picture based on official statistics permits identification of a number of key policy areas that require attention if the most persistent aspects of women's socio-economic disadvantage are to be redressed. Thus, this section outlines a set of initial broad-brush policy recommendations following from the statistical picture presented in this chapter to help the Government prioritize its responses to these challenges. These recommendations endorse many of the recommendations already put forward in the two previous country gender assessments (World Bank,

2011; UNDP, 2006) and are organized around five main areas:

- IMPROVE THE PRODUCTIVITY AND EARNING CAPACITY OF WOMEN WHO RELY ON AGRICULTURE AS MAIN SOURCE OF LIVELIHOOD.** Greater recognition is needed of the continuing importance of agriculture in Viet Nam's economy as a source of employment and the role that a more dynamic and productive agricultural sector can play in supporting the growth of the other sectors. When looking at the sheer numbers of women involved (more than 12 million, or about half of the total female labour force) and the regions where agriculture dominates (the poorest ones), it is apparent that an economic strategy aimed at supporting women farmers more proactively is crucial for achieving gender equality as well as reducing spatial and income inequality and promoting a sustained and balanced growth path. An economic structure with stronger backward and forward linkages between agriculture and other sectors is likely to be associated with stronger domestic demand and hence a wage-led economic growth path, as explained in Braunstein (2015).
- PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE PLIGHT OF ETHNIC MINORITY WOMEN AND GIRLS, WHO CONTINUE TO LAG BEHIND BOTH ETHNIC MINORITY MEN, AND KINH AND CHINESE WOMEN IN ACCESSING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.** Given that the vast majority of ethnic minority women work in agriculture, this issue is evidently related to the first recommendation regarding greater government support to female farmers, but policy action must go further than this. Innovative solutions are required to ensure that public services and resources indeed reach ethnic minority areas and are specifically tailored to the problems that women and girls face in these communities in terms of health, education and housework burdens.

- OUTSIDE OF AGRICULTURE, FACILITATE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE JOBS AND SECTORS TRADITIONALLY SEEN AS 'FEMALE').**

Although an increasing number of women is gaining access to relatively more secure wage jobs, gender segregation in the labour market remains a significant concern. This problem was highlighted in both the 2006 and the 2011 CGAs and confirmed in the statistics presented in this chapter. The Government could intervene in many ways, for example, through increasing support for the provision of non-traditional skills. The focus should be, in particular, on enabling women to participate in training of high quality and providing opportunities for them to specialize in technical fields, which are still often closed to them, as data analysed in an earlier section have shown. This would not only expand the range of economic options available to women but would also increase their ability to rise up the occupational hierarchy as already stressed in Kabeer et al. (2005). Innovative solutions are also needed to tackle gender stereotyping in the workplace and discriminatory practices from employers contributing to perpetuate prejudices about women's suitability for certain occupations rather than others.

- SUPPORT PUBLIC INVESTMENT TO REDUCE AND REDISTRIBUTE UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK AND CARE.** Having to balance paid work and home responsibilities continues to be one of the major factors limiting women's access to more secure and remunerative economic opportunities. Despite frequent calls for better statistics and research on care burdens and care needs, the scoping of national statistics undertaken in this chapter has demonstrated these areas remain considerably under-documented. Even with the limited information available, there is scope, however, for the Government to take a more proactive role in promoting measures to reduce and redistribute unpaid work. The data on household access to basic infrastructure presented in this chapter, for instance, suggest that well-targeted public

investment in sanitation and water infrastructure could go a long way towards redressing inequalities in the drudgery of unpaid domestic work. The Government must take steps to ensure that consideration of unpaid domestic work and care is systematically integrated in the formulation of its macro-economic planning.

- CONTINUE TO PROMOTE EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN GENDER STATISTICS AND DEVELOP RESEARCH ON GENDER IN THE ECONOMY.** As stressed in earlier sections, without regular data collection and monitoring over a range of gender and inequality indicators, policies cannot be designed and implemented equitably and effectively. Some progress has been made in the last few years in the collection of gender-relevant statistics, such as the inclusion in the labour force survey of questions that try to capture informal employment. Gaps, however, are still severe, particularly in the area of unpaid housework and agriculture. It would be also useful if sex-disaggregated data were not just collected, but also more fully integrated in economic analyses.

Most of these recommendations will be further corroborated in the next chapters. The recommendation on strengthening gender statistics is addressed in detail in the next section, which concludes this chapter 2.

2.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING VIET NAM'S GENDER STATISTICS

This review of Viet Nam's datasets and surveys for the purpose of building a comprehensive picture of the gender structure of the economy has brought to light a number of useful gender statistics. These statistics could be more fully put to use in policy analysis and would benefit from being examined more systematically and in combination with each other. For instance, data on gender patterns in

employment should be routinely analysed together with data on childcare arrangements and on access to other social infrastructure, since many women have primary responsibility for dependents in their households, which influences the kind of paid work they can do. Examining data on gender-based employment segregation together with sex-disaggregated data on field of study in tertiary education could also prove instructive. These are examples of how to combine and analyse data to provide insights on factors facilitating access to decent jobs and are useful in guiding policy.

This chapter has offered a useful template on how to assemble the sort of data needed to carry out gender-aware economic assessments and where to find them. It has demonstrated that, to be truly useful for policy analysis, the gendered picture of an economy must be: (i) comprehensive (including multiple layers and dimensions – a few headline indicators cannot adequately capture the full extent of gender based inequalities); (ii) highly disaggregated (in terms of economic sectors, institutions and socio-economic groups to be included in such picture and including both paid and unpaid dimensions); and (iii) produced in a timely manner and at regular intervals (without an understanding of trends and changes over time, gender-differentiated impacts of policies cannot be predicted).

The current scoping exercise has also exposed limitations and data gaps. What follows is a list of suggestions for strengthening Viet Nam's gender statistics.

SPECIFIC DATA GAPS

AGRICULTURE AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

There is clearly the need to better document gender dynamics in agricultural production. To the extent possible, it would be useful to have data enabling the researcher to attribute the roles and responsibilities of agricultural production to the individual. This can only be achieved if

survey questions about ownership and use of resources, as well as paid and unpaid labour provided on crops, are aimed at each individual in the household. Most of the questions asked in agricultural surveys, however, still treat the household as the only unit of reference.³⁸

When agricultural surveys ask about the various crops being cultivated and various tasks being performed, they should disaggregate by both sex and age. It would be also useful to collect sex-disaggregated information on the full range of income-generating activities that individual family members engage in. For example, findings from the LFS have shown that a significant share of women whose primary occupation is in agriculture are involved in one or more additional paid jobs. It would be important to gather details on these secondary jobs and the resources and assets required to run them profitably.

To understand the different constraints that rural self-employed women and men face, it would also be helpful to collect data on: their participation in rural institutions and services such as extension services and credit; who in the family has contact with extensions workers; and who sells produce in the market. Information on some of these aspects is occasionally found in government reports, but with a limited coverage. Data on these issues need to be produced regularly and for representative samples, and reported systematically.

The upcoming 2016 Rural, Agricultural and Fishery Census (Prime Minister Decision N1225/QĐ-TTg, displayed on GSO website) offers an important opportunity to fill some of these data gaps. There is also scope for revising some of the VHLSS modules: on the farm household, subsistence production, land certificates, land and water use, and costs of cultivation.

These proposed changes to data collection would provide a great opportunity for intra-household analysis, and could be extended to forms of self-employment other than agriculture.

TIME USE

The relevance and richness of TUSs for gender analysis has been discussed since the beginning of section 2.3. In addition to shedding light on how different groups of women and men allocate their efforts to care activities and other unpaid work, TUSs could also help in better documenting informal forms of paid work (e.g. subcontracted work carried out in workers' own homes). A nationally representative TUS for Viet Nam is much needed. It would be essential for monitoring progress, not only towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, Target 5.4, but also other SDG targets and for other purposes, for example, to guide allocations of public finance across specific sectors, by pointing where public services to reduce and redistribute unpaid work are needed the most.

In order to be most useful to budgetary analysis and government planning, a TUS would have to be: (i) designed and implemented as a large-scale representative survey; (ii) designed to be compatible with other surveys on households' access to infrastructure, social services and home technologies; and (iii) produced regularly, ideally on an annual basis.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS ON SPECIFIC SURVEYS AND DATA REPORTING

As seen in the analysis of labour market patterns in section 2.3, sex-disaggregated data on formal sector/wage work are easier to collect than data on self-employment work and work within the household. Nonetheless, there is also room for improvement of these data. The latest rounds

(from 2007 onwards) of the Vietnam Labour Force Survey offer a rich picture of the quality as well as quantity of employment, and the GSO LFS yearly report increasingly produces a number of tables that include sex-disaggregation. This reporting could be further strengthened by providing more cross-tabulations showing how gender intersects with other characteristics such as place of residence, ethnicity, age and educational attainment of the workforce. There is a need to improve information on earnings, ideally enabling calculations of hourly earnings. Additional data could also include questions to wage workers on on-the-job training and their prospects for promotion.

Although the LFS now collects information on informal employment, it is possible that the most precarious forms of informal employment are still not fully captured in the survey. To address this gap, it would be advisable to support a number of complementary special surveys, for example, on paid domestic workers.

It would be advisable if the Enterprise Survey could start collecting data on employees broken down by skill.

The MICS is yet another useful survey from the point of view of gender analysis. The module on Early Childhood Education is especially interesting. It could be made even more useful by asking questions on mothers' employment status and type of paid work (in addition to reporting on their education). It would be also helpful to collect data on the full range of childcare arrangements prevailing in a household in addition, or in alternative to, organized childcare such as: child minded mostly by the mother, the father, siblings, other relatives, neighbours, or a paid domestic worker.

Collection of sex-disaggregated data on elderly care arrangements should be promoted.

Standardization and comparability between surveys could be enhanced. For example, the

VHLSS, unlike the LFS, does not always seem to conform to the internationally agreed standards on employment classifications.

The use of female headship as a proxy for gender disadvantage should be strongly discouraged. Data from the VHLSS clearly show that while a quarter of Viet Nam's households are headed by women, as a whole, Vietnamese female-headed households do not conform to the conventional image of a single parent living with children in poverty. They are a very heterogeneous group. A substantial number of female household heads are married and enjoy a relatively high standard of living. For example, 60 per cent of them live in households in the top two expenditure quintiles (Rodgers, 2015). An earlier study by Nguyen et al. (2007) also finds that in Viet Nam, the sex of the household head is not correlated with the income quintile of a household. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, however, there is a subgroup of rural female-headed households who are at disadvantage. In sum, these findings suggests that a more careful differentiation by subgroups of headship is important for policy targeting as well as future research on drivers of poverty and vulnerability (see also Klasen, Lechtenfeld, Povel, 2015).


The use of sex-disaggregated statistics in conjunction with 'economic' data on output, exports/imports, public expenditure allocations and so on should be encouraged.

Now that the SDGs have been adopted, the Vietnamese Government will have soon to decide on the range of indicators that can best capture progress on gender equality (and inclusive economic development broadly) in its many facets. It is hoped that the analysis and suggestions provided in this chapter constitute a good starting point for this objective.

In order to carry out all these improvements to the way gender statistics are collected and analysed, it is important to strengthen the capacity of various government departments to do so. Clearly, the

³⁸ Similar recommendations were already made in the 2010 FAO Gender Profile based on the 2006 Vietnam Rural Census, a project financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). However, it would appear that the SIDA/FAO recommendations were not followed up when designing any of the questionnaires of the subsequent rural censuses in 2011 and now in 2016.

Ministry of Planning and Investment and the GSO have a primary role in these efforts, but the Gender Equality Department of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs also needs to be closely

involved. Concerted action is required to train the relevant staff, harmonize surveys, produce new ones and ensure that these are regularly used in policy formulation and monitoring. 

SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING VIET NAM'S STATISTICS: A SUMMARY

- Improve the way agricultural statistics are collected with particular attention to intra-household resource allocation.
- Systematically collect and monitor sex-disaggregated data on access to services (ranging from agricultural extension to credit to health).
- Collect detailed nationally representative data on time use, and ideally administer the time use survey as an add-on module to an existing survey (e.g. the Labour Force Survey, or LFS).
- Promote new special surveys, e.g. on the elderly and on paid domestic workers.
- Enrich current reporting of data from LFS, Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS) and Monitoring Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in General Statistics Office (GSO) documents with more cross-tabulations that include gender relevant variables.
- Use sex-disaggregated statistics more regularly in economic analysis.

3

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S POSITION IN PAID WORK

CHAPTER 3. STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S POSITION IN PAID WORK

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Realizing women's rights at work and promoting a path of economic growth similar to the 'gender egalitarian' scenario described in Chapter 1 requires that women are able to enjoy safe working conditions, decent pay and social protection in their paid employment. However, as evidence presented in both Chapter 2 and here shows, for some groups of Vietnamese women, paid employment does not yet meet these criteria. Chapter 2 used available statistics to point where gender differences in the structure of Viet Nam's economy are most marked. Once this picture is laid out, further analysis is needed to interpret the processes behind the numbers and gain a more nuanced understanding of qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions of gender inequality, including an understanding of the role that policies may play in it. A key tenet of the framework presented in this study is that the way that governments design and implement economic policies can indeed reduce or amplify gender-based inequalities. The main aim of both Chapters 3 and 4 is therefore to examine the extent to which Viet Nam's current policies and programmes are contributing or not to redress women's socio-economic disadvantage.

As emphasized in the latest Progress of World's Women (UN Women, 2015), a policy agenda to promote the full realization of women's economic and social rights needs to be built around two key interrelated goals: (i) strengthening women's position in paid work by improving their opportunities for decent jobs; and (ii) recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid

care and domestic work. Chapter 4 will deal more specifically with unpaid domestic work as an across-the-board policy concern. This chapter deals with the issue of strengthening women's position in the labour market and considers the specific constraints facing three distinct categories of women workers: small-scale women farmers, domestic paid workers (within Viet Nam) and garment factory workers.

These three occupations were chosen because they tend to be dominated by women (not only in Viet Nam, but globally). They are each located in a different position in the hierarchy of jobs and represent different forms and degrees of precariousness. Both self-employed women in small-scale farming and women working for wages in domestic paid work constitute informal workers, but each are exposed to different vulnerabilities. The main challenges faced by female farmers relate to their limited ownership of productive assets as well as their restricted access to knowledge, technology, services and markets,³⁹ whereas the main challenges faced by paid domestic workers relate more to their limited enjoyment of labour rights and the lack of established mechanisms to enforce them. Wage employment in export-oriented production appears to be a more secure form of employment for some segments of the female workforce, but the picture is uneven, depending on firm ownership and structure as well as workers' specific circumstances.

More than 12 million women are employed in agriculture compared to about 4 million in manufacturing production, around 15 per cent of the total female labour force. The number of paid domestic workers is a few hundred thousand

according to official statistics, but likely to be larger in reality.

Different groups of women – different status, education and age – tend to cluster around each of these occupations. The most disadvantaged of these groups are probably the women who are channelled into low productivity agricultural self-employment.⁴⁰

3.2. WOMEN'S SMALL-SCALE FARMING

Agriculture in Viet Nam remains the main source of livelihood for the majority of the poor, particularly in the poorest regions. Recent assessments note that trade of agricultural goods has increased considerably in the last decade, and Viet Nam is now an established producer and exporter of rice, coffee and cashew nuts with a large agricultural trade surplus (IFAD, 2012; WTO, 2013). The main crop, rice, accounts for 36 per cent of the total value of agricultural output, is mostly grown in the Mekong and Red River Deltas, and is used both as main staple and for export. Women are significantly involved in its production. The Government recognizes the need to play an active role in the provision of support to the agricultural sector. This is reflected in various official documents and government planning strategies, which put the emphasis mostly on improving infrastructure, research and development, and extension services (MARD, 2012). Interest rates and inputs are also subsidized, and state-owned enterprises have an important role in the processing and trade of some products.

In practice, although productivity has increased, several factors continue to constrain production, such as the small size of most farms. As documented in the latest Rural Census (GSO, 2012), 84 per cent of family farms are less than

2 ha and the average area of agricultural land at the national level is just above 0.6 ha. In many areas, the climate and infrastructure allow two or three crops per year, however, which means that harvested area can be greater than farm size. Farm sizes vary to some extent from one region to another, and tend to be larger in the south than in the north (ibid). In addition to their small size, most farms also tend to be made up of several scattered holdings, which aggravates problems of economies of scale (IFGS, 2015). Other concerns identified by IFAD (2012) are: Viet Nam's lower prices than neighbouring countries for rice and other exports; inadequate agricultural knowledge systems; limited farmer access to market information; uneven transport infrastructure; and poor integration along value chains. Findings from other countries as well as some evidence from Vietnamese sources suggest that many of these constraints are likely to be exacerbated for women farmers (IFGS, 2015, background study; FAO, ILO and IFAD, 2010). A more systematic documentation of the gender dimension of these aspects, and how this is evolving in response to current economic developments, is urgently needed. For example, UNDP (2016) points to promising new developments in the production of high value products such as pork, cut flowers and litchis for export markets, including new markets of Australia and the United States of America. However, the terms upon which small-scale women farmers are included (if at all) in these initiatives and other contract farming are not well understood.

3.2.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES OF WORKERS

Female agricultural self-employment continues to be more prevalent among ethnic minorities, in the poorest regions and in households belonging to the poorest quintile (Rodgers, 2015, Table 3.6). More women than men work in agriculture in the north than in the south (i.e. agriculture

39 These constraints are also faced by male small-scale farmers but are exacerbated for female small-scale farmers.

40 Even more disadvantaged are the women who do not have any access to land, or have lost it, and must resort to petty trading or other more precarious income-generating activities for survival; their plight is the least documented in the literature.

is more female-intensive in the north), which is characterized by smaller land areas and higher levels of male internal migration in the north than in the south. Statistics analysed in Chapter 2 also highlight that more than half of female farmers have barely completed primary education or even less, and only a tiny fraction have received vocational training. Their educational attainment is therefore significantly lower than that of female workers who find employment in other sectors. The statistics in Chapter 2 also show that a considerable share of female farmers must take on additional paid jobs during the year, and that this female share is higher than the male share of farmers who do so.

Any other published statistical account of women's role in agricultural production in Viet Nam resorts to the approach of comparing female-headed households with male-headed households (e.g. FAO/SIDA, 2010; and Newman, 2015). As already observed in Chapter 2, this is problematic because it adds very little to any understanding of the situation of those many women farmers who live in, and contribute to, male-headed farm households. It often remains, however, the only approach that one can take, since most quantitative surveys on agricultural production still treat the household, and not the individual, as key unit of reference.⁴¹ There are nonetheless some useful insights to be derived from these comparisons between female and male heads of households, which are reported in the next few paragraphs. These will be followed by findings on the gender division of labour and decision-making from a small qualitative survey of selected agricultural households across four different agro-ecological regions, which was specifically commissioned for this study (IFGS, 2015).

41 One of the key recommendations of the FAO Gender Profile (FAO, 2010) is for the future rural agricultural and fishery censuses to adopt the concept of individual sub-holder to enable collection of data for intra-household analysis of labour division and decision-making.

42 This analysis is based on data from the Vietnam Access to Resources Household Survey (VARHS) for 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014.

