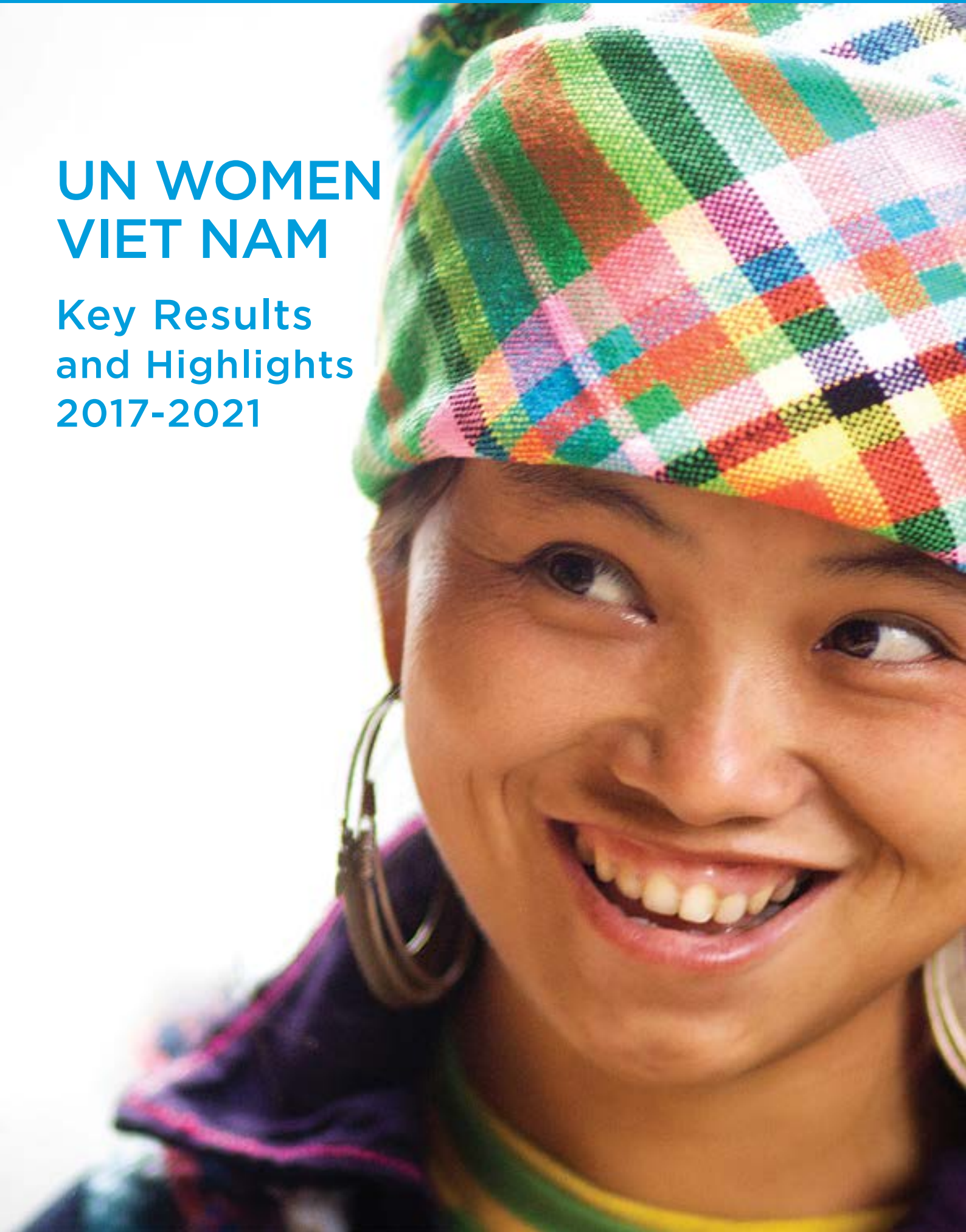


# UN WOMEN VIET NAM

Key Results  
and Highlights  
2017-2021



# Our Donors

We would like to thank our donors for their invaluable support over the last five years. The work of UN Women in Viet Nam to advance gender equality and women's empowerment would not have been possible without them.