FEMALE-HEADED VS MALE-HEADED AGRICULTURAL HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME, LAND AND FARM EQUIPMENT

While country-wide, on average, female-headed households in Viet Nam are not income-poorer than male-headed households, in rural areas, female-headed households tend to be more disadvantaged and vulnerable than male-headed households, particularly if the head is a widow or a divorced woman (Klasen, Lechtenfeld, Povel, 2015; Newman, 2015). A recent analysis by Newman (2015) shows that in 2014, the income of rural female-headed households was 27 per cent lower than the income of rural male-headed households.⁴² Her data show that the income levels of rural female-headed households have grown between 2008 and 2014, but the gap between male- and female-headed households has also widened (only 20 per cent in 2008). Rural female-headed households appear to be more vulnerable to income shocks than male-headed households, are less involved in agricultural activities and more reliant on income from non-farm household enterprises. Those who are involved in agricultural production tend to have smaller plots of land than male-headed households (but are more likely to have a 'red book', i.e. a LUC).

This latter finding confirms previous findings reported in the Gender Profile of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2010), which showed that in rural areas, on average, 62 per cent of female-headed households and 75 per cent of male-headed households had access to agricultural land – a difference of 13 percentage points. In the South-East, fewer female-headed households had access to agricultural land than male-headed households, while in the Red River Delta and the Central Highlands, male- and female-headed households had more equal

access. Female-headed agricultural households had an average land area of 0.48 ha compared to 0.66 ha for male-headed households. For rice cultivation, the area cultivated by female-headed households was almost six times smaller than the area cultivated by male-headed households. FAO (2010) also shows that agricultural female-headed households are less likely than male-headed ones to own farm equipment such as a tractor or a water pump. In addition, fewer female heads than male heads have access to agricultural extension workers (about 35 per cent females compared to 43 per cent males). Another significant source of gender inequality between rural female- and male-headed households relates to the ownership of commercial farms: in 2006, less than one tenth of all commercial farms in Viet Nam were owned by female-headed households. An update of these figures, which are about ten years old, is most urgently needed.

GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR AND DECISION-MAKING IN RICE AND FRUIT FARM HOUSEHOLDS ACROSS NORTH AND SOUTH

The Institute for Family and Gender Studies (IFGS) study is based on in-depth interviews of 72 households and 24 focus group discussions in four sites across different agro-ecological regions: Hai Duong Province in the Red River Delta, Hoa Binh Province in the north-west, Binh Dinh in the south-central coast and Tien Giang in the Mekong River Delta (IFGS, 2015). The surveyed households were all engaged in rice production and/or fruit orchards and included both a wife and a husband in about three quarters of the cases. The picture that emerges from this study is one in which both wives and husbands contribute to agricultural production and there appears to be a certain level of consensus between spouses on how to manage overall livelihood strategies, but there are also asymmetries. The intra-household division of tasks and responsibilities appears to be organized along marked gendered patterns, and decision-making is largely delegated to men (although a few of the interviewees, mostly the male respondents, suggest that gender relations are gradually

becoming more equal). In rice production, women do most of the weeding, transplanting and drying while men take care of land preparation and pesticide application. In general, 'male' activities tend to be concentrated around specific times of the year, while 'female' activities require more time and attention throughout the season. In the growing of fruit, men carry out all the tasks deemed strenuous, and take most decisions, while women tend to be less involved. Men operate most motorized equipment and, importantly, have main responsibility for, and control over, the sale of products. This gender division of roles holds across the four regions but it appears to be more persistent in the Mountainous areas and more susceptible to change in the Red River Delta. In this latter region, due to higher levels of male migration, the wives left behind feel encouraged to take on additional farming responsibilities previously considered to be the domain of men. The effects of this on women farmers are often ambiguous, involving greater autonomy but also heavier work burdens.

Women farmers in the surveyed sites were around the age of 40 or older. They stayed behind in agriculture because it seemed both they and their families considered it to be the form of employment most compatible with their domestic responsibilities. They also felt that they would probably have no other chance to earn an income and accepted that it made more sense that other family members, either men or younger women, sought out opportunities to diversify out of agriculture (IFGS, 2015). This echoes findings from earlier studies such as Kabeer and Tran (2002).

3.2.2. KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The study by IFGS points to several constraints that women farmers especially face and limit their capacity to earn more secure incomes and to become more productive. Reflecting debates in the wider literature on Viet Nam and other

Asian countries, this section focuses on two policy aspects related to both women's entitlement to use land and women's access to agricultural extension services.⁴³

LAND

The lack of secure tenure limits women farmers' land use and cropping choices. In some countries, for instance, women's lack of statutory rights over agricultural land has been found to be a key factor for their exclusion from contract farming in high-value products (Dolan, 2001; Maertens and Swinnen, 2012). In many contexts, lack of land can also significantly limit women's access to credit, water and grazing rights, thereby further constraining their options for agricultural self-employment as well as social protection in times of shocks. In Viet Nam, women who do not possess a LUC cannot apply for loans, for example, from any of the commercial banks. Women who possess a land certificate, if just jointly with their husbands, can borrow from commercial banks without their husbands' authorization (World Bank, 2011).

Qualitative evidence from Thot Not, in the Mekong River Delta region of Viet Nam (Menon and Rodgers, 2015) seems to indicate that women who have their name on land use certificates (LUCs) on average earn more than women who do not. They also report having greater decision-making power on matters such as borrowing money, purchasing household goods and carrying out various transactions related to production. For example, while almost 70 per cent of women with their names on LUCs claim to have a say over the purchase or sale of agricultural products, less than 10 per cent of women without their names on a LUC make the same claim. Additional quantitative analysis carried out by Menon and Rodgers (2015)

on VHLSS data from a nationally representative sample suggests that both LUCs held by women only and LUCs held jointly with husbands reduce the incidence of household poverty by about 5 per cent (relative to those cases in which LUCs are held by men only). They also find women's ownership of residential and agricultural land to be correlated with improvements in child health and education (Menon et al, 2014b).

The benefits are thus clear, and would provide a strong rationale for promoting widespread land titling for women. The problem is, however, that women's land rights are not fully realized in practice as yet. After more than 20 years since the enactment of Viet Nam's 1993 Land Law, which granted women and men equal rights to land, the number of female farmers with formal entitlements to agricultural land remains small. In 2013, the percentage of rural women who were named as sole owners (17 per cent) or joint owners with their husband (14 per cent) on the land-use title was still lower than the percentage of rural men named as sole owners (59 per cent) (UNDP, 2013, Table 25).⁴⁴ This suggests that the implementation of the Land Law continues to exhibit gender bias despite a number of measures taken over the years to redress this issue.

Commentators provide a number of reasons for this bias. In the initial years, a source of gender bias was that the LUCs had space for only one name to be filled by the household head which tended to be a man. This changed with a 2001 government decree that stipulated that the names of both husband and wife should be stated on the LUCs if the land was jointly owned. Another source of gender bias in the allocation of land was that many localities stipulated larger amounts of acreage to be allocated to individuals of working age relative

to younger or older household members. Because female-headed households tended to have fewer adults of working age, they on average received less land than male-headed households. Moreover, because the legal retirement age for women is five years earlier than that for men, the amount of land allocated to women older than 55 has been half of that allocated to men of the same age (Ravallion and van de Valle, 2008, quoted in Rodgers and Menon, 2015). Since the early 2000s, female-only as well as joint holders of land-use titles for both agricultural and residential land have increased, but with some unevenness across regions and household characteristics. UNDP (2013) reports that the lowest level of formal entitlements over non-residential land for the wife is found among members of ethnic minorities that practice patrilineal succession.

A lack of administrative capacity, which is especially weak in remote rural provinces, is one of the reasons for this disappointing performance, but, as UNDP (2013) notes, a number of other factors play a role in causing gender-based inequities in the issuance of land-use rights. UNDP points to: the difficulties women have in accessing basic legal services because of complex bureaucratic procedures and language barriers; the limited availability of a broader set of social and support services for women; the predominance of inheritance practices privileging sons over daughters; and the role played by the local mediation committees. UNDP (2013) reports, for example, that mediation committees, who are given responsibility by their community members for maintaining harmony in the village, tend to make decisions in accordance to traditional family norms more than the formal law when resolving disputes over land. In sum, the issue of Viet Nam's land law and its uneven implementation is a clear example of what Kabeer would call a "policy imposed form of gender disadvantage". Out of a range of actors – from local officials, to court officials, community leaders, and to family members themselves—each seems to play a role in limiting women's enjoyment of their land rights.

The challenge is for the Government and other key actors to find ways to reverse this pattern.

UNDP (2013) reports of successful efforts by international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aimed at assisting women in registering their land use documents in a the provinces of Ninh Thuan and Tra Vinh, which could constitute a promising starting point. As concerns future interventions, UNDP recommends a three-pronged approach focused on: (i) improving the content and communication strategies of outreach programmes; (ii) encouraging more women to register their land rights and use land transfer documents; and (iii) improving the quality of legal services. It would be important that these initiatives engage with a variety of local organizations and that awareness campaigns include not just women, but also, importantly, men.

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

Agricultural extension and rural advisory services play an important role in transferring knowledge of new approaches and technologies to farmers. However, in most countries, these services still tend to engage more with male farmers, and there is little evidence that the needs and requirements of female farmers are being met (Jafry and Sulaiman, 2013; Manfre et al, 2013). Viet Nam is not exception to this bias. This is evidently a serious missed opportunity for enhancing women's productive potential in agriculture self-employment. Ulimwengu and Badiane (2011) finds, for instance, that Vietnamese female farmers who have received vocational training at agricultural schools achieve substantially higher rice yields than female farmers who have no training; and that the impact of agricultural vocational training is more significant for female than for male farmers.

Earlier data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) reported in Kabeer (2008) show that, in 2000, women made up only 25 per cent and 10 per cent of participants in

⁴³ There are many other issues such as, among others: female farmers' (lack of) integration into agricultural value chains; and the gender-blindness of rural physical infrastructure planning. Not all of them can be fully covered in this section, but some of these issues will be picked up again in other sections/chapters.

⁴⁴ UNDP (2013) is an excellent and thorough study carried out in selected districts across Viet Nam's main eight socio-economic regions. It is thus comprehensive but should not be seen as fully representative. The VHLSS had questions about LUCs in 2004 and 2008, but not in 2010 or 2012. It would be highly desirable to have questions on the gender of the LUC holder as a regular part of the VHLSS.

training programmes on animal husbandry and crop cultivation, respectively. However, up-to-date sex-disaggregated data on participation in agricultural extension programmes at the national level are not easily available. Nevertheless, information on selected training initiatives suggests that programmes financed and supported by international donors are likely to put greater emphasis on facilitating women's participation and greater say on their learning needs (ADB, 2014; MARD and CIDA, 2012,). The extent to which government programmes have been successful in increasing the number of female participants in recent years is less clear.

The Government, in particular MARD, is clearly committed on paper to promote effective agricultural training tailored to 'the specific technical needs of women and ethnic minorities'. This is reflected in Article 12, Resolution No 02/2010/NĐ-CP, cited in IFGS' background study, and also as reported by a government newspaper (VGP News, 2010). IFGS' qualitative study across the four provinces of Hai Duong, Hoa Binh, Binh Dinh and Tien Giang (IFGS, 2015) seems however to confirm a scenario in which male farmers, and in particular the most successful large-scale farmers, are the primary recipients of agriculture extension services. This especially applies to training courses on how to use new machinery and to those on cultivation techniques in non-traditional crops that are seen as commercially promising. By contrast, women farmers remain confined to more traditional types of training such as small-scale animal husbandry. The study by Pham Thu Hien and Nguyen Thi Huong (2014) suggests similar findings in other parts of the country.

Many government actors are involved in the management and delivery of agricultural extension services at the central, provincial, district and communal levels, with important facilitating roles played also by the Farmers' Association and Women's Union. Only a small proportion of these officials is female though (Pham Thu Hien, 2014), which can often be part of the problem. The modalities and duration of these training courses

vary a great deal across regions and sites, including how farmers' attendance costs are financed and remunerated. For example, in some Northern parts of Viet Nam, it appears that the provision of per diems creates the incentive for men to attend even in cases where women do most of the agricultural tasks (Mia Urbano, personal communication, 2015). The criteria for selecting participants do not seem to be always transparent or systematic either.

In the sites surveyed by IFGS (2015), women's attendance appears lowest in the mountainous regions. In these areas, married women report that they only attend agricultural extension courses when their husbands are temporarily absent. They also often mention conflicting housework and caring responsibilities as a reason for not taking part. And yet, in every location, these women farmers show great enthusiasm and eagerness to learn, as acknowledged by some of the male interviewees: "Female farmers' work requires engaging with soil and plant every day; as a result, they are thirsty of technical training" (better-off male owner of fruit orchard, Hai Duong, in IFGS, 2015: 38). Women more than men try to satisfy their needs for technical knowledge through informal channels, such as watching TV programmes as well as talking to suppliers of agricultural inputs or more experienced neighbour farmers.

All of these constraints are not specific to Viet Nam. Evidence suggests that, as in other countries, the main reasons for women farmers' low participation in agriculture extension include that the services provided tend to focus on the tasks that males specialize in; the staff is overwhelmingly male, raising cultural difficulties in engaging in face-to-face communication with women farmers; and often attendance involves travelling long distances and taking several hours away from the family (FAO, IFAD and ILO, 2010). In sum, in many contexts, there seems to be a mismatch between the types of support rural women receive and what they would really need. The current organization and content of agricultural extension and training often do little to challenge gender

disparities in the distribution of knowledge and productive resources, with potentially serious negative implications for the promotion of equity and sustainability in agricultural development.

An important policy question is whether this gender bias in Viet Nam's agricultural extension and training has reduced or intensified in recent times as a result of greater commercialization of agriculture, and what efforts can be made in practice to change this trend. Other countries have made efforts to increase the number of women extension workers and to ensure a quota for women in extension programmes. There are also growing calls for demand-led rather than top-down programmes only focused on 'demonstration'. Emphasis is put on approaches that use participatory methods and teaching tools that are adequate for the learning needs of farmers who have no formal education and are suitable for engaging with women who may be more reserved or less socially mobile (Jafry and Sulaiman, 2013). These experiences could provide useful insights into the Vietnamese Government in shaping its response to the challenge of creating more gender-equitable extension services. The Farmer Livestock Schools (FLSs) implemented by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and operated by the National Agriculture Extension Centre of MARD since 2000 in 36 poor communes in both delta and mountainous areas offers a good example of a project with a strong participatory component that has been highly successful. An assessment of this project (Minh, Larsen and Neef, 2010) reports positive outcomes in terms of enhancing female farmers' knowledge and self-esteem as well as changing the attitudes and practices of farmers, extension officers and local authorities for the benefit of farmers' livelihoods. This is a promising initiative with potential to be scaled up and extended to areas other than just livestock.

WAYS FORWARD: THE NEED FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

As reflected in IFGS' study and frequently voiced

in a number of newspaper articles in the English daily Viet Nam News, farmers, in particular women farmers, would very much need an integrated set of services and support to go well beyond technical skills in cultivation methods and to also include credit, market information, business skills and market facilitation. This support for Vietnamese farmers, especially female farmers, is bound to become particularly relevant in the next few years, in the context of lower international trade barriers in agricultural products brought about by the TPP.

Recent years have witnessed increasing interest among development organizations in the role of gender in agricultural value chains (FAO, 2011a; USAID, 2009). Promoting holistic and integrated approaches to redress rural women's socio-economic advantage is likely to be a more promising way forward than focusing on specific interventions in isolation. This is because, as explained, rural women face biases in multiple domains, and gendered constraints in access to resources are mutually interdependent. Indeed, only comprehensive agricultural policies and public support to rural areas can enable poor rural women to improve the productivity of both their labour and their land and to gain greater autonomy (Elson and Jain, 2011). An important question for policy concerns the kind of collaborations, coordination of governmental efforts, and range of stakeholders involved that need to be encouraged to promote these synergies.

3.3. WAGE WORK IN EXPORT-ORIENTED FACTORIES

Statistics analysed in Chapter 2 show that, in the last five years, the proportion of women in wage employment has increased in relation to other categories of employment such as own-account work or unpaid family work. This continues a trend from previous years and already noted in CGA 2011. It was observed that this rise is mostly the result of growing numbers of female workers in export-oriented factories. The same

data also suggest that wage employment offers comparatively more favourable conditions to women workers. Labour conditions appear more 'decent' for women who are employed in public or foreign-owned enterprises relative to domestic private firms. In 2014, women constituted more than 65 per cent of the total labour force employed by the foreign-owned sector while their share in both public and private domestic sectors was less than 50 per cent (GSO, 2015, Table 2.9). In the case of foreign-owned export factories, higher compliance with labour standards can be partly explained by increasing pressures from reputation-conscious buyers. It is also a reflection of the more developed labour and occupational safety policies prevailing in the countries where these companies originate.

This, however, does not suggest all jobs available to women (and men) in manufacturing provide good working conditions, adequate pay and social protection. Studies of different segments of the Viet Nam's manufacturing sector (Kim et al; 2012; ActionAid, 2012; MUTRAP and ILSSA, 2014) variedly report problems that wage workers face with: the insecurity of their contracts; excessive and poorly paid overtime; inadequate health services (especially lacking in the area of reproductive health and diagnostics); and non-compliance with occupational health and safety standards. These studies also point to insufficient work inspections and limited workers' opportunities for mobilization as factors compounding these problems. The Government is well aware of the situation and is taking steps to tackle poor labour law compliance, for example the launch in April 2015 of the Labour Inspection Campaign, which has now concluded its first phase.⁴⁵

Another important concern in ongoing policy debates regards the risk that Viet Nam's position in the manufacturing global supply chain may

remain at the level of low value-added assembly operations, even as the country's production shifts from garments to electronics (Norlund and Tran, 2015). This is largely seen as related to a lack of technical skills and specialized training among the current labour force (World Bank, 2013a), a problem that is especially acute among female workers. This underscores the importance of stronger government support for an industrialization model with a strong emphasis on gender equality objectives and human capacities development (Braunstein, 2015).

Geographically, most manufacturing production and employment are heavily concentrated around Viet Nam's two main cities, Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) and Hanoi. The South-East (HCMC and surroundings) receives more than half of all FDI while the Red River Delta (Hanoi and its region) receives over one-quarter (Cling et al, 2009). This concentration is a cause of significant regional imbalances and a factor in the flows of domestic migration. Sectorally, as already noted, export-oriented production is growing particularly in new products such as electronics and vehicle parts, and so is the proportion of women working in these emerging sectors (albeit still at the level of low-skill assembly type of work). It is the garment sector, however, that continues to provide the bulk of manufacturing wage employment for women, as in export garment manufacturing in other parts of the world. In Viet Nam, about 1.5 million of the women who are employed in manufacturing work in the garment industry and less than 300,000 work in electronics and vehicle parts (GSO 2014). For this reason, the analysis in this section focuses on workers in the garment sector and examines, in particular, the case of Better Work factories. As explained below, Viet Nam's Better Work programme is a widely popular initiative and offers a promising model for the objective of strengthening women's rights at work. It could be

used by the Government as a template for similar initiatives in wage sectors beyond the garment sector.

The garment industry is the most long-established of all export-oriented manufacturing sectors in Viet Nam, having grown significantly during the 1990s due to greater access first to European and then to US markets. Despite some fluctuations and a decline caused by the global financial crisis in recent years, garment exports have managed to remain stable, at about 14 per cent of total export value (see Figure 3, Chapter 2 and Table A5), and Viet Nam today is the fifth largest exporter of garments in the world. The vast majority of garment factories produce at the cut-make-trim end of the value chain, a simple assembly process with low value-added for the producer, and rely heavily on imported raw materials, particularly from China. This is a drawback and constitutes a serious obstacle for upgrading and economic development in the long term (Williams et al, 2015).

3.3.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES OF WORKERS

The socio-economic profile of female garment workers is markedly different from the profile of either female farmers or paid domestic workers. Much like paid domestic workers, female garment workers are largely migrants from rural areas, thus they are the ones who leave and not the ones who stay behind. But they are much younger and tend to be better educated than either female farmers or paid domestic workers. Data reported in ILO Viet Nam (2015) show that garment workers are the youngest of all wage workers, with an average age of 30, while wage workers employed in domestic services are the oldest, with an average age of 44. In Better Work factories, more than half of female garment workers have completed at least lower secondary school (ILO, 2013b).

In contrast to earlier evidence on garment workers in Asian countries, which describes them as being mostly single and childless (see Kabeer and Tran, 2002), a considerable proportion of female wage workers in Viet Nam's garment industry today is married and has children. Data specific to Better Work factories indicate, for example, that 54 per cent of female workers are either married, widowed or divorced, 44 per cent of whom have children who, in most cases, are under five years of age (ILO, 2013b). More than 40 per cent of female workers in these factories have been in their job for three years or longer.

For the garment workers who are recent migrants to the cities, and especially for those who have young children, problems of accommodation as well as access to health and education services can be especially severe. ActionAid (2012: 56-61) reports, for example, that migrant factory workers with limited or no residency status in Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh face higher-than-average water and electricity bills, live in very basic shared accommodations and struggle to find affordable and quality education and care for their children.

3.3.2. KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Because of the demographic profile of current female garment workers, this section gives priority to the specific issues and challenges faced by workers during pregnancy and as mothers of young children. It reports insights from the experience of a subset of garment factories, those participating in the Better Work programme. These findings should not be seen, therefore, as representative of the whole garment industry. Since the programme is on a voluntary basis, participating factories are more likely to be characterized by higher levels of compliance with labour standards than other smaller, less successful garment factories, even before joining the programme.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The first stage of this Campaign, aimed at raising awareness of labour laws in the garment sector, was implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs (MOLISA) in collaboration with the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour, Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and support from the ILO. According to official reports, it has been a success, and MOLISA plans to replicate the same initiative in the construction sector (see ILO Viet Nam website on the Final Review Workshop on 16 October 2015). It would be interesting to find out the motivation for focusing on construction now, instead of other more tradable sectors such as electronics or footwear.

BETTER WORK

Better Work is a programme jointly managed by the ILO and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) which is aimed at improving simultaneously both working conditions and competitiveness in a firm. As of September 2015, more than 360 factories, or about half of the total FDI factories in the country (Tran and Norlund, 2015), were enrolled in the Better Work programme, employing more than 470,000 workers of which about 80 per cent are females.⁴⁷

In Viet Nam, as in other countries where it operates, the approach of Better Work is firmly rooted in the key principle of social dialogue⁴⁸ and focuses on the delivery of three 'core services': assessment, advisory and training. Once factories

enrol in the programme, they are assessed for their compliance with both national labour laws and core international labour standards. This is followed by regular factory visits from especially trained 'enterprise advisors' who facilitate worker-management dialogue, help the factory to develop and implement plans for improving compliance, and build effective management systems to raise standards and prevent labour abuses. One of Better Work's most innovative features is the institution of workers-management committees, also called Performance Improvement Consultative Committees (PICCs). The PICCS, as the name suggests, involve the active engagement of both workers and managers. Both work together in non-hierarchical ways on problem-solving and decision-making related to factory matters. Workers participating in the committees do not need to be

BOX 4. THE BETTER WORK CYCLE

The Better Work cycle begins with an initial advisory period of about three-months, during which factories are coached through the process of first establishing a worker-management committee, and then conducting a self-diagnosis of the issues they think require improvement. Worker-management committees (called Performance Improvement Consultative Committees, or PICCs) are at the heart of the Better Work model, since they represent the key mechanism through which 'social dialogue' is nurtured and improvement activities are planned. After the committee is established and the self-diagnosis is completed, the factory receives an unannounced visit from Better Work, which establishes a baseline evaluation of its labour compliance. Questions in the assessment tool are organized into eight clusters: four clusters are assessed in relation to the national law (compensation, contracts, working time, occupational safety and health) and the others are assessed in relation to international labour standards (discrimination, freedom of association, child labour, forced labour). Once this baseline is established, the factory will continue to receive advice and coaching both through the PICC mechanism and additional training and learning events specific to its improvement needs.

Source: Williams et al, 2015.

46 Comparing workers' circumstances and enjoyment of rights in participating and non-participating factories would be an interesting area for research and of great usefulness for policy.

47 This is roughly equivalent to just below one third of all female garment workers in the country.

48 Social dialogue refers to the various forms of communication, negotiation and consultation that take place between workers and employers, and between workers, employers and the government, on issues of common interest. It is a core ILO principle and seen as critical for encouraging good governance and promoting social and industrial stability.

trade union representatives. More details on Better Work's overall philosophy are provided in Box 4.

Factories in the programme vary in size and ownership, as well as main buyers and export markets. Foreign owners from the Republic of Korea (39 percent) and Taiwan (13 percent) are the most common. Most factories are producing for brands and retailers based in North America and the European Union, although the Republic of Korea and Japan are also becoming important markets. While some factories have managed over time to secure stable and profitable partnerships with specific buyers, the majority continues to face intense competition, unpredictable orders, and narrow profit margins (Williams et al. 2015; World Bank, 2015d).

OVERALL GENDER PATTERNS IN BETTER WORK FACTORIES

Analysis of Better Work worker survey data suggests marked differences between male workers and female workers at the time that the garment factories joined the Better Work programme (ILO, 2013b). For example, women clustered in different occupations were less likely than men to receive training or be promoted, even though, on average, they had been employed at the same factory for longer than men. Overall, however, only a small fraction of workers, regardless of gender or education, had received training. Women worked slightly longer hours in a week than men, but received lower bonuses and wages. Women sought health treatment more often than men, and women with upper secondary education or higher sought treatment more often than less educated women. Most workers were dissatisfied with the quality of the health facilities at the factory, however. Factory-provided childcare facilities were rarely available, and women with higher education were more likely than women with lower education to send their children to private care centres. This

difference indicates a possible source of inequality between women with a relatively higher income level, who can afford to pay for privately provided childcare, and women from poorer backgrounds who must resort to more informal or unpaid forms of care.⁴⁹ Most workers thought that there were barriers to promotion, but in general, few workers appeared to voice their concerns. The proportion of highly educated female workers who complained about work-related matters was higher than the proportion of women with lower education. These matters included overtime, pay, the quality of facilities on the factory floor, as well as verbal abuse and sexual harassment.

The same survey data analysed over time suggests improvements after the factories join the programme (Better Work Vietnam Impact Brief, 2014). For example, workers report greater employment security, with the share of workers on indefinite or open-ended contracts more than doubling over four years. In addition, they also report greater stability of income and ability to cover for health care costs. Opportunities for promotion remain limited, however; 85 per cent of workers have never been promoted. More workers report availability of factory-based health care but continue to rate the services received as 'only fair' or 'poor'. Childcare support such as on-site crèches and kindergartens remains scarce but a few Better Work factories provide monthly allowances for children to contribute towards childcare costs, although these remain a minority (Williams et al, 2015).

ISSUES SPECIFIC TO PREGNANT AND NURSING WORKERS

Most recent compliance data from Better Work factories⁵⁰ reveals a generally positive picture with regard to key aspects of maternity protection, including non-discrimination on the basis of maternity status, maternity leave entitlements,

49 This is based on the assumption that higher formal education can be taken as a proxy for a more affluent family background.

50 The 8th Better Work Vietnam Synthesis Report, upon which this account is based, was released in July 2015, covering 193 factories of varying size, structure and ownership.

BOX 5.**PROVISIONS FOR PREGNANT AND NURSING WORKERS UNDER THE LAW**

Viet Nam's 2012 Labour Code has several specific provisions to protect female workers against discrimination and from workplace risks during their pregnancy and nursing period. Additional provisions refer to the responsibility of enterprises to support childcare provision for workers, including partial cover of related expenses.⁵¹ In October 2015, the Government issued Decree no. 85/2015/ND-CP ("Decree no. 85") providing detailed regulations on the implementation of a number of articles of the Labour Code regarding female employees. According to the Decree, employers who build nurseries, kindergartens and healthcare facilities which meet statutory requirements may be entitled to a reduction in corporate income tax.⁵²

In Viet Nam, an employer is prohibited to discriminate based on gender or marital status, and male and female employees whose work is of equal value must receive an equal salary.⁵³ Furthermore, an employer is not allowed to unilaterally terminate a labour contract in case the female employee is absent for marriage, pregnancy, maternity leave or in case she is nursing a child under 12 months of age. Furthermore, a female employee under the above mentioned circumstances is protected from disciplinary procedures.⁵⁴ A female worker is not protected, however, in the event that the contract is completed or has expired while she is in this situation.

The Vietnamese labour law also contains provisions on maternity benefits such as maternity leave and alleviating the workload for female employees before and after giving birth. For example, a female worker is entitled to 30 minutes' paid time off during her monthly period and 60 minutes' paid time off per day from the seventh month of pregnancy onwards and when she is nursing a child under 12 months old, intended as a breastfeeding break (to be taken at a time agreed between the worker and the factory management).⁵⁵ In addition, a woman in these circumstances is not allowed to work at night, to work overtime, or to work in remote locations.⁵⁶

A female employee is entitled to 6 months of maternity leave.⁵⁷ During her pregnancy, a female employee can take 5 days' leave for prenatal examinations, and the employer is responsible for organizing a gynecology health check every 6 months.⁵⁸ In case the pregnancy ends in a miscarriage, abortion or stillbirth, the woman is entitled to 10-50 days off, depending on the age of the foetus; if the newborn child dies after delivery, a woman can take 30-90 days' leave, depending on the age of the newborn. The right to take 7-15 days per year off for contraceptive measures should also be noted.⁵⁹

During these different types of maternity leave, the woman is entitled to 100 per cent of her average monthly salary of the last 6 months and returning to her previous work shall be guaranteed. If this is not possible, the employer must arrange other work with the same salary.⁶⁰ These benefits only apply, however, if a woman has contributed to the social insurance scheme for at least 6 months during the 12 months before giving birth.

51 Art. 154, Labour Code 2012.

52 Decree no.85/2015/ND-CP Art. 11.

53 Art. 90 clause 3, Labour Code 2012.

54 Art. 155 clause 3 and 4, Labour Code 2012.

55 Art. 155 clause 5, Labour Code 2012. In addition, Decree 85 encourages employers to build breastfeeding rooms and provide facilities to store breast-milk (Art. 7).

56 Art. 155 clause 1, Labour Code 2012.

57 Art. 157, Labour Code 2012.

58 Art. 29, Social Insurance Law 2006; and Art. 152 clause 2, Labour Code 2012.

59 Art. 33, Social Insurance Law 2006.

60 Art. 35, Social Insurance Law 2006; and Art. 158, Labour Code 2012.

and safety and health provisions for pregnant and breastfeeding workers.

Overt discrimination against pregnant women and young mothers in the factories appears to be rare. For example, no factories were found to have terminated workers on the basis of a woman's being pregnant or breastfeeding. In addition, no employers were found to have changed the employment status, wages or seniority of workers during their maternity leave. The vast majority (98 percent) of factories allow workers the required number of days off for prenatal visits, and also receive their full entitlements in terms of maternity leave. Widespread compliance in this area likely reflects that the Vietnam Social Insurance Agency reminds factories of their obligations, and that workers in Better Work factories appear to be well informed about the terms of their entitlements.

Better Work is, however, aware of cases whereby factories comply with all the provisions in the Labour Code but continue to discriminate in more subtle forms, thus effectively circumventing the protections of the law (Williams et al, 2015). An example is the non-renewal of workers' contracts after they return to work from maternity leave, which some employers use as a means to avoid having to provide and/or pay for the statutory one hour breastfeeding break for new mothers. Evidently, this is only possible for workers on fixed or short term contracts. For indefinite term contracts, factories have found other ways to persuade workers to leave and yet remain compliant with the law, such as transferring workers to less attractive positions with the same salary but smaller bonuses – the law permits such transfers as long as the salary is not reduced, but it does not mention additional bonuses.

As concerns protection of pregnant or nursing workers against safety and health risks, 13 per cent of the factories assessed by Better Work do not comply with standards. Some examples of non-compliance are failing to transfer heavily pregnant

workers to lighter work, letting them undertake hazardous that can compromise their child-bearing and nursing ability, or not allowing them one hour off per day at full pay. There are various reasons for this. For example, Better Work has found cases whereby the records of workers who should be transferred to lighter work or whose working day should be cut to seven hours is kept by the human resources department, leaving the production staff unaware of which staff these rules apply to. At times, it is the workers themselves who want to work additional overtime to earn more, and hence do not alert the production staff.⁶¹ Other reasons offered by workers for wanting to work beyond the seven-hour limit include a desire to get a free dinner (which they are entitled to if they work more than two hours overtime) and the need to wait for husbands working in the same factory before travelling home together. With respect to not providing breastfeeding breaks to eligible workers, these are cases in which production managers did not keep accurate lists of breastfeeding workers, or in which the factory, the workers, or both parties prefer to forgo these breaks. However, 97 per cent of factories do pay workers for their statutory daily breastfeeding break.

Better Work has also found that some managers remain uncomfortable with what they see as a compliance burden vis-à-vis the protection of pregnant and nursing workers (Williams et al., 2015). Common objections include: the extended duration of maternity leave (which was increased from four to six months in the 2012 Labour Code); limits on their ability to discipline pregnant and breastfeeding workers; and the reduced working day (i.e. seven hours), which they argue disrupts line continuity and productivity, to the disadvantage of both the business and other workers. Some managers also resent that women can take maternity leave within months of joining the factory, and argue that in some cases, this right is exploited by unemployed workers, who join factories with the explicit intention of getting

61 While pregnant workers are easier to identify, those who have given birth can easily conceal their maternity status.

pregnant soon after. For these reasons, some factories have sought new ways to circumvent the law and prevent the employment of pregnant workers. Examples of this include hiring female workers on short fixed-term contracts of six months and the use of physical 'fitness' tests such as asking workers to jump on the spot, as an alternative to standard pregnancy test upon recruitment, which would be against the law, to screen out already-pregnant workers. While legal, both practices serve to undermine rights at work for pregnant women.

WAYS FORWARD

As the examples discussed in this section show, employment in the more formal segments of the garment industry may provide some women workers with the opportunity for decent working conditions and relatively stable earnings. These, however, are jobs that do not offer much opportunity in terms of gaining and consolidating skills, or obtaining promotion.

There are clearly circumstances, such as being a rural migrant, having young children, or being on a short-term contract, that make some female garment workers especially vulnerable and limit what they are actually entitled to in the daily reality of their factory work.

The Better Work programme, which is currently implemented in a sub-set of export-oriented firms, provides a promising approach for improving factories' compliance with Viet Nam's labour laws. These laws are progressive and recognize women and men workers as equal, but they need to be better implemented. Better Work-type programmes should definitely be scaled-up and extended, including to manufacturing sectors other than garments and to factories other than the foreign-owned ones. What is especially valuable is that the benefits of Better Work are demonstrated to go beyond increased compliance and include the

development of workers' communication and life skills through participation in the PICCs. A number of female garment workers report that they find these skills especially useful, not only in the workplace, but also in their personal lives (World Bank, 2015c).

However, Better Work-type initiatives cannot be the sole intervention to promote. Concerted efforts from various government departments are required to address the lack of technical skills of the female workforce and to improve the provision of social services that are needed to support the well-being and productivity of working women. Quality and affordable childcare and healthcare services in particular should be prioritized. In sum, the Government needs to develop a sound, overarching industrial policy including strong gender considerations in each of its aspects.

It would be also important to enhance the capacity of civil society organizations, and in particular women's groups, to offer support on wider legal and social issues to workers and mobilize against existing but covert forms of gender discrimination. For instance, the Women's Activities Units of Viet Nam's General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) have played an important role in supporting female workers' rights in a number of garment and textile factories across the country. However, their influence is limited by the fact that most union representatives at the enterprise level are paid by the employers and are often part-time. Independent financial support for union representatives and stronger training skills in collective bargaining could go a long way to address these weaknesses and improve their autonomy. The newly formed Network of Action for Migrant Workers (M.net) established in October 2014 as a joint effort of six local NGOs⁶² may also play a role in facilitating access to social welfare services for all those garment workers who are recent migrants to the cities.

3.4. PAID DOMESTIC WORK

Paid domestic services – defined as work done for pay within a private home and which involves either housework such as cleaning and cooking or person care for children, the elderly and the sick, or, most often, a combination of the two – are an important and growing source of wage employment for women in many parts of the world. ILO statistics for Asia and the Pacific (excluding China) indicate that in 2010, female domestic workers constituted about 5 per cent of total female employment in the region, and almost 12 per cent of total female paid employees (Table 3.1 in ILO, 2013a). The corresponding figures for male workers are 0.5 per cent and 1.7 percent, respectively, suggesting this is a highly 'feminized' occupation. This is often explained in terms of widespread perceptions and stereotypes about women as being 'naturally' suited for activities that bring harmony and well-being in a household. In addition to the gender dimension, paid domestic work often also has class and racial dimensions, being mostly carried out by women from disadvantaged regional, ethnic, racial or caste background (Duffy, 2005). Domestic workers do not only look for work in their own home countries, but also migrate internationally in search of paid jobs, often with employment agencies as intermediaries. Asia has substantial migration within the region, for instance from Indonesia, Lao PDR and Cambodia to richer countries such as Malaysia. Other domestic workers migrate beyond their region's borders, in particular to the Middle East, Europe and North America. The Philippines and Indonesia are the major sending countries of female migrant workers in the Asian region (ILO, 2013a).

LFS data presented in Chapter 2 show that female domestic workers in Viet Nam make up about 1 per cent of total female employment (a lower share than the regional average) and that their average monthly earnings, at about 125 USD per month (April 2016 exchange rate), are among the lowest in the whole economy, only higher than those paid in the agricultural sector (see Table 11 in Chapter 2).⁶³ Paid domestic services is also by far the most female-intensive sector in Viet Nam, with women constituting 93 per cent of the total sectoral workforce. As for international migration, Viet Nam currently sends a comparatively small proportion of domestic workers abroad (mostly to Taiwan, Macau Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, and Cyprus, as documented in UN Women Viet Nam, 2012b), but policy commentators suggest there is potential for a significant increase related to the lifting of a ban on the recruitment of Vietnamese migrant domestic workers that Taiwan had been enforcing since 2005 and recent agreements on greater protection for domestic workers signed with Saudi Arabia and Malaysia (ILO Vietnam 2015).

A number of reasons explain the growth of the paid domestic sector in Asia, as in other developing regions (ILO, 2013a). Due to the ageing of the population and the rise of nuclear families associated with rural-urban migration, for example, families need more support with caring activities, particularly if they live in a country where public social services and infrastructure are limited. The most important explanatory factor is women's increasing labour force participation. Since domestic care responsibilities are predominately the domain of women, families' need for outside help increases accordingly. Importantly, this phenomenon has an income inequality dimension

of domestic paid workers for a variety of reasons; hence the numbers taken from the LFS and reported in Chapter 2 and this section should be seen just as a lower bound for the true number of these workers in Viet Nam. The LFS, or any other nationally representative survey that conforms to internationally agreed definitions, remains, however, the best source to date, since it offers at least a reliable indication of broad patterns, which are countrywide and comparable over time. On the other hand, statistics reported by advocacy NGOs are not always as informative, given that the samples they tend to draw on are not representative and their definitions and methodologies often not clearly spelled out. The VHLSS had a module in 2010 specifically asking whether the household had 'a domestic helper who shared meals and accommodation, or a family member who had migrated to work as domestic helper' but an analysis of data from this module suggests that the questions may have not been effectively administered or perhaps misinterpreted by respondents (findings available from Fontana, 2015). The GSO may consider to try again and develop a well-designed module on domestic paid workers to become a regular feature of the VHLSS.

62 These local NGOs are: the Institute for Development and Community Health (LIGHT), the Centre for Development and Integration (CDI), the Research Centre for Gender - Family and Community Development (GFCD), the Institute for Research on Policy, Law and Development (PLD), the Vietnam Judicial Support Association for the Poor (VIJUSAP) and the Research Centre - Counselling Social Work & Community Development (SDRC).⁶³ Official figures are likely to underestimate the actual numbers

as well as a gender dimension. It is mostly professional women in households at the higher end of the income distribution who have the resources to employ domestic workers, while women at the bottom of the distribution are willing to accept jobs in domestic services, even if the levels of remuneration and social protection are low.

In Viet Nam commentators attribute the recent growth of the paid domestic sector mostly to the rise of the urban 'middle-classes'. For example, research conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) and the ILO (2011) in Hanoi and HCM City shows that 46 per cent of surveyed households hire domestic workers and this rate is more than twice than in the pre-2000 period. The majority of these urban households hiring domestic workers has average or above average living standards⁶⁴ and is well endowed with labour-saving technologies such as washing machines and gas cookers. Households with care-intensive circumstances, such as having small children or frail elderly parents, are more likely than other households to opt for live-in domestics (Nguyen Minh, 2015). In the vast majority of cases, it is the wife in the hiring household who agrees on the contract with the domestic worker and manages her work on a day-to-day basis. There is some indication that demand for paid domestic services is also growing in small towns and rural areas, particularly in relation to the care needs of the elderly (Pham Thu Hien, 2015).

The adoption of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 in 2011 has been an important landmark. It is contributing to raise awareness on the situation of domestic paid workers globally and provides a good legal basis for workers' mobilization at the country level. Viet Nam has not ratified as yet Convention No. 189 but has taken useful steps towards better recognizing and protecting domestic workers' rights. For

instance, the new Viet Nam's Labour Code adopted in 2012 for the first time recognizes domestic work as a proper paid job and has five specific clauses covering it. This was followed in 2014 by Decree 27/2014/ND-CP9 (Decree No. 27) and its accompanying Circular 9/2014/TT-BLDTBXH (Circular No. 19), which sets out more specifically the conditions that apply to domestic workers employed within the country. Decree No. 27 requires a written employment contracts to be signed between the domestic worker and their employer and mandates certain conditions, which are listed in box 6.

In accordance with Circular No. 19, the employer is required to notify the worker's local People's Committee of their engagement as a domestic worker, and if and when their employment is terminated. People's Committees (in the domestic worker's place of origin) are required to manage, and report on, matters regarding domestic workers' contracts and entitlements. Detailed guidelines are specified for local authorities at the commune, district and provincial level. All this clearly demonstrates that the Government is committed to improved standards for paid domestic workers but it is still at its early stages and, as ever, implementation is a challenge.

3.4.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES OF WORKERS

The vast majority of domestic workers in Viet Nam are women. Much like garment workers, a significant proportion of them are migrants from rural areas and many come from poor households. On average, they are older than garment workers and indeed the oldest of all female wage workers, with an average age of 44 (GSO, 2014). A considerable share of domestic workers have completed lower secondary school, and hence tend to be better educated than the women

BOX 6. SELECTED ARTICLES FROM DECREE NO. 27

Article 5. Conclusion of the labour contract	Within 10 days from the day on which the labour contract is signed, the employer must notify the employment of a domestic servant to the People's Committee of the commune, ward or town where the worker works.
Article 7. Labour contract contents	A labour contract must contain specific terms related to the living conditions of the worker (if any); the worker's travel allowance when the labour contract expires on schedule; the time and financial support for the worker to go to school (if any); the responsibility to pay compensation for damaging equipment or other assets of the employer; the prohibitions applied to both parties.
Article 8. Probation	The probation period must not exceed 06 working days.
Article 13. Responsibilities of the employer and worker when the labour contract is terminated	When the labour contract is terminated according to Article 10 of this Decree, the employer and the worker must settle the relevant payments according to the labour contract.
Article 15. Wages, method of payment, and deadline for payment	The level of wage is agreed by both party and must be written in the labour contract. The wage (including the living cost if the worker lives with the family) must not fall below the minimum wages imposed by the Government. The employer and the worker shall negotiate the monthly living cost, provided it does not exceed 50 per cent of the wage in the labour contract.
Article 16. Payment upon resignation	The employer must pay wages to the worker in full if the employer is accountable for the worker's resignation, unless otherwise agreed by both parties.
Article 18. Bonus	Every year, the employer shall pay bonus for the worker according to their performance and the financial capacity of the household.
Article 19. Social insurance and health insurance	The employer must pay the worker an additional amount that is equal to the social insurance and health insurance premiums when paying wages. The worker shall use this amount to pay insurance himself or herself.
Article 21. Hours of work and hours of rest of workers that live with the family	The hours of work and hours of rest shall be agreed by both parties, provided the worker has at least 8 hours of rest, including 6 consecutive hours of rest in during a 24-hour period.
Article 22. Weekly rest time	The worker must have at least 24 hours of rest every week. Otherwise, the employer must allow the worker to rest at least 4 days a month on average. The time of rest shall be negotiated by both parties.
Article 23. Annual leave and public holidays	If the worker has worked for 12 months for an employee, he or she is entitled for 12-day leave in the year. The time of rest shall be negotiated by both parties. When taking annual leave, the worker shall receive an advance payment that equals at least the payment for the days off.

Source: Decree No. 272014/ND-CP, Guidelines for regulations of the Labour Code on Domestic Servants.

⁶⁴ In the MOLISA-ILO survey, living standards are determined based on respondents' own perceptions. There is no official definition of living standards in Viet Nam (MOLISA, personal communication).

who stay behind to work in agriculture. Another difference compared to the self-employed in agriculture is that almost all paid domestic workers belong to the ethnic majority group (ILO and MOLISA, 2011, reported by Pham Thu Hien, 2015). Whereas race and ethnicity are often central to power dynamics in domestic services elsewhere, power and hierarchy in the relationship between domestic workers and their employers in Viet Nam seems to play out mainly as income and rural-urban difference (Nguyen Minh, 2015).

An ILO and MOLISA study (2011) distinguishes three main types of domestic workers: those who live-in with their employers; those who do not live in their employers' home, and may work for more than one household for a few hours each time; and those who work as carers assisting patients with personal hygiene, eating and similar while they are in hospital. There are differences in the profile of domestic workers across these three groups. A greater proportion of live-out workers and hospital workers are married with children, while a greater proportion of live-in workers are widows or divorced and often lack a stable home of their own. Although many domestic workers are rural migrants, some of them are from urban areas. The proportion of urban workers is higher among live-out domestics. Urban domestics tend to be slightly more educated-- some of them having completed upper secondary education or even some vocational training-- and have had a different employment trajectory before becoming domestic workers compared to rural women. Some of them, for instance, were previously employed in state-owned enterprises closed down with privatization (Nguyen Minh, 2015). The small share of men who is in this occupation is heavily concentrated in the category of hospital carers and tends to assist male patients only, while hospital carers who are female look after both female and male patients (ILO and MOLISA, 2011 reported in Pham Thu Hien, 2015b). According to the same survey, overall, more than 60 per cent of the domestic workers who were interviewed wish to continue in their occupation for the long term, while the rest sees domestic

work only as a short-term opportunity (23 percent) or are not sure (16 percent).

As observed in Nguyen Minh (2015), domestic workers in each of the three categories face different kinds of challenges. Live-in domestics are the most dependent on their employer. They tend to have more stable and secure earnings but also a restrictive, at times exploitative, employment relationship. Their living costs are covered and they are able to save more than live-out domestics, but they often lack any privacy and only in some cases are they given their own room in the house where they live and work. They are also likely to face more claims on their time (outside of regular working hours) from their employers. Work as a live-out domestics may be more irregular and less remunerative but is also perceived as giving the worker more flexibility and autonomy. Hospital work can be the most intense and yet erratic of all, requiring at times to live side-by-side with a patient uninterruptedly up to 14 hours a day, and heavily concentrated in short blocks of time throughout the year.

3.4.2 KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

As in other parts of the world, most of the challenges for domestic workers in Viet Nam come from the fact that their occupation has only recently started to be recognized and regulated by the law. Hence, the current legislation may not yet fully cover all aspects that are relevant to their employment, and even if it does, the institutional mechanisms to ensure enforcement of such labour regulations may not have been properly tested and implemented.

Moreover, the nature of domestic workers' work place – their employer's private home – puts them in an especially vulnerable situation: they are generally isolated from other workers and in close physical and emotional proximity to their employers, which in some cases may even

Table 15. Responses by both employers and employees on contract type for domestic workers

Type of contract	Employers with live-in domestic workers (% of total)	Employers with live-out domestic workers (% of total)	Live-in domestic workers (% of total)	Live-out domestic workers (% of total)	Hospital domestic workers (% of total)
Labour agreement	95.8	100.0	89.8	94.0	90.4
Form					
Verbal	89.5	96.3	93.3	98.9	97.6
Written	8.5	3.8	6.7	1.1	2.4

Source: ILO and MOLISA, 2011, Table 12: 71.

lead to exploitation and abuse including sexual harassment. The level of organization among domestic workers also tends to be low. In the case of rural migrant domestic workers with no defined residential status, this vulnerability is compounded by their limited entitlements to social services in the area where they have come to work and their possible lack of familiarity with the local surroundings (much in the same way as garment workers who are recent migrant to the cities). All these issues require creative policy solutions.

The first step towards ensuring compliance with labour standards for domestic workers is evidently a written contract between the employer and the domestic worker that transparently defines the parameters (e.g. wages, working hours, insurance benefits, leave entitlements, and so on) of the job. This can be complemented by other measures, such as the promotion of model contracts in the language that both domestic workers and employers understand. It has been noted that Viet Nam's new Decree No.27 issued in 2014 indeed requires a written contract. The ILO and MOLISA survey, however, indicates that, at least as of 2011, in both Hanoi and HCMC, most contracts between domestic workers and their employer were only verbal. It is interesting to note there are discrepancies between what the employers and the workers report about this issue, as shown in Table 15.

With respect to live-in domestics, while 96 per cent of their employers claim to have agreed a contract, only 90 per cent of domestic workers report say to have agreed one. And while about 9 per cent of employers report to have a written contract, only 7 per cent of domestic workers report to have one. As for live-out domestics, 4 per cent of their employers say to have signed a written contract while only 1 per cent of the workers state to have signed one. It is also useful to compare these figures with figures reported in Table 9 of Chapter 2 on prevailing contractual arrangements for wage workers in general. The figures from Table 9, which are country-wide and across sectors, show that even among wage workers without any technical qualification, more than half of female workers (54 percent) has a written contract, a much higher share than what appears to be the share for domestic workers reported in the ILO and MOLISA study (2011). This suggests a much higher level of precariousness for domestic workers than for other informal wage workers.

Another step to improve compliance is to encourage accurate record-keeping of hours worked by both the domestic worker and her employer for proper computation of pay including compensation for overtime and on-call duty. The ILO, for example, has recently developed a creative and accessible training toolkit with pictures on this aspect, which is aimed at domestic workers'

organizations or any other advocacy organization looking to support and organize domestic workers (ILO, 2014a).

Even though Viet Nam's 2012 Labour Code already stipulated a maximum of 8 working hours per day and 48 hours per week for domestic workers, available evidence suggests that both live-in domestics and hospital carers far exceed these limits (Pham Thu Hien, 2015b). As for other aspects of domestic workers' entitlements, there is evidence that only few domestic workers have health and social insurance and that most of them, rather than their employers, pay for it. A number of domestic workers are also likely to be exposed to verbal or sexual abuse, but there appears to be reticence around these issues.

Now that a few years have passed since the ILO and MOLISA first researched paid domestic services in Hanoi and HCMC, it would be really useful to re-run a similar survey and design it in such a way as to monitor whether the existence of Decree No. 27 is starting to make a difference to the working lives of domestic workers. Many other steps are required to move forward, such as wider dissemination of information on the new law to workers themselves, their employers and to the relevant local authorities. An outreach strategy including simple and clear materials, promoting clarity on complaint mechanisms and access to justice, and working closely with community groups and organizations, is likely to be the most effective. Strengthening the capacity of local authorities to enforce Decree No. 27 and offer legal support to domestic workers is also needed.

A high level of coordination between relevant actors is required to achieve these goals. These actors would include: the Department of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs (DOLISA), local authorities at both the place of origin and the place of destination of domestic workers, organizations providing legal support, job centres, and various branches of the Women's Union. Experience from other countries suggests that

the involvement of women's groups is often crucial to ensure that domestic workers' rights are fully realized. Attention to the plight of domestic workers among Viet Nam's mass organizations and civil society organizations has been limited in the past, but there is some promise. The Centre for Gender, Family and Community Development (GFCD) has been active in recent years in conducting research, consultation and advocacy on this issue. The Women's Union is about to pilot a few initiatives involving the creation of a 'meeting club' for domestic workers in Hanoi and HCM City and the provision of vocational training specifically tailored to domestic workers' needs in some of the provinces (Pham Thu Hien, 2015). The newly formed Network of Action for Migrant Workers (M.net) mentioned in Section 3.3 could also become an important reference point for the many domestic paid workers who come from rural areas.

3.5. MAIN CHALLENGES AT WORK AND PRIORITIES FOR POLICY

Realizing women's rights at work requires that women can access stable employment with safe working conditions, decent pay and social protection. However, in some segments of the Viet Nam economy, women's employment does not meet as yet these criteria.

The analysis in this chapter focused on the specific constraints facing three distinct categories of women workers: small-scale women farmers, domestic paid workers, and garment factory workers. There are of course many other occupations and sectors that would be important to closely examine such as the tourism sector, street vending and the public sector among others. However, these three occupations were selected because they are quite representative of the range of challenges that different groups of

disadvantaged women face in the daily reality of their working life.⁶⁵

Both self-employed women in small-scale farming and women working for wages in domestic paid work constitute informal workers, but each are exposed to different constraints and vulnerabilities. As already stressed in earlier chapters, the sheer number of women working in agriculture (about half of the total female labour force), and the fact that female small-scale farming is prevalent among ethnic minorities, in the poorest regions and in the poorest households, makes tackling their socio-economic disadvantage a very high priority for advancing substantive gender equality in the country.

Viet Nam's economic development strategy is increasingly centred around greater global integration and enhanced international competitiveness, and hence investing in the skills and productivity of the many women who work for a wage in export-oriented factories must be a key policy priority. This issue was already emphasized in previous CGAs, which made strong recommendations about the need to improve labour standards and overcome gender barriers in training and promotion for factory workers. But greater trade integration is also likely to bring challenges for women (and men) in agriculture through increased competition from imports (see Box 7 on TPP below). Thus a plan to clearly identify key binding constraints for farmers, especially small-scale female farmers, and to ensure that they are integrated in agricultural value chains on equitable terms, must also be top priority for the Government.

WOMEN FARMERS

Section 3.2 highlighted two key policy areas for improving the productivity and quality of women's agricultural employment: land and extension services. But it also stressed the importance of promoting a holistic approach through well-

coordinated agricultural policies and public support to rural infrastructure, since gender-based constraints in access to land, credit, services and markets are mutually interdependent.

The number of rural women who are sole owners or joint owners of a LUC has increased over the years but gender gaps remain significant. A strategy for strengthening women's land rights would entail, among others: increasing the quantity and quality of legal services offered to rural women; encouraging more of them to register their land rights; and promoting outreach programmes and awareness campaigns that include men as well as women. Ethnic minority communities that practice patrilineal succession would deserve special attention.

Further, there is clearly the need to make agricultural extension services more gender-sensitive and easier to attend by: ensuring that the training is organized in places and at times that are compatible with rural women's caring responsibilities; increasing the number of female extension services; and using participatory methods and teaching tools tailored to the needs of farmers who have no formal education.

DOMESTIC WORKERS

Paid domestic work is an expanding source of wage employment for women in Viet Nam. The activities of housework and caring provided by domestic workers are crucial for the well-functioning of families (especially those households with care-intensive circumstances) and the economy, and yet they tend to be undervalued and underpaid. The Government of Viet Nam has recently passed Decree No.27, which defines for the first time key rights and entitlements for domestic workers. This is a great achievement. However, implementation of these improved labour standards still remains a challenge. Measures to improve compliance with the law on domestic workers could include disseminating information on the new

⁶⁵ This focus was chosen after extensive consultations with a number of stakeholders.

BOX 7.**THE TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR VIET NAM**

After five years of negotiations, in October 2015, Viet Nam signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) together with other 11 countries: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and the United States of America. The TPP, which is expected to come into effect at the end of 2017, is a comprehensive trade agreement, comprising not only enhanced market access through the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, but also wide-ranging commitments on government procurement, regulatory quality, workers' rights, environmental protection, and intellectual property rights. Viet Nam is the lowest-income country among the members, and as suggested by the World Bank, could be one of the major winners of the TPP, with forecasted real GDP growth of more than 8 per cent over 15 years (World Bank, 2015d). The likelihood of this success occurring is, however, highly conditional on the ability of Viet Nam to increase its competitiveness through adequate investments in technology upgrading and infrastructure, as well as human capacities development.

While some sectors are expected to benefit from greater trade opportunities under the TPP (provided that enabling measures are put in place), other sectors may be undermined by enhanced foreign competition. The specific gender impacts of the TPP will depend on the gender composition of the sectors that expand/contract and on whether the reforms required to enhance competitiveness will be undertaken in gender equitable ways. Different groups of women are likely to be affected differently, depending on whether they work in manufacturing or agriculture for instance.

It is important to emphasize that Article 23.3 of the TPP indeed encourages the parties to undertake specific measures to ensure that women benefit from the TPP, particularly as far as skills development, access to market, finance and technology, and workplace flexibility are concerned (TPP, chap. 23).

MANUFACTURING

It is predicted that the TPP will bring export growth to Viet Nam, especially in the garment sector (World Bank, 2015d), because, inter alia, it is expected that Vietnamese manufacturing products may replace an increasing share of Chinese exports in TPP countries markets.

The TPP has strict provisions on rules of origin, establishing that yarn and textiles should be sourced from within TPP countries in order to benefit from duty-free access. This can pose a challenge for Viet Nam, which is a major importer of fibre and yarn mainly from China and Taiwan Province of China for its textile production. It can only be hoped that the need to comply with rules of origin may provide an opportunity to build yarn/fabric production capacity domestically, but this may take some time.

AGRICULTURE

With a reduction or elimination of tariffs over agricultural products, opportunities may also emerge for Viet Nam's top agricultural exports. However, these exports already benefit from low or duty-free rates under preferential trade agreements with some of the TPP members (e.g. ASEAN, Australia, New Zealand, Japan), which suggests limited export growth potential with such countries (USDA, 2014). Moreover, expanded market access for agricultural goods, particularly to developed countries, is not expected to be straightforward due to strong protection of domestic production afforded by non-tariff measures, quality standards requirements and labelling. Important shortcomings related to food safety and hygiene would need to be addressed to ensure that Vietnamese products meet the high-quality standards required by international buyers. Agriculture restructuring and technology upgrading is also necessary to improve productivity and compete with major producers in the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand, whose large landholdings are better positioned to take advantage of preferential access and will increasingly put pressure on small-scale farming in Viet Nam (JICA and VEPR, 2015; Viet Nam News, 30 November 2015). All these factors suggest that there might be a decline in agriculture commodity exports as a result of TPP.

Sectors that have traditionally been weaker and not competitive, particularly livestock, poultry and dairy (JICA and VEPR, 2015), may not only struggle to enter global value chains, but may also face significant threats as the increasing influx of lower-priced meat or other agricultural products from the United States, Australia or New Zealand on the Vietnamese markets could eventually cut off domestic output and dramatically affect employment. Similar concerns apply to Viet Nam's deeper integration in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), effective as of 1 January 2016. Vietnamese agro-forestry and seafood industries are expected to face higher competition within ASEAN.

Given the above scenarios, it is plausible to predict that women working in agriculture will be the most vulnerable to the negative effects of greater trade integration. This negative impact on agriculture is likely to be further exacerbated by environmental damage that might result from an increase in industrial activities that are polluting and water-intense (World Bank, 2015d).

law to workers, employers and relevant local authorities as widely as possible and promoting and supporting civil society initiatives aimed at organizing and representing domestic workers.

WORKERS IN EXPORT-ORIENTED FACTORIES


As section 3.3 has shown, wage employment in export-oriented production is a more secure form of employment for some segments of the female workforce, but the picture is uneven. Some progress has been made in recent years regarding the enforcement of labour standards, particularly in the foreign-owned segment of the garment sector. This has been thanks to initiatives such as Better Work. However, not all factories and wage workers in the export industry are able to benefit.

Measures to make wage employment in export-oriented factories more stable and better protected could include: addressing the lack of technical skills of the female workforce and ensuring a fairer treatment regarding promotions; supporting workers through adequate provision of social services; and paying particular attention to the plight of migrant workers by supporting them through quality health and childcare as well as easier access to other facilities. This latter measure would be of great significance since there are many new migrants to the cities, not only among export-oriented workers, but also among paid domestic workers.

OTHER PRIORITIES FOR POLICY

In addition to ensuring that women in these three occupations enjoy more stable and secure conditions, the Government needs to put greater effort into facilitating their access to a wider variety of decent jobs, with particular attention to enabling disadvantaged women to acquire the necessary skills and productive resources for entering non-traditional sectors. This recommendation was also put forward in earlier CGAs, which stress the importance of encouraging women's participation in training in scientific, engineering and technical fields. Both CGAs point

to the highly gender-stereotyped vocational training on offer in Viet Nam and its failure to prepare women to pursue a wider range of labour market opportunities. Special focus should be placed on follow up measures to ensure that the training achieve their objectives. These could include a monitoring system to track cohorts of women (and men) in the labour market after they have completed training courses. These recommendations continue to be highly relevant today.

Finally, as already highlighted from the very first pages of this report, strengthening women's rights at work is not only a matter for labour market, agricultural and educational policies. It also crucially depends on the range of public resources that governments make available to reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid domestic work and care. Chapter 4 discusses this aspect in detail. 

4

REDUCING AND REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK AND CARE: A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE

CHAPTER 4. REDUCING AND REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK AND CARE: A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Promoting the substantive realization of women's economic rights requires a combination of policies in a range of interconnected areas. Economic policies at the macro-level as well as sectoral measures to strengthen implementation on the ground are both very important to achieve this goal. Chapter 3 focused on the specific vulnerabilities associated with three occupations that tend to be characterized by both high female intensity and employment insecurity. It recommended measures to make these occupations more secure and more profitable. It also emphasized that the Government needs to put greater effort into facilitating women's access to a wider variety of decent jobs, with particular attention to enabling disadvantaged women to acquire the necessary skills and productive resources for entering new sectors and occupations. All this requires comprehensive gender-sensitive agricultural and industrial policies.

Improving access to secure and adequately paid jobs is not only a matter for labour market agricultural and educational policies however. It also vitally depends on the range of public resources and infrastructure that the Government makes available to women workers to support their families' and their own well-being (Pearson, 2014). Redressing women's socio-economic disadvantage requires a reorganization of unpaid care and domestic work to avoid that women continue to bear disproportionate responsibility for it, and suffer from such a burden in terms of their own health and productive capacity. This requires

promoting a 'gender egalitarian' structure of care provision as outlined in Chapter 1 (Braunstein, 2015). These considerations underpin the decision UN General Assembly Draft 69 Session, 12 August 2015) to set 'the recognition and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work' as one of the targets for monitoring progress on gender equality in the context of the new SDGs (SDG 5, target 5.4).

It is worth reiterating here the crucial role that unpaid domestic work and care play in both improving living standards and ensuring the effective functioning of the market economy in a country, by sustaining the full and healthy development of workers in the labour force. These caring activities, however, are rarely recognized or valued in economic planning. This is a serious omission that can create the illusion of efficiency gains when in fact costs are being transferred from the public sector to the private sphere, with disproportionate negative impacts on women as the primary caregivers. Elson's research on structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s (Elson, 1991) is the first to highlight how public expenditure cuts to reduce budget deficits often violate women's right to adequate livelihoods by assuming their time and energy to be a limitless resource to be drawn upon at no cost. She reports, for example, that, in Zambia, cutbacks in health expenditure were hampering women farmers who could spend less time farming because of the need to care for sick relatives (Elson, 1991). Policies such as the 'socialization' policies implemented in Viet Nam since the 1990s in both the education and health sectors (see Box 8) carry the same risk of imposing unduly heavy time burdens on women,

especially in disadvantaged households, and hence undermining gender equality and social justice objectives.

The Government can take several steps to reduce and redistribute unpaid domestic work and care. As emphasized in the latest Progress of World's Women (UN Women, 2015), it is important to consider this goal as an across-the-board issue. The objective of reducing and redistributing unpaid domestic work and care must be built into the design and implementation of the widest range of sectoral interventions and must be also fully integrated in the overall formulation of macro-economic policies such as public expenditure, taxation and trade policies.

Viet Nam's National Strategy for Gender Equality 2011-2020 includes a target to "reduce women's time involvement in household duties by two times by 2015 and 1.5 times by 2020 as compared to men's" under its objective to ensure gender equality in family life.⁶⁶ By including this target, the strategy is the only policy within the ASEAN region to set specific targets towards the reduction of women's unpaid domestic work (UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and FES, 2015). However, as highlighted in Chapter 2, the absence to date of sound nationally representative time use data (and other related indicators) renders unfeasible the task of identifying inequalities in housework burdens as well as monitoring progress on this target. In addition to better and more regular collection of time use data, there is also an urgent need to develop analytical frameworks and tools that enable a better understanding of the links between unpaid domestic work and various components of macro-economic policies for use in relevant ministries.

Towards this objective, this chapter examines two policy areas in particular: infrastructure investment in rural water, as an example of a policy that has the potential to reduce the drudgery of

unpaid domestic work; and provision of ECEC, as an example of a policy that has the potential to redistribute unpaid work away from households, to public and private sector providers. The chapter attempts to assess how far the Vietnamese Government has been willing to incorporate gender and equality considerations in such policies.

4.2. REDUCING UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK THROUGH INVESTMENT IN WATER AND OTHER RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Public investment in water and sanitation could significantly reduce unpaid domestic work and care by providing access to good quality and easily accessible infrastructure, with important positive gender and equity effects. Women use water for both productive work and unpaid domestic work. Their unpaid domestic work includes cooking, bathing children, cleaning and laundry – all of which involves water. Better availability, affordability and accessibility of water and sanitation would therefore be especially beneficial to women and girls. It would likely improve their families' and their own health, and free up time that women and girls would need otherwise to spend collecting as well as treating water and caring for sick family members. The freed-up time could enable women to enjoy more rest, engage in paid employment, or participate in community life. Time savings associated with improved water and sanitation infrastructure could also provide girls (and women) with the opportunity to return to education and training. All this would have positive consequences for the well-being of the women and girls concerned, and significant spill-over effects for the whole economy.

⁶⁶ National Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2011-2020 period. www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/English/strategies/strategiesdetails?categoryId=30&articleId=10050924

A regular supply of drinking water piped into the household as well as a toilet at home is the ideal situation but, as noted in the latest UNICEF and WHO Progress Report on water and sanitation (UNICEF and WHO, 2015), many women and girls, especially in remote rural areas and among poor households, continue to be denied this option. The majority of the poor is more likely to rely on water sources such as boreholes, standpipes, water kiosks and delivery agents. Even if these count as ‘improved sources’ according to the UNICEF and WHO definition (UNICEF and WHO, 2015), they still require time for collecting, queuing and treating water (such as boiling) before domestic use. And the costs of water use are not just in terms of time but also in terms of money. Evidence from a number of low income countries reviewed in UN Women (2015: chap. 3) show that standpipes often charge prices several times higher than those associated with a network-connection for low-income households, and water sellers often charge a much higher per unit price than public utilities.

What is the situation in Viet Nam with regard to access to water infrastructure and to what extent are Viet Nam’s current national water policies informed by gender concerns?

4.2.1 IS INVESTMENT IN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE RECEIVING ADEQUATE POLICY RECOGNITION? ARE THE BENEFITS EVENLY DISTRIBUTED?

Improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation has become a higher priority in government and donor agendas in the last decade. This is mostly framed as a public health

concern, with some acknowledgment, at least on paper, of its strategic importance for women and girls. Much of this increased interest can be traced to Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7 target C, which was to halve by 2015 the proportion of population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Official UN assessments report that the financial and human resources allocated to both sustaining existing infrastructure and expanding access, however, remain poorly targeted, even in some of the countries that have managed to achieve MDG 7 target C (UNICEF and WHO, 2015).

According to the latest ‘Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water: 2015 Update and MDG Assessment’ (UNICEF and WHO, 2015: 74-75), Viet Nam has met both the target for drinking water and the target for basic sanitation. These results are for the country as a whole, however, and disparities between rural and urban locations as well as across income groups remain significant as was highlighted in Chapter 2 (data from MICS, 2015).⁶⁷

The National Target Programme (NTP) for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation is the main government programme aimed at expanding water supply and sanitation coverage in Viet Nam’s rural areas. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) has main responsibility for water supply and the Ministry of Health (MOH) for sanitation and hygiene. The NTP is implemented in 21 provinces with particular focus on the poorest parts of the Northern Mountains and Central Highlands. Its budget is of about VND 27,600 billion (USD 1.3 billion – October 2015 exchange rate) equivalent to 7 per cent of Viet Nam’s GDP in 2014. Half of this budget comes from the central government while the rest is from donors (30 percent), provincial governments (11 percent) and the

users themselves (10 percent) (World Bank 2015b: p.22). The NTP on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation is now at the end of its 3rd phase (2012-2015) and its main stated objective is to have achieved by end of 2015 a coverage of: 85 per cent of rural population using clean water,⁶⁸ 65 per cent of rural households using hygienic latrines, and 100 per cent of schools and health centres provided with safe water and latrines. The latest available Joint Annual Review (JAR) of the 3rd phase of the NTP on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, which assesses the programme until mid-2013 (Vietnamese Government, NTP, 2013), reports good progress on these three objectives but also significant unevenness in performance across the different provinces. This is confirmed in a more recent evaluation published by the World Bank (Environmental and Social Systems Assessment (ESSA) of NTP III, 5 October 2015). The Assessment notes a ‘highly variable’ level of achievement in each province, and particularly low performance in mountainous regions where ethnic minorities are concentrated (World Bank, 2015a: 7; 116).

The statistics on household access to basic infrastructure examined in Chapter 2 suggest that these findings of considerable unevenness in the areas where NTP3 operates appear indeed to extend to the rest of the country. The data show glaring differences between households in their access to water and sanitation infrastructure, depending on place of residence, income level and ethnicity. For example it was reported that in 2014, while 68 per cent of households in the richest wealth quintile enjoyed piped water at home, only 6 per cent of households in the poorest quintile did. It was also noted that the burden of water collection falls disproportionately on ethnic minority women and girls who are by far the main collectors in their communities. Water

collection is a daily and time-consuming activity (at times requiring longer than 30 minutes per trip) in 20 per cent of ethnic minority households compared to a national average of less than 4 per cent households with a similar burden (MICS 2014, Table WS.3). Ethnic minority households also lag behind in terms of access to improved sanitation, with only 24 per cent of them using a septic tank compared to 71 per cent households among Kinh and Chinese groups (Ibid, Table WS.4). Data in chapter 2 also show that these inequalities do not seem to have declined over time. *If anything, in the last few years water and sanitation access has improved more for households in the top wealth quintile than for households in the poorest quintile* (Table WS.1 and WS.6, MICS 2014 and MICS 2011).

4.2.2. WHAT ARE THE GENDER IMPACTS?

When access to basic infrastructure is limited and household income is low, this is very likely to translate into longer hours spent on all sorts of housework and care, not just on water collection and treatment. Maintaining basic levels of health and well-being for family members may be especially arduous in households with young children or people with disabilities.⁶⁹

A comprehensive statistical analysis of changes over time cannot be provided at this stage since, in Viet Nam sex-disaggregated quantitative data on these aspects are still sparse. However, qualitative findings supports the hypothesis that the lack of basic water infrastructure is a significant contributing factor to women’s and girls’ time poverty, especially in remote areas. As early as 2002, a field-work study conducted by the National Centre for Rural Water Supply and Environmental

⁶⁷ Earlier reviews (ISF-UTS, 2011, Vietnam Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector Brief, prepared for AusAID by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney) had already noted discrepancies in results depending on the source used and agency involved (e.g. WHO-UNICEF JMP vs. MARD’s and MOH’s administrative data vs. GSO) and also highlighted the high level of unevenness of outcomes across regions and locations.

⁶⁸ The definition of ‘clean water’ used by Vietnamese authorities seems to conform with the internationally agreed definition of ‘improved sources of water’. More specifically, clean water by national standards is the water that meets the criteria prescribed by the National Technical Regulation on water quality NTR 02: 2009 / by the Ministry of Health issued on 17/6/2009.

⁶⁹ A recent study of Viet Nam shows that provision of infrastructure and basic services can indeed lessen the impact of disability on families with disabled members (Spatial Variation in the Disability-Poverty Correlation: Evidence from Viet Nam, UCL, 2013. Quoted in World Bank 2015b, October 2015: 26).

Sanitation (CRWSES) and DANIDA in two provinces of the Red River Delta region and the North Coastal region, respectively, reported that both women and men in the villages surveyed acknowledged that women were more reliant on water in their work than men. This was mostly due to women's domestic responsibilities (CRSWES and DANIDA, 2002). Women living in the villages where water supply had recently improved stressed how 'easier' their lives had become since. They pointed out for example that they could now find more time to watch television, read books, take care of their children, participate in community life or simply rest.

An important finding of the study is also that, due to their heavy workloads and family responsibilities, women usually could not be as active 'village motivators' as men, nor could they regularly attend hamlet meetings. The study also points to women's time poverty as one of the factors explaining their weak representation in Commune Steering Committees and other committees taking decisions on WASH issues. This is highly relevant evidence that clearly demonstrates that, unless programmes on the ground are designed to take women's unpaid domestic work into consideration, there is a high risk of failing gender-equality objectives. The risk is that women either won't be able to participate in, and influence, decisions on how to best implement and manage water projects, or will be overburdened with even more commitments related to their involvement in WASH committees, thus adding to their already heavy workloads. The following section, which examines how 'gender' is treated in official water policy frameworks and related project assessments, will return to this point.

4.2.3. HOW ARE GENDER ISSUES TREATED IN CURRENT WATER SECTOR POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND ASSESSMENTS?

The evaluation by CRWSES and DANIDA (2002), although limited to a small number of villages, provides an excellent template for how to conduct proper gender assessments of rural water and sanitation projects. It involves a step-by-step approach that includes questions on gender differentiated uses of, and needs for, water as well as questions on factors likely to affect women's representation and voice in local institutions responsible for water infrastructure. It seems, therefore, a real missed opportunity that this approach has not been replicated and built upon in the drawing of subsequent policy frameworks and gender strategies for WASH.

An examination of recent policy documents and assessments related to WASH (World Bank 2015b; JAR, 2013,) suggests that gender equality and social inclusion issues are at best acknowledged only as general goals. But a comprehensive analytical framework that clearly spells out how gender differences in time burdens, health and economic opportunities are linked with water and sanitation access and provision seems to be missing. And so is the articulation of detailed guidelines and mechanisms for implementing and monitoring WASH strategies in a gender-sensitive way. JAR (2013), for instance, notes that

'Gender issues however, remain inadequately addressed in the program. Recommendations for how to better address strategic and specific gender concerns, which were put forward in the 2011 gender and pro-poor targeting study, have not been adopted. "Gender" continues to be equated exclusively with the participation of the Viet Nam's Women's Union in the program' (JAR, 2013: 5).

Donors' reports that make reference to the need to 'mainstream' gender issues in the water and

sanitation sectors (for example, World Bank 2012; CS WASH Fund Vietnam country report, Australian Aid April 2014) seem to be concerned mostly with women's participation in WASH related institutions. The World Bank Economic Assessment of Sanitation Interventions in Vietnam (2012) also emphasizes the role that village women can play on the ground as effective facilitators in the dissemination of information on the benefits of improved water and sanitation. But the performance of this role, it seems, is mostly expected on a voluntary basis (i.e. without remuneration for the women involved). There seems to be less concern with the goal of reducing women's burden of unpaid domestic work per se. CSWSH 2014 usefully lists 'the percentage of WASH committees with at least 50 per cent female members' as a key indicator target for their projects, but the emphasis seems almost exclusively on this, i.e. on the need to ensure equal numerical representation of women and men in local water committees, key ministries, and similar such institutions. By contrast, no indicator to capture the possible reduction in time spent on water collection and treatment is recommended. The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) in Geneva has recently proposed that, after 2015, one of the indicators for access to basic water should be the percentage of the population using an improved source with a total collection time of 30 minutes or less for a round trip including queuing. A similar indicator (adjusted to take into account the context specific trade-offs) could be proposed for use in monitoring WASH projects in Viet Nam.⁷⁰

4.2.4 WAYS FORWARD

Women's involvement in water-related decision-making is evidently a necessary but not sufficient step. First, special attention needs to be put into ensuring that the requirements for membership and participation in the various WASH committees truly encourage women's substantive participation

and truly give them greater power to influence decisions. As the cases reported by CRWSES and DANIDA have shown, village women may find it especially difficult to take part in meetings because of their already heavy domestic and care responsibilities, and because of their 'shyness', which may be especially acute if they lack formal education or belong to a marginalized ethnic minority group. Under these circumstances, measures to facilitate substantive participation could involve: scheduling WASH meetings at times that are compatible with women's household responsibilities; providing childcare assistance during meetings; and providing female participants with training in negotiating skills or other relevant skills. It may be also useful to adopt additional mechanisms to ensure that the needs of women and girls as water users and collectors are fully taken into account into the implementation of water projects. Performing multi-stakeholder consultations that include women and women's organizations, in order to better clarify water policies' roles and effects on women and girls could be one of these mechanisms; administering score cards to be filled periodically by local users of new water services (e.g. a successful case study of Kenya reported in World Bank 2010) could be another. Equally important would be to develop the technical capacity for routinely undertaking gender impact assessments to monitor differential effects on women and men of water supply projects. These assessments would need to fully integrate consideration of the time savings (most likely to be for women and girls) likely to result from better WASH infrastructure in the calculations of costs and benefits of drinking water supply interventions that inform government public investment decisions.

Experience from other countries reviewed in Fontana and Elson (2014) suggests that effectively promoting gender-equitable water infrastructure investment requires a multi-pronged approach combining initiatives to enhance women's participation and voice in decision-making

⁷⁰ 'WASH Post-2015: Proposed targets and indicators for drinking water, sanitation and hygiene' (2014, cited in UN Women, 2015)

processes regarding water with the promotion of collection and use of statistics on sex disaggregated time use and other indicators. These gender statistics need to be regularly incorporated into government planning and budgeting documents at the national level, and can also be used to monitor the implementation of specific projects on the ground. Methodologies and frameworks outlining how, for example, time use data can be used for planning gender-equitable water infrastructure investment (Fontana, 2014, among others) are available and straightforward to use; they could become part of training sessions on gender-responsive budgeting to be offered to officers from various Viet Nam's ministries, including the Ministry of Planning and Investment.

4.3. REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK THROUGH INVESTMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Public finance to strengthen and extend quality ECEC services⁷¹ is an important way in which unpaid domestic work and care can be redistributed away from households and to the public and private sectors, where it is paid.

It is widely accepted that public provision of quality and inclusive ECEC can benefit children in significant ways by enabling them to develop both their cognitive and emotional capabilities. Access of girls and boys from disadvantaged backgrounds in particular can improve their performance in school and their life chances. Greater availability of ECEC can also benefit those older children

and adolescents (especially girls) whose family circumstances dictate they have to take on responsibility for looking after younger siblings (e.g. orphans, children of disabled parents, or of poor mothers who are doing long hours of paid work). This can be a key factor in enabling girls to complete secondary education (UNESCO, 2006).

However, the arguments for providing easily accessible ECEC services can also come from a women's rights and gender equality perspective, emphasizing the opportunity costs of childcare within the family. ECEC services can leave mothers, grandmothers and older daughters more time to spend on other activities of their choice, including, but not only, education, political participation and paid employment. Public funding for ECEC in itself creates jobs for women, who are the vast majority of the paid workforce in this occupation; yet pay is generally low and there are few opportunities for promotion.

Despite these considerations, ECEC provision remains limited and is poorly targeted in most developing countries. ECEC programmes usually aim at two age groups: children under three (day-care level) and those from age three to primary school entry (pre-school level). Programmes for children under three are especially sparse, particularly in low-income countries (POWW 2015: chap. 3). This is mainly because most governments in these countries still tend to view the care and education of children under three as the exclusive responsibility of parents, or of charitable organizations. Even in countries with reasonable levels of coverage, there tends to be significant gaps in access between the richest and poorest children, and between rural and urban areas (UNESCO, 2011), therefore, the children most likely to benefit from ECEC are the least likely to be enrolled.

A number of middle-income countries in East Asia and the Pacific as well as Latin America have recently started to invest more substantially in provision, both at the preschool (3–6 years) and day-care (0–3 years) levels (POWW 2015: chap. 3). In the Republic of Korea, for instance, the budget for pre-school education has more than tripled since 2000 (Peng, 2010). This new trend is motivated by the need not only to address child disadvantage, but also to respond to increased demand for the services due to higher female labour force participation.

The following section analyses the situation in Viet Nam with regard to the provision of ECEC services and the extent to which Viet Nam's current ECEC policies are informed by gender equality concerns.

4.3.1. IS INVESTMENT IN ECEC RECEIVING ADEQUATE POLICY RECOGNITION? ARE THE BENEFITS EVENLY DISTRIBUTED?

The Government of Viet Nam has focused its efforts on the goal of universal primary education, which according to official documents has been achieved in 2012, and has so far accorded lower priority to ECEC. There is now increasing recognition, however, of the important role that the State must play in the provision of early childhood education and in reducing inequalities in access to these services across income groups and regions. This is reflected, for example, in the Education Development Strategic Plan 2011-2020, which sets as targets to be achieved by the end of 2020 a coverage of: 100 per cent of children aged 5, 80 per cent of children in the 3-5 age bracket and 30 per cent of children in the 0-3 age bracket. The increase over the 2005-2012 period of the government budget allocated to pre-schools, both as a share of GDP (from 0.4 per cent in 2005 to 0.8 per cent in 2012) and as a share of the total education budget (from 9 per cent in 2005 to 15 per cent in 2012) (Ministry of Education

and Training (MOET), according to data reported in Pham Thu Hien, 2015a), is only a modest improvement, however.

There are a number of Government-sponsored programmes on the ground as well as others managed by organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children and World Vision (ibid). Reflecting patterns observed in other countries, international support for ECEC tends to target particular groups of marginalized children, such as those belonging to ethnic minorities and most affected by poverty or disease, while government programmes are broader in scope.

In government programmes, there appears to be strong priority to services for relatively older children (in particular children who are five years old and just about to enter school), with limited support provided instead for children under 3, and almost no services provided for children under 18 months (ibid). For instance, data from MOET reported in Pham Thu Hien (2015: Basic Fact 2, p.3) show that while enrolment rates for children in the 3-4 age bracket have increased from 69 per cent in 2008-2009 to 81 per cent in 2012-2013, enrolment rates for children in the 0-3 age bracket have remained almost unchanged over the same period, at about 13 per cent. Enrolment rates for children who are five years old are the highest and rising, from 91 per cent in 2008-2009 to 98 per cent in 2012-2013 (ibid). But it is when children are under three that the care burden on mothers is largest.

In Viet Nam, gaps in access to ECEC between the richest and poorest children, and between rural and urban areas are significant. Data on children aged 3-5 years attending early childhood education presented in Chapter 2 showed for example that, in 2014, 80 per cent of children attended in urban areas compared to 68 per cent in rural areas. This gap between rural and urban areas has increased rather than declined since 2011 (MICS Table CD 1, 2011 and 2014). It is particularly worrying that only 53 per cent of children in the poorest wealth quintile attended organized ECE compared to 86

⁷¹ Definitions of ECEC vary. Some reports and organizations refer only to early childhood education (ECE), usually for children in the 3-5 age bracket, while others include both education and care (ECEC). UNESCO adopts a holistic approach and describes ECEC as supporting children's survival, growth, development and learning (including health, nutrition and hygiene; and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development) from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings (UNESCO, 2006:15).

BOX 8.**EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF VIET NAM'S 'SOCIALIZATION POLICIES'**

Since the early 1990s, the Government of Viet Nam has been promoting a set of measures known as 'socialization', which involve mobilizing resources from households, communities and various organizations to support the provision of education and health services. The aim is to mobilize resources from outside the public budget and redistribute institutional responsibility for the provision of social services from the state to a range of actors including the private sector, community-based organizations and families (UNDP, 2015; London, 2013). In recent years, the Government has increased public funding for health care and education, but it has also changed the way of financing them, moving from services that were previously free, universal and fully funded by the State, to a mixed system of state and private funding and user charges. Some relief is provided for the poor and a few groups with special needs.

The outcomes of these socialization policies have been mixed, and the effectiveness and equity of social service delivery have been uneven (UN Viet Nam, 2015; UNDP, 2016). For example, although primary education is free in principle, parents' contributions, usually in the form of informal fees, are still required to cover expenses related to school facilities, supplies and teaching materials. In addition, since the official curriculum covers only half-day schooling, parents have to contribute towards extra tuition hours, which are often necessary to make up for the limited learning time provided by the public system.

Overall, the average parents' out-of-pocket expenditure for the education of each child amounts to nearly 15 per cent of household income (UNDP, 2015; UN Viet Nam, 2015), a significant share that places thus a heavy financial burden on households, taking away resources that could be otherwise used for other essential family needs. This raises important issues of social justice, since evidently, under this system of provision, access to education is more restricted for children who belong to poor households. There are also important gender implications since women are those who most typically compensate for inadequate basic social services. For example, if a household cannot afford to pay for private tutoring classes and childcare facilities, or when such services are of poor quality, it is mothers who are expected to look after their children at home, with possible negative consequences for their ability to engage in income-generating activities or in training.

Similar concerns apply to the case of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services, access to which is likely to be even less equitable since ECEC is not considered an obligation of the State but is expected to be financed through private means. This is reflected in the fact that only 11.2 per cent of Viet Nam's education budget was allocated to pre-primary school in 2012, compared to 28.3 per cent for primary school (UNDP, 2015; Pham, 2015).

per cent in the richest quintile. The corresponding figures for 2011 were higher in both household groups, 59 per cent and 91 per cent respectively (MICS 2011, Table CD1). Attendance is also lower among ethnic minority children than Kinh children (about 66 per cent and 72 per cent, respectively, in 2014). The region with by far the lowest attendance level in 2014 is the Mekong River Delta⁷² (only 39 per cent of children in this region attended an early child education centre).

4.3.2. MODES OF DELIVERY

ECEC programmes are financed to varying degrees by households, governments, and other institutions such as NGOs and sometimes employers. They are usually delivered by a diverse mix of public and private providers. In Viet Nam, 'socialization' policies promoted since the early 1990s have brought about a shift from education (and health) services previously being universal and fully funded by the State to a mixed system of state and private funding and user charges (for further details, see Box 8). Education for five-year-olds is largely provided by the State – 75 per cent of pre-schools for five-year-old children were public institutions in 2011 (MOET data reported in Pham Thu Hien, 2015a). A variety of modalities is currently being tested with regard to the provision of ECEC to younger children.

A number of initiatives have been launched in the last few years that are managed by the Ministry of Education (MOET) in collaboration with other ministries such as MOLISA (including the Gender Equality Department), the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF). The National Programme on Gender Equality 2011-2015 committed to build ten daycare centres in proximity of vocational

training centres, industrial parks and factories with the aim to alleviate women's care burden and hence encourage their participation in economic, cultural and social activities. The Government, with MOLISA as implementing agency, also committed to support land acquisition, purchase of equipment and forms of collaboration between the Government, enterprise and employees in setting up and operating these daycare centres.

To date, on the ground, there are mostly pilot projects that are run in urban areas and industrial zones. Increased levels of female rural-urban migration and a related shift in female employment towards factory work is one of the key determinants of this surge in demand for (non-family-provided) childcare. Childcare previously provided by mothers themselves (who, for example, may find it easier to combine looking after children with paid employment if they are involved in part-time agricultural work) or by family members living nearby now needs to be 'outsourced' to other providers. As noted in Chapter 3, as a result of a lack of residency status, however, factory workers who are recent migrants to the cities often seriously struggle to find affordable and quality education and care for their children.

One of the most recent of these ECE pilot projects was approved by the Prime Minister in 2014 for the HCMC's area, the Programme on Support and Development of Independent/Private Groups of Children in Industrial and Export Zones ("Programme 404"),⁷³ (Pham Thu Hien, 2015a) and is still in an experimental stage. Its key objective is to support female factory workers with children under three, clearly suggesting a shift of government focus to a concern for working mothers' needs. Decree 9, which was issued in May 2015, assigns clear responsibilities

⁷² The Mekong River Delta is a well-known case for the challenges it faces in delivering ECEC services. These include: limited resources allocated by the local government, shortage of preschool teachers, and reluctance of parents to sending children under three to school. In addition, Mekong River Delta is prone to annual floods affecting accessibility to schools, especially for young children (UNICEF staff, personal communication, January 2016).

⁷³ Decision 404 dated 20 March 2014 on Approval of the Program on the Support and Development of Independent/Private Groups of Children in Industrial and Export Zones.

to the various institutions involved, such as People's Committees and the Women's Union, and also identifies training needs for the carers and educators concerned. The model being put forward is one in which the state offers interest free loans, other subsidies and incentives to private providers and community based family groups to build and upgrade facilities and relevant infrastructure. Training to childminders is also provided. More specifically, the Department of Education and Training (DOET) and the Department of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs (DOLISA) run sessions on childcare skills and child rights and protection, respectively, with fees being covered by People's Committees. It is not clear, however, what kind of monitoring mechanisms are in place to ensure that the services provided are both of good quality and affordable, and what the costs for parents are. It appears that this model put forward is somewhat in line with the 'socialization' philosophy and thus carries the risk of not being appropriate for reaching the most disadvantaged children (and mothers).

Evidence from other countries suggests that direct public provision of services tend to bring a higher degree of equity in access compared with state-subsidized or entirely privately run models and also better quality, better training and working conditions for educators (OECD 2006; UNESCO, 2006). This is corroborated by the limited evidence available specifically on Viet Nam. This points to unsafe facilities, unqualified staff and even cases of violence against children in the unregulated private childcare sector (Truong Thi Thuy Hang, 2015; Pham Thu Hien, 2015a).

As concerns existing public pre-school services for five-year-old children, a major drawback in Viet Nam is that they do not allow access to children without a residential permit. Moreover, their opening hours are only from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and hence less compatible with the working time of mothers employed outside of the government sector. Working conditions and pay of pre-school teachers are low and insecure even within the public sector, especially in rural areas, even though

pre-school teachers in the public sector have stronger educational qualifications than pre-school teachers in the private sector. These aspects are too very important from a gender equality point of view since most ECE staff is female (Table from the MOET, reported in Pham Thu Hien, 2015: 18).

Employers may also contribute to the provision of ECEC, either by financing a company centre, or indirectly, by including childcare costs in employees' wage and benefits packages. As noted in chapter 3, Art. 154 of the 2012 Labour Code indeed refers to the responsibility of enterprises to support childcare provision for workers, including partial cover of related expenses. But this form of childcare provision has the problem of excluding all those women who work for informal firms or are self-employed—the majority among low-income groups. It may also act as a disincentive to the employment of women by firms.

4.3.3. GENDER EQUALITY AND WAYS FORWARD

The Government of Viet Nam is slowly recognizing the importance of extending and strengthening ECEC services. The promotion in the last year of a few programmes that target children under 18 months and attempt to respond to the increased needs of mothers working in industrial zones is a promising step. Such programmes should not remain confined to urban areas but extended to rural areas, where the majority of poor women and children live and work.

These new programmes are mostly in the form of subsidized private centres and mostly aimed to support mothers who are wage workers but exclude the self-employed. Evidence from other countries suggests, however, that the best outcomes are achieved through ECEC services provided directly by the public sector, which usually tend to bring better quality, better working conditions for educators and a higher degree of equity in access. Evidence provided in this

chapter shows that in Viet Nam, services offered to children under three remain very limited, and attendance in rural areas and among poor households is especially low. It is when children are younger than three that the care burden is largest, and this is especially so for mothers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, the greater availability of childcare for this age range, and ideally free of charge for low-income households, would meet important gender equality objectives. The further expansion of good quality public ECEC services could also contribute to the objective of gender equality by directly creating jobs for women, since ECEC staff tends to be mostly female. But it is important to ensure that these jobs are adequately protected, and enjoy good working conditions and better salaries than currently is the case. In the meanwhile, and in the hope that the Government will be willing to allocate more public resources to ECEC in the medium term, both MOET and MOLISA have an important role to play in monitoring compliance and providing technical support in private ECEC arrangements.

Other models of care provision for children under three such as those supported by UNICEF tend to focus on ethnic minority children and follow an approach that combines nutrition, health and education objectives. This involves among others support for home-based programmes, which train parents to create a stimulating environment at home that promotes early learning for their children. These initiatives are of great value, but it is important to prevent them from reinforcing gender stereotypes. This could be achieved, for example, by encouraging inclusion of men and boys in training on care practices rather than targeting mothers only.

4.4. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS FOR OTHER SECTORAL PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES

This chapter has analysed the overall approach taken by the Government of Viet Nam with regard to two policy areas, one related to physical infrastructure (WASH) and one to social infrastructure (ECEC). The aim was to assess the extent to which gender equality concerns are currently integrated in such policies, with special attention to measures that have the potential to reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid domestic work and care.

The review of a few key policy documents reveals that, in both the case of WASH and ECEC, gender equality and social inclusion are acknowledged at best as general goals. However, this acknowledgment is not accompanied by sound analytical frameworks that spell out the many channels through which each of these interventions is likely to affect gender dynamics, and the extent and distribution of unpaid work in particular. Nor is this supported by a clearly defined set of data and indicators for monitoring of impacts.

Analytical frameworks as well as accompanying indicators need to be adapted and developed in the context of the specific policy question at hand. There are, however, some general principles that can serve as guidelines as follows.

With regards to the macro level, and as emphasized throughout this study, promotion of gender equality is likely to be associated with higher levels of public spending on social services and infrastructure such as health, education, water and sanitation. This is because these services are critical to reduce women's unpaid domestic work and hence can enhance their capacity to access paid work, attend training and participate actively in political life, thus contributing to human

BOX 9.
THREE BASIC GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Gender-equitable economic programmes are programmes that recognize:

Principle:	Corresponding Measure:
(1) That unpaid care work is vital for producing and maintaining human capabilities	> Measures that reduce and redistribute unpaid care work
(2) That material conditions and social practices make it more difficult for women than for men to access decent jobs and the productive resources for remunerative self-employment in either agriculture or trade	> Measures that redress gender asymmetries in labour markets and other markets
(3) That goods, income, time and other resources are often not equitably distributed within families.	> Measures that facilitate re-allocation of resources to vulnerable members in a household.

capacities development in the long term (UN Women, 2015; Braunstein, 2015).

At the local level, what matters is that the public money thus allocated to social services and infrastructure is then actually spent, and that the related programmes are actually implemented according to gender equality and inclusiveness criteria. A framework for projects on the ground could involve the three criteria listed in box 9.

How these principles can be met in practice can be best illustrated in the context of a specific intervention such as Criteria 2 of Vietnam’s current National Targeted Program on New Rural Development (NTP-NRD) ‘Transport’, which is essentially understood as paving and maintaining different kinds of rural roads. Ensuring that the design and implementation of rural roads projects are gender equitable would involve simultaneously fulfilling the two objectives of (a) generating jobs for both women and men and (b) creating assets that reduce aspects of women’s domestic workloads. This would require, for example,

facilitating women’s participation in construction work on equal terms as men by providing child care on construction sites; improving women’s employability after the completion of the road project by offering skill-training; and ensuring that women are remunerated for their contributions, and paid the same wage as men.

A recent assessment of the rural road programme under NPT-NRD in three communes in the North East and the Red River Delta, respectively (World Bank, 2015b) suggests, however, that none of the above objectives is currently being met. The study reports that gender issues and concerns appear to be rarely raised at management meetings regarding the programme. Although women tend to contribute the majority of working hours to road construction in the sites surveyed, they are not remunerated for this work. Moreover, mechanisms to ensure that the road infrastructure that is built support women’s own needs, including their need to spend less time on housework, seem lacking.

Evidence from other countries shows that gender equality objectives are more likely to be achieved if women in communities are directly involved in the design of projects. A widely cited case from Peru (World Bank, 2004) shows, for instance, that women’s direct participation in the design of a rural roads project ensured greater priority given to their needs. Upgrading included not only roads connecting communities, but also many non-motorized transport tracks used mostly by women and ignored by other road programmes. As a result, women started to participate to a greater extent in markets and fairs, spent less time obtaining food and fuel supplies, and 43 per cent of them reported to be earning higher incomes. This example and similar experiences from other countries could offer valuable insights to the Vietnamese Government in shaping its response to the challenge of making its NTP-NRD more gender-equitable in the future. 🌐

5

CONNECTING THE DOTS:

DOES VIET NAM'S
CURRENT ECONOMIC
GROWTH MODEL
ENABLE THE
GOVERNMENT
TO REALIZE ITS
COMMITMENT TO
GENDER EQUALITY?

CHAPTER 5. CONNECTING THE DOTS: DOES VIET NAM'S CURRENT ECONOMIC GROWTH MODEL ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO REALIZE ITS COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY?

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the analysis of the study by going back to the overarching question posed in the introductory chapter and drawing together findings and lessons from the various chapters that help in answering whether Viet Nam's commitment to gender equality in law is reflected in its current economic growth model, and what can be done to ensure that policies become more inclusive and 'leave no woman behind'.⁷⁴

This was an ambitious research question, which could not be answered exhaustively within the available time and resources. What this study offers is a comprehensive statistical gender map of Viet Nam's economy (the first of its kind) and an initial scoping of key policy issues. These together provide a sound and rigorous starting point for any gender impact assessment of specific aspects of Viet Nam's macroeconomic policies, or sectoral policies, that the Government may want to undertake in the future.

Section 5.2 returns to the scenarios combining patterns of economic growth with systems of care provision described in section 1.2.3. In light of the findings presented in the previous chapters, it reflects on where Viet Nam falls under these scenarios. Section 5.3 summarizes key themes that have emerged throughout the study and provides final policy recommendations.

⁷⁴ 'Leave no one behind' is becoming one of the most cited phrases from the UN 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015); it emphasizes growing international consensus on the need to reduce inequality.

⁷⁵ A proper assessment of Viet Nam's position relative to its regional neighbours is beyond the scope of this study. Just a few selected indicators are examined here in order to provide some context.

5.2. PATTERNS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH FROM A GENDER EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE: WHERE DOES VIET NAM FIT?

VIET NAM IN RELATION TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA⁷⁵

Viet Nam (and China) are considered to be yet another group of SIEOs (UNRISD, 2010). Both countries have been transitioning from centrally planned to market economies. Over the last 20 years, their communist governments have facilitated rapid growth and significant poverty reduction. As transition progressed, their development strategies have increasingly come to rely on high-productivity-driven foreign firms and greater integration into the world economy. At the same time, inequality has been growing (UNRISD, 2010; UNDP, 2016). Evidence presented in this study corroborates these trends with reference to Viet Nam.

In terms of economic structure, today Viet Nam appears to be very much still a country 'in-between', moving away from its close neighbours (Cambodia and Lao PDR), but it still has not made

the complete transition to a structure with fully developed industrial and service sectors such as that of Thailand and Malaysia. Most of the statistics presented in Chapter 2 suggest this, including the fact that productivity growth in the Vietnamese manufacturing sector has been slow, which is confirmed in the data presented in Table 16.

As illustrated in Table 16, Viet Nam has one of the highest female labour force participation rates in South-East Asia and is also the most open economy in the region (trade in goods constituted about 170 per cent of GDP in 2013). As highlighted in earlier chapters, this high trade openness, constitutes both an opportunity and a vulnerability. Given these characteristics, only a strong emphasis on public investment in health and higher education (as in the first generation SIEOs) with special attention to working women's needs and on stimulating domestic demand could enable Viet Nam to avoid unsustainable growth scenarios.

As shown in Chapter 2, about half of the population is still employed in agriculture. In the second generation of SIEOs, the shares of women and men working in agriculture are considerably smaller than in Viet Nam, and interestingly, agriculture remains a more important source of employment for men than for women. The reverse is true in Viet Nam, Cambodia and especially Lao PDR. Chapters 2 and 3 both presented evidence showing that women and men working in agriculture, particularly in the poorest regions, are more likely to be left behind in Viet Nam's transition. Thus, devoting more effort to increasing these groups' opportunities for more remunerative employment as well as connecting the agricultural sector more productively to industry and other sectors are crucial for a more equitable and inclusive growth path.

In the three richer SIEOs reported in Table 16, the service sector is a more important source of employment, in particular for women: 72 per cent of the Malaysian female labour force and 52 per cent of the Indonesian female labour force

work in services compared with only 34 per cent of the Vietnamese female labour force. Greater public provision of childcare, health and other care facilities not only would support the current female workforce but could in principle also contribute to directly create more jobs for women in services, since the majority of the paid workforce in these occupations is female. This needs to be accompanied by efforts to improve the pay and working conditions in these jobs.

In terms of public spending to support unpaid domestic work and care, Chapter 4 has analysed specific sectors in isolation, such as ECE and WASH, but has not provided information on Viet Nam's social spending overall. Recent assessments of public services reviewed in Chapter 1 express concerns over the limited inclusion of low-income groups, ethnic minorities and migrants in both educational and health services. Table 17 shows data on public provision of health and education, not only in Viet Nam, but also in the second generation SIEOs, to help gain further glimpses into the structure of these countries' care arrangements and the extent of their commitment to inclusive social services. The main aim is to determine whether Viet Nam in particular can be currently considered to have a 'feminization of responsibility' system or a 'gender egalitarian' system for care provision according to Braunstein's definition. Aggregate data on spending are only indicative and do not say whether public resources are allocated efficiently and equitably (this latter is an important concern, it seems, in the context of Viet Nam's current social policies). For this reason, other indicators on access (e.g. out of pocket health expenditure) and outcomes (e.g. number of nurses or adult women without education) are also reported in the table. For example, high out-of-pocket expenditures on health care suggest inequality in access since they can keep women, especially poor women, from getting the health care they need.

Viet Nam's public expenditure on health and education as share of GDP (2.8 per cent and 6.1 percent, respectively) is overall at a reasonable

Table 16. Output and employment structure in selected South-East Asian countries

	Cambodia		Lao PDR		Viet Nam		Indonesia		Thailand		Malaysia	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
GDP per capita (constant 2005 USD)	750		818		1078		1854		3769		7365	
Agriculture (% of GDP)	30.4		27.7		18.1		13.4		10.5		8.9	
Industry (% of GDP)	27		31.4		38.5		41.9		36.8		40	
<i>of which Manufacturing (% of GDP)</i>	16.2		8.9		17.5		21		27.7		22.9	
Services (% of GDP)	42.6		40.9		43.4		42.2		52.7		51.2	
Trade (% of GDP)	129		90.1		169.5		48.2		131.8		138.5	
	*											
Labour force participation (% of population ages 15+)	86.6	78.7	79.3	76.3	82.5	73.0	79.6	51.4	80.5	64.2	75.7	44.5
Agricultural employment (% of tot female/male employment)	52.9	55.4	69.2	73.5	44.9	48.8	35.6	33.4	44.1	39.3	15.4	8.3
Industrial employment (% of tot female/male employment)	17	15.5	9.9	6.7	25.2	17.0	23.6	15.0	22.6	17.7	32.8	19.8
Services employment (% of tot female/male employment)	30.1	29.1	21.0	19.5	30.0	34.2	40.8	51.6	33.1	42.8	51.8	71.9

Source: World Development indicators, mostly from 2013 unless specified otherwise.

NOTE: 'Industry' also includes mining and construction; employment data for Lao PDR and Cambodia are from 2010. (*) M = Male, F = Female

Table 17. Health and education in selected South-East Asian countries, 2005-2014

	Viet Nam	Indonesia	Thailand	Malaysia
Public expenditure on health (% of GDP)	2.8	1.2	3.0	2.2
Out of pocket health expenditure (% of total health expenditure)	48.8	45.4	13.1	35.6
Number of nurses and midwives (per 1,000 people)	1.1	1.4	2.1	3.3
Public expenditure on education (% GDP)	6.3	3.6	7.6	5.9
Pre-primary enrolment, female (% of pre-primary age population)	69.0 (2)	32.5	99.8	71.3
Pre-primary enrolment, male (% of pre-primary age population)	73.6 (2)	32.8	100.0	77.1
Women with no formal education (% of women aged 20-59)	28.1	15.8	12.0	--

Source: Progress of the World's Women 2015

NOTES:

Data from the most recent year available during the 2005-2014 period. For consistency, these data are all from the same international source. There may be some discrepancies between international data and national data.

Data on pre-primary enrolment for Viet Nam from MICS 2014 and only for children aged 26-59 months. However, data reported in Chapter 4 show that enrolment for children under 26 months are much lower, and also that enrolments are lower among the poorest households.

level by regional standards, lower than Thailand's but slightly higher than Malaysia's, among others. In terms of equity in access, however, the average out-of-pocket health expenditure in 2012 was high, at about 48.8 percent, compared with Malaysia (35.6 percent) and Thailand (13.1 percent); the average for East Asia and the Pacific was 29.7 percent. The very low share of out-of-pocket health expenditure in Thailand is largely the result of the introduction of an effective Universal Coverage Scheme since 2001 (POWW, 2015), which could provide useful lessons to the Vietnamese Government on how to promote a more gender equitable and inclusive health system in the next years. This confirms other evidence reported in previous chapters, educational outcomes also suggest that there is room for Viet Nam to considerably improve the equity of access of its services. For example, despite the country's good progress in reducing educational gender gaps

at all levels, its share of adult women (aged 20-59) without any formal education remains high (about 28 percent) relative to the other SIEOs (15 percent or less in Indonesia and Thailand). Another example is provided by pre-primary enrolment levels for children in the 3-5 age range, which, on average, are comparable to levels in Malaysia but display high levels of disparity within the country. As discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3), attendance of ECEC is significantly lower for children from poor households, and services are especially limited for children in the 0-3 age range. Viet Nam's National Human Development Report (UNDP, 2016) notes that current participation rates in vocational training are also very low and socially stratified. Women's under-representation in vocational training and skills development, particularly in rural areas, is of special concern, as also highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study.

VIET NAM AND ITS ECONOMIC GROWTH/CARE PROVISION MODEL

Much like the first and second generation of SIEOs, in the last decade, Viet Nam has energetically sought greater regional and global integration, and promoted an industrialization strategy focused on exports. As discussed in earlier chapters, the growth of garment manufacturing, and especially electronics, has been impressive in recent years. However, to date, the resulting employment opportunities have been largely concentrated in unskilled jobs. Opportunities for training, skills development and promotion in these sectors have been limited, especially for women. Another drawback of the current configuration of these industries is that they rely heavily on imported raw materials, thus limiting prospects for backward linkages with other sectors of the economy, and for upgrading. The agricultural sector in particular does not seem to be sufficiently integrated with more dynamic parts of the economy. The establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community in early 2015 and the signing of the TPP in late 2015 are further steps towards Viet Nam's greater trade integration. As noted earlier, Viet Nam's participation in these new trade agreements opens up an exciting range of opportunities but also increases its exposure to the global economy. This exposure is likely to make Viet Nam highly vulnerable unless a vigorous policy of investment to encourage human capacities development, through more equitable public provision of quality education, health and other care services, is put in place.

From a gender and care responsibility perspective, the analysis in this study suggests that the Viet Nam model of social welfare is characterized by limited public support for care services and rigid gender norms that still assign primary responsibility for care provision to women within the private sphere of the household. This mirrors Braunstein's findings on other SIEOs. Both Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, for example, have highlighted that the provision of basic services such as water

infrastructure and early childhood education is not only inadequate but also skewed against poorer quintiles and rural populations, particularly rural ethnic minorities living in remote areas. Evidence reported in Chapters 2 and 3 also shows that access to health and vocational training is socially stratified and skewed against internal migrants and low-income women. This indicates the prevalence of a 'feminization of responsibility' system of care provision at present.

To conclude, the current structures of the economic growth model and the care provision model suggest, therefore, that Viet Nam is currently at risk of being pulled towards a profit-led pattern of growth, which risks undermining human resources and becoming unsustainable in the long term. The Government can prevent this from happening. Each chapter of the study has made a number of suggestions on the steps that the Government could take in specific areas to generate better outcomes for marginalized women and facilitate Viet Nam's transition towards an economic model that strongly emphasizes decent jobs creation, inclusive public provision and gender equality. The next section concludes by drawing together these suggestions in a set of final policy recommendations.

5.3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has highlighted a number of themes that are of relevance to policy concerns in Viet Nam and can contribute to current debates on what the Government should do to put the country on the path towards a more inclusive and gender equitable growth model.

First, it looks ahead to prepare Viet Nam for the challenge of maximizing the benefits (and minimizing the costs) likely to result from greater integration in regional and international trade. It considers ways of preventing the gender wage gap from widening in the future as predicted by

research, which has sought to simulate the impact of greater integration into the ASEAN Economic Community.

Second, looking ahead also entails implementing timely measures to support the healthy development of individuals and groups, with emphasis on the most disadvantaged, in particular investing in measures to equip women and girls with the capabilities needed to take full advantage of the economic opportunities generated by Viet Nam's transition to a full industrialization stage.

A third key theme running through the study is the need to take into account the interlinkages between the productive (paid) economy and the reproductive (unpaid) economy when designing and implementing economic policies, both at the macro level and at the sectoral level. Women's work in the paid and unpaid economy is highly interdependent, underscoring the importance of a fairer distribution of responsibilities in care provision for gender equality objectives and human development broadly. Public support for care provision is critical for the objective of gender equality and also a necessary premise for the successful creation of productive and decent employment.

Finally, the study highlights the need to pay particular attention to those who are, and likely to continue to be, left behind. This means directing policy efforts to specific groups, those below the poverty line as well as ethnic minority communities, to the specific sectors and occupations where these groups are concentrated, and to the specific locations in which they live. Increasing agricultural productivity and facilitating women small farmers' integration into dynamic agricultural value chains in particular was identified as an important route to inclusive growth.

Various policy recommendations have been made throughout the study. An overarching recommendation, which cuts across all sectors, is the need for comprehensive analytical frameworks

at macro, meso and micro levels that can spell out the interconnections between different dimensions of gender inequality and aspects of economic policy. This will help to ground policy efforts in rigorous analysis. This concluding section groups these recommendations together under broad policy categories to highlight their relevance across sectors and how they complement each other.

SKILLS AND TRAINING

The question of education and skills is raised in the study in relation to a number of different challenges and opportunities. At the macro-economic level, the upgrading of skills of the work force has been recognized as essential to meet the challenge of competing in the global economy. It is essential that women workers are included in this policy agenda through the provision of specialized training that meets their needs in different sectors and occupations and contribute to widen their choice for paid employment.

Women are particularly disadvantaged in the agricultural sector. It is not simply that they are less educated than both men as well as women in other sectors, but that almost no women have received any technical or vocational training. Agricultural extension services are also biased towards better-off male farmers, further reinforcing their advantage in terms of accessing new technologies and crops. Yet the evidence suggests that women farmers who did receive vocational training at agricultural schools not only reported higher productivity than those who did not, but the impact of training was more significant than for male farmers.

Levels of vocational and technical training of both men and women are also low in other sectors. In the garment industry, explicit note was made of the fact that women workers were less likely to receive training than men. The need to address gender gaps in training opportunities is all the more urgent because women's share of the

working population with technical qualifications has fallen while that of men has risen since 2004.

It is also troubling that fields of study remain highly gender-stratified, thereby reproducing the gender segregation of the occupational structure. Yet note was made of the fact that although the numbers are still small, there has been a rise in the female share of the workforce in a number of male-dominated sectors such as electronics and machinery. Promoting training of women in non-traditional skills will help them to enter these sectors, and preferably in more skilled occupations. It may also help to overcome employer prejudices, which have been shown to be still widespread.

INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

Gender-based constraints in access to land, credit, services and markets are mutually interdependent. For instance, due to continued inequalities in land distribution, women farmers find it harder to gain credit than men, one reason why they make less use of agricultural technologies and inputs. The report suggests an integrated package of services, including credit, market facilitation, business skills and information, together with public policies to support rural infrastructure, as a means of increasing overall productivity among poorer farmers as well as closing the gender gap in productivity. It is especially important that small-scale women farmers are not left behind in efforts to promote contract farming in high value products and other commercially oriented agriculture initiatives.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Basic social services and infrastructure emerged as important for the goal of equalizing responsibility for unpaid domestic work and promoting women's

ability to participate in paid work, community decision-making and training activities. These measures could help to reduce and redistribute the time spent on unpaid domestic work and care, and stimulate long-term growth by raising economy-wide productivity.

The study shows that the current provision of basic services such as water and childcare is not only inadequate, but is skewed against poorer quintiles and rural populations, particular rural ethnic minorities living in remote areas. Differences in access between urban and rural areas have been widening rather than narrowing. This can only further exacerbate inequalities.

Without access to ECEC services, for instance, poor rural women must make other arrangements that further limit their own opportunities to participate in either more remunerative jobs or community activities, and are also less likely to promote the future capabilities of their children, especially girls. Urban female wage workers are also in need of social service support; particular attention needs to be paid to new migrant workers who predominate in the export-oriented sector as well as in paid domestic work and who currently have restricted access to education and health services.

It should be stressed that many of these recommendations carry the potential for generating more and better jobs for women: employing more women in agricultural extension services to ensure outreach to poorer women farmers, and expanding quality childcare facilities and health facilities. The challenge remains to improve the pay and working conditions in these jobs. But this would certainly have pay-offs in the medium term since higher wages for a larger share of women would promote a virtuous circle of higher domestic demand within the Vietnamese economy.

All these considerations demonstrate that an understanding of gender dynamics must be integral to defining Viet Nam's public investment strategy. A common concern is that countries such

as Viet Nam might be lacking sufficient fiscal space to undertake public investment, even if desirable from a gender equality and social justice point of view. But assessments of public finances that do not take into account the growth-expanding potential of public investments unnecessarily constrain such investments. Gender-responsive investment itself creates fiscal space by adding to the productive base of the economy. More fiscal space can also be generated by enhancing efficiency in the delivery of services and better prioritisation of public expenditures as observed in UNDP (2016).

LAW

Viet Nam has made considerable progress on legal provisions that promote gender equality. Its revision of land law in 2003 to allow for names of both men and women to appear on the title deed and the passing of the law on domestic violence prevention in 2007 are a few examples. More recently, its new Labour Code has made a major stride in support of vulnerable workers by recognizing paid domestic workers as workers with clearly defined rights. Viet Nam could also learn from the Cambodian experience of using the law to support wage earners at the bottom of the hierarchy by guaranteeing a basic minimum wage to even those on piece rates. But adoption of good laws clearly does not guarantee their enforcement. Additional measures need to be pursued, including: better legal services to ensure women's entitlements to land; the production of model contracts for domestic workers as well as the means for monitoring their hours of work; and better compliance with labour standards in factories (and not limited to the most successful foreign-owned ones).

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community participation emerges as important in relation to a number of objectives. Indeed, the study points out that the absence of substantive

representation of women in key decision-making bodies, especially at the local level, is likely to reinforce those very barriers that curtail their ability to participate. While this point is made explicitly in relation to water infrastructure committees, it applies across a range of public fora.

Civil society organizations, and women's organizations in particular, can also help to disseminate information about gender equality provisions, not only with women but also men and particularly within ethnic minorities where awareness of women's rights appears to be weakest. They can also help improve the enforcement of legal provisions. They can offer support to workers on legal and social issues, and support them to mobilize against gender discriminatory practices. The newly formed Network of Action for Migrant Workers established in October 2014 by six local NGOs is an example of a collective effort to facilitate access to social welfare services for all those workers who are recent migrants to the cities.

IMPROVED GENDER STATISTICS

Good data is the foundation for good planning. The study highlights a number of different ways in which greater attention to improving and expanding data collection would contribute to the achievement of gender equality goals. Given the strong interconnection between the paid and unpaid economy, a better statistical picture will help to guide future planning and budget allocation in relation to human development and increased productivity. A key recommendation here relates to improving collection of statistics on different categories of work, particularly unpaid work of various kinds. Time use surveys are particularly important in this regard.

Better data are also essential to monitoring development interventions of various kinds – among those suggested by this report is: examining the quality as well as quantity of child and elderly care arrangements utilized by different groups;

monitoring the enforcement of labour standards; tracking cohorts of men and women in the labour market after they have completing training courses in order to ascertain whether the training has achieved its objectives; and monitoring the distributional effects of the new trade agreements. Smaller surveys to complement the official labour force survey are an important means of capturing harder-to measure precarious work in the informal economy. Special surveys may also be needed to gain better information on neglected groups such as the elderly and paid domestic workers. 🌐

ANNEX

Table A1. Number and distribution of own-account workers and unpaid family workers, 2014

Residence/Socio-economic region	Number of own-account workers and unpaid family workers (1,000 people)	Percentage distribution (%)			Proportion of own-account workers and unpaid family workers to total employed population (%)		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
		TOTAL	32 834.3	100.0	100.0	100.0	62.2
Urban	6 805.0	20.7	20.2	21.2	42.5	37.5	47.8
Rural	26 029.3	79.3	79.8	78.8	70.8	65.0	77.0
Socio-economic region							
Northern Midlands and Mountains areas	5 835.1	17.8	18.0	17.6	78.9	74.7	83.1
Red River Delta (*)	4 803.4	14.6	13.2	15.8	59.6	51.6	67.2
North and South Central Coast	7 775.6	23.7	22.3	24.9	67.0	58.5	75.5
Central Highlands	2 586.4	7.9	8.5	7.4	78.9	76.6	81.3
Southeast (*)	2 045.5	6.2	6.7	5.9	44.8	42.7	47.2
Mekong River Delta	6 652.1	20.3	22.1	18.7	65.9	61.5	71.0
Hanoi	1 777.5	5.4	5.0	5.8	48.2	41.5	55.0
Ho Chi Minh	1 358.8	4.1	4.3	4.0	33.5	30.3	37.1
Age group							
15-24	3 775.5	11.5	13.3	9.9	53.1	52.2	54.2
25-54	21 913.4	66.7	65.2	68.1	58.8	52.7	65.2
55-59	3 183.2	9.7	9.5	9.9	79.7	70.4	89.5
60 and over	3 962.1	12.1	12.1	12.0	90.0	86.2	93.7

Source: Calculated from GSO (2014) Labour Force Survey data.

NOTE: (*) Red River Delta excludes Hanoi City and South-East excludes Ho Chi Minh City.

Table A2. Gender patterns of employment, by aggregate industrial sector and region, 2014

	Agriculture		Industry and Construction		Services		Total	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
TOTAL	44.6	48.1	25.2	17.5	30.2	34.4	100.0	100.0
Red River Delta	28.2	40.0	36.1	23.6	35.7	36.4	100.0	100.0
Northern Midlands and mountainous areas	65.6	73.4	16.6	7.6	17.8	19.1	100.0	100.0
North Central and Central Coastal areas	50.4	57.1	23.2	11.3	26.4	31.5	100.0	100.0
Central Highlands	73.2	72.0	9.4	4.7	17.5	23.3	100.0	100.0
South-East	19.6	15.5	35.6	34.0	44.8	50.4	100.0	100.0
Mekong River Delta	53.7	47.5	17.9	15.2	28.4	37.3	100.0	100.0
Main cities								
Hanoi	17.2	26.3	32.5	21.5	50.4	52.2	100.0	100.0
Ho Chi Minh City	3.4	1.7	34.5	30.7	62.1	67.6	100.0	100.0

Source: Calculated from GSO (2014) Labour Force Survey data.

Table A3. Employed male population by sex, aggregate industrial sector and education, 2014

Industrial sector	Male employment (% of tot male employed)	No education* (% of sectoral male employed)	Completed primary (% of sectoral male employed)	Completed secondary** (% of sectoral male employed)	College or higher (% of sectoral male employed)
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	44.6	20.7	30.6	47.1	1.4
Industry, Mining and Construction	25.2	7.4	21.1	62.3	8.9
Services	30.2	5.4	13.5	56.5	24.3
TOTAL	100.0	12.8	23.1	53.8	10.2

Source: Calculated from GSO (2014) Labour Force Survey data.

NOTE: * Includes 'not completed primary'; **Includes 'secondary vocational schools and training'.

Table A4. Female employment by one-digit level industrial disaggregation and technical qualification, 2014 (percentage)

Industrial sector	Female employment as % of total female empl.	Technical qualification			TOTAL
		No technical qualification*	Vocational training or school**	College or above	
A. Agriculture, forestry and fishery	48.1	97.3	1.9	0.8	100.0
B. Mining and quarrying	0.2	47.3	31.9	20.8	100.0
C. Manufacturing	15.8	86.6	8.2	5.2	100.0
D. Electricity, gas, steam, hot water supply	0.1	32.5	26.7	40.8	100.0
E. Sewage, refuse disposal, water distribution	0.2	71.7	13.9	14.4	100.0
F. Construction	1.2	77.4	5.5	17.1	100.0
G. Wholesale and retail trade	14.8	86.3	6.6	7.2	100.0
H. Transport and storage	0.6	49.6	14.8	35.5	100.0
I. Hotels and restaurants	6.2	91.1	4.7	4.2	100.0
J. Information and communications	0.4	22.0	14.7	63.3	100.0
K. Financial intermediation, banking and insurance	0.7	14.6	8.1	77.3	100.0
L. Real estate	0.3	69.2	6.8	24.0	100.0
M. Professional, scientific and technical activities	0.3	15.0	12.3	72.7	100.0
N. Administrative activities, supporting services	0.4	61.7	10.5	27.8	100.0
O. Communist party, public administration and defence	1.8	16.0	23.9	60.1	100.0
P. Education and training	5.2	7.9	17.0	75.1	100.0
Q. Human health and social work	1.2	10.5	53.2	36.4	100.0
R. Recreation and sport	0.5	80.0	7.6	12.4	100.0
S. Other services	1.3	85.6	9.6	4.8	100.0
T. Paid domestic services	0.7	97.6	2.1	0.4	100.0
U. International organizations and agencies	0.0	7.0	0.0	93.0	100.0
TOTAL	100.0	84.1	6.1	9.8	100.0

Source: Calculated from GSO (2014) Labour Force Survey data.

NOTES:

* 'No technical qualification' includes 'not completed primary', 'completed primary' and also not completed/completed secondary but the latter only for those people who have not attended any technical or vocational course.

** 'Vocational training or school' includes those who have attended 'secondary vocational schools and training'.

Table A5. Top 20 Viet Nam exports as a proportion of total export value, 2005-2014 (percentage)

Exports	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Est. 2014
Phones and parts	0.4	0.4	0.6	1.6	2.5	4.1	6.6	11.1	16.1	15.7
Garment and textile products	14.7	14.7	15.9	14.5	15.9	15.5	13.6	13.2	13.6	13.9
Electronics, computer and parts	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.2	4.8	5.0	4.8	6.8	8.0	7.6
Footwear	9.4	9.0	8.2	7.6	7.1	7.1	6.8	6.3	6.4	6.9
Fishery products	8.4	8.4	7.7	7.2	7.5	6.9	6.3	5.3	5.1	5.2
Machinery and equipment					3.6	4.2	4.3	4.8	4.6	4.9
Crude oil	22.7	20.8	17.5	16.5	10.8	6.9	7.5	7.2	5.5	4.8
Wood and wooden products	4.8	4.9	5.0	4.5	4.5	4.8	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.1
Transport vehicles and parts					1.7	2.2	2.4	4.0	3.8	3.7
Coffee	2.3	3.1	3.9	3.4	3.0	2.6	2.8	3.2	2.1	2.4
Rice	3.2	3.2	3.1	4.6	4.7	4.5	3.8	3.2	2.2	2.0
Weaving fibres							1.2	1.6	1.6	1.7
Luggage articles	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.7
Articles of plastic	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Cashew nut	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.3
Fresh and processed vegetables and fruit	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	1.2
Rubber	2.5	3.2	2.9	2.6	2.1	3.3	3.3	2.5	1.9	1.2
Black pepper	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8
Cassava and products					1.0	0.8	1.0	1.2	0.8	0.8
Coal	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.2	1.7	1.1	0.7	0.4
Percentage of total export value	80.2	79.2	76.6	74.2	77.5	75.8	75.9	81.1	82.1	81.6

Source: Data compiled by the World Bank from GDC; values for 2014 are only estimates.

Table A6. Type of contract for wage workers by firm ownership (percentage)

	Contract duration									
	Unlimited term		1-3 year contract		<1 year contract		Verbal agreement		No contract	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
TOTAL	34.6	44.8	14.3	21.9	3.6	4.8	38.1	22.3	9.4	6.2
State-owned enterprises	84.8	87.7	9.8	8.3	2.4	2.5	0.9	0.6	2.1	0.8
Private domestic enterprises	14.2	19.7	12.3	19.9	3.8	5.7	56.6	43.4	13.1	11.3
Foreign-owned enterprises	37.5	38.0	53.4	53.6	6.8	6.5	1.2	1.0	1.1	0.9

Source: Calculated from GSO (2014) Labour Force Survey data.

(*) M = Male, F = Female

Table A7. Payments for overtime for wage workers, by firm ownership and industrial sector

	Overtime payment		Premium	
	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
TOTAL	17.4	9.5	17.6	12.4
Firm ownership				
State-owned enterprises	10.4	9.4	19.5	19.5
Private domestic enterprises	10.8	5.7	12.4	8.1
Foreign-owned enterprises	49.6	49.6	29	27.5
Industrial sector	17.4	9.5	17.6	12.4
A. Agriculture, Forestry and fishery	0.4	0.7	1.9	2.1
B. Mining and quarrying	1.8	6.5	12.8	14.8
C. Manufacturing	33.5	23.6	21.8	17.8
D. Electricity, gas, steam and hot water supply	10.2	10.9	18.2	23.6
E. Sewage, refuse disposal and distribution of water	8.4	7.2	18.5	21.0
F. Construction	1.7	2.2	7.6	4.0
G. Wholesale and retail trade	5.6	5.4	16.6	13.5
H. Transport and storage	5.3	7.7	24.4	13.6
I. Hotels and restaurants	6.0	9.0	11.4	16.5
J. Information and communication	9.5	12.5	25.3	26.0
K. Financial intermediation, banking and insurance	15.8	13	35.7	31.5
L. Real estate activities	9.4	6.6	21.7	24.2
M. Technological, scientific and specialized activities	7.8	10.9	21	24.9
N. Administrative activities and supporting services	10.0	11.2	19.8	21.4
O. Communist party, public administration and defence	5.6	6.2	15.7	15.4
P. Training and education	9.0	9.1	17.7	17.7
Q. Health and social work	22.6	26.2	22.9	24.2
R. Recreational cultural and sporting activities	10.8	13.7	15	13.1
S. Other service activities	3.9	4.2	9.1	8.1
T. Paid domestic services	2.9	0.0	6.0	0.0
U. International organizations and agencies	0.0	0.0	21.7	15.7

Source: Calculated from GSO (2014) Labour Force Survey data

Table A8. Payments for overtime (cont.)

More details for manufacturing	Overtime payment		Premium	
	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
TOTAL MANUFACTURING	33.5	23.6	21.8	17.8
10 Food products	10.1	11.2	9.4	14.4
11 Beverages	3.8	13.3	23.0	23.8
12 Tobacco products	15.3	8.2	34.6	35.0
13 Textiles	17.0	22	18.4	16.9
14 Wearing apparel	41.6	42.7	25.0	25.7
15 Leather and related products	47.5	41.8	25.5	21.3
16 Wood and of products of wood and cork	9.4	10	8.0	7.2
17 Paper and paper products	21.8	27.3	15.6	18.2
18 Printing and reproduction of recorded media	21.0	18.8	19.9	27.5
19 Coke and refined petroleum products	1.9	9.2	2.9	7.6
20 Chemicals and chemical products	15.5	18.8	23.8	19.4
21 Pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical	9.8	9.3	26.3	32.0
22 Rubber and plastics products	19.1	17.9	18.3	21.6
23 Other non-metallic mineral products	10.4	14.3	10.2	14.6
24 Basic metals	9.8	17.1	15.1	21.8
25 Fabricated metal products, exc. machinery & equipment	18.1	14.6	20.7	13.1
26 Computer, electronic and optical products	45.9	46.9	34.6	36.6
27 Electrical equipment	32.5	31.4	29.2	31.7
28 Machinery and equipment n.e.c	18.8	13.7	34.7	27.2
29 Motor vehicles; trailers and semi-trailers	28.6	37	26.5	26.5
30 Other transport equipment	39.2	33.6	26.4	22.5
31 Furniture	53.1	25.1	17.6	8.1
32 Other manufacturing	31.7	40.6	28.4	23.9
33 Repair and installation of machinery and equipment	10.1	4.6	13.9	10.5

Source: Calculated from GSO (2014) Labour Force Survey data

Table A9. Oaxaca Decomposition of the Gender Earnings Gap, 2004-2012

A. RESULTS FOR BOTH WAGE WORKERS AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED

Gap Explained by Differences in Observables										
Year	F/M Earnings Ratio (%)	Total gap	Days worked	Education	Potential Experience	Industry and Occupation	Other	Total explained	Residual gap	% Explained
2004	86.9	14.1	0.3	-1.1	1.3	1.0	-3.0	-1.5	15.6	-10.8
2006	83.6	17.9	1.7	-1.0	1.8	1.0	-0.4	3.3	14.7	18.1
2008	81.9	20.0	2.0	-1.3	1.0	-0.5	-0.4	0.8	19.2	3.8
2010	80.3	21.9	2.4	-0.6	1.5	3.0	-1.3	5.1	16.8	23.2
2012	80.2	22.0	2.5	-0.5	1.1	3.4	-1.4	5.1	16.9	23.3

B. RESULTS FOR WAGE WORKERS ONLY

Gap Explained by Differences in Observables										
Year	F/M Earnings Ratio (%)	Total gap	Days worked	Education	Potential Experience	Industry and Occupation	Other	Total explained	Residual gap	% Explained
2004	82.2	19.6	1.1	-0.5	1.2	3.4	-2.0	3.2	16.4	16.4
2006	78.7	24.0	4.4	-0.4	2.2	3.3	0.1	9.6	14.4	40.1
2008	80.4	21.8	3.9	-0.7	1.0	0.7	-0.2	4.7	17.1	21.6
2010	76.9	26.3	4.7	-0.3	1.7	3.6	-0.5	9.2	17.1	35.1
2012	75.8	27.7	4.9	-0.1	1.6	4.1	-0.7	9.7	17.9	35.2

Source: Rodgers (2015) calculations based on GSO (2004-2012) Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey.

NOTE: Reported results are the male-female difference in log earnings times 100, unless otherwise indicated. Sample consists of all individuals of working age (15-65) with positive cash earnings, including both wage workers and the self-employed who have positive cash earnings.

Table A10. Households with access to basic infrastructure, 2012

	Access to improved sanitation (%)	Access to improved water (%)	Has tap water at home (%)	Boils or treats water (%)	Connected to electrical grid (%)	Has garbage collection (%)
TOTAL	73.5	81.6	29.5	91.5	97.6	41.5
Residence						
Rural	65.1	75.4	12.4	91.1	96.6	25.8
Urban	93.0	96.1	69.3	92.5	99.7	78.3
Ethnicity						
Kinh/Chinese	80.5	83.1	33.0	91.7	99.3	47.0
Ethnic minorities	26.3	71.1	5.6	89.9	85.8	4.3
Education of Household Head						
Illiterate	40.7	74.5	17.5	79.0	89.3	15.7
Primary school	59.7	81.0	23.8	87.9	96.6	26.1
Lower secondary school	77.0	78.8	22.9	93.8	98.4	41.5
Upper secondary school	90.4	87.8	47.6	94.8	99.4	63.5
Expenditure quintiles						
1st lowest	36.6	72.5	9.5	88.4	91.8	14.2
2nd	61.5	78.7	16.4	88.6	97.4	23.7
3rd	78.5	79.6	25.1	91.1	98.5	38.5
4th	88.3	83.7	35.7	93.5	99.5	53.0
5th highest	95.2	91.0	54.8	95.0	99.8	70.8
Region						
Red River Delta	92.1	64.9	32.2	98.7	100.0	74.4
Northern Midlands and Mountain Area	52.2	78.3	12.9	97.1	90.4	14.6
North Central and Central Coastal Area	75.9	86.1	23.4	92.9	97.7	32.5
Central Highlands	57.8	87.7	12.3	89.9	97.0	20.8
South-East	91.8	98.2	48.3	88.9	99.6	63.2
Mekong River Delta	49.8	83.2	32.7	79.6	97.5	15.2

Source: Rodgers (2015) calculations based on GSO (2012) Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey; author's calculations.

NOTE: Percentages are weighted; sample size is 9399 households. Access to improved sanitation includes flush toilets, suilabh toilets and double septic tanks. Access to improved water includes tap water in home, public tap water, drilled wells, protected dug wells, protected stream water, purchased water, and other improved or protected sources.

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