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# About UN Women

**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 UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; all women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

**UN Women Viet Nam  
Key Results and Highlights  
2017-2021**



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# Table of Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Gender Equality and women's empowerment in Viet Nam</b>	<b>2</b>
UN Women Viet Nam	3
Leave No One Behind	4
COVID-19: An unprecedented crisis	5
Our Stories: Supporting survivors of gender-based violence during COVID-19	7
<b>Our Impact</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Policy Advocacy</b>	<b>10</b>
Our Stories: Gender-responsive budgeting puts women's interests to the forefront	14
<b>Our Programmes</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Ending violence against women and girls</b>	<b>16</b>
Our Stories: Be yourself and keep it real.	18
<b>Women's economic empowerment</b>	<b>19</b>
Our Stories: Strengthening women's resilience to disasters and climate change	21
<b>Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction</b>	<b>22</b>
Our Stories: Women take the lead in disaster prevention and response	24
<b>Coordination</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Outreach</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Looking Ahead</b>	<b>30</b>
Our Team	31

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## UN Women in Viet Nam Key Results and Highlights 2017-2021

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# Foreword

As we complete the 2017-2021 cycle of our Strategic Note, it is an opportune moment to take stock of achievements – as well as lessons learned – to better support the Government of Viet Nam and stakeholders to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women in the years ahead.

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a turning point for socio-economic progress of the nation and the well-being of Vietnamese women, men, girls, boys and gender-diverse people. The increasing vulnerability of specific groups is threatening to reverse the hard-won progress for women and girls and gender equality across Viet Nam. As the government and all social and economic actors work to overcome and recover from the pandemic, UN Women will work with the UN System in Viet Nam to “build back better” for sustainable development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. To this end, the whole UN system in Viet Nam will work together under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026 in line with Viet Nam’s national priorities.

Our new Strategic Note is in line with both the UNSDCF and the global UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025. We will build on the knowledge and lessons learned during the period presented here in this publication, aiming for UN Women to work better, broaden our scope and scale, and pursue long-term sustainability for all our interventions. We will aim to build synergy between our three mandates – normative, coordination, and operations – while creating stronger connections



Photo: UN Women/Duong Bao Long

with our global strategic outcomes, by pursuing greater capacity and financing for gender equality. We will work with actors from government, civil society, development partners, the private sector, and others to achieve transformative and long-term change towards gender equality.

This review highlights some of the achievements UN Women has supported in the past five years in a succinct and reader-friendly manner. We present our overall impact through our main work themes at the policy and programme level, as well as the added value of our coordination function and outreach efforts. We take the opportunity to thank all our donors, partners and the people of Viet Nam for your invaluable support during this period. We hope these pages help policy makers, practitioners, and partners better understand our contribution in Viet Nam, so you are able to find connections with your own work and identify potential areas for further development and collaboration in the coming years.

Elisa Fernandez Saenz  
Representative, UN Women in Viet Nam

# Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Viet Nam

Viet Nam is rightly regarded as a development success story. During the last three decades, rapid economic growth has driven rising living standards and lifted millions out of poverty.

But while the majority have benefited, many women and girls remain at risk of being left behind. Deeply entrenched gender-based discrimination and inequality prevents women and girls from reaching their full potential, limiting economic opportunities and restricting participation in decision-making, including in important areas such as disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Unpaid domestic and care work remains a key factor limiting women’s paid employment.

Although Viet Nam has made much movement in gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE), recent progress has been limited. Women and girls continue to face unacceptable levels of gender-based violence, with almost two in every three ever-married women aged 18-60 having experienced violence at the hands of their husbands or intimate partners at least once in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> There is little respite in the online world as young women suffer increasing levels of bullying and harassment. Social norms and gender stereotypes sustain different forms of gender-based violence at home, at work, and in public spaces, and keep survivors from seeking help and support.

When women are empowered to participate equally in economic activity – as business owners, as workers, as consumers – economies grow. Yet, a Vietnamese woman today can expect to be paid 13% less than a man.<sup>2</sup> Gender stereotypes also limit study and employment opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and medical (STEM) fields. As long as these inequalities persist, women will remain unable to benefit equally from Viet Nam’s social and economic development.



Photo: UN Women/Nguyen Duc Hieu

## Country Context

**87<sup>th</sup>** Despite significant efforts, Viet Nam’s progress on gender equality has slowed, ranking **87 of 156 countries** in 2021, compared to **65 of 144 countries** in 2016.

**30%** **Over 30% of National Assembly Delegates** are women, higher than the global average, but there is only one woman among 27 members of Cabinet, one of the world’s lowest ratios.

**63%** 62.9% of ever-partnered women in Viet Nam report having experienced some form of **domestic violence**.

**71%** **Female labour force** participation in Viet Nam is one of the highest in the region at 70.9%, yet women are paid **13% less than men**.

1. National Study on Violence Against Women in Viet Nam 2019 – Journey for change (UNFPA, 2019). [https://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/0\\_vaw\\_study\\_main\\_report\\_1.pdf](https://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/0_vaw_study_main_report_1.pdf)

2. Country Gender Equality Profile Viet Nam 2021 (UN Women, 2021). [https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2021/10/vn-cgep\\_full.pdf?la=en&vs=3314](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2021/10/vn-cgep_full.pdf?la=en&vs=3314)



**Violence against women and girls**

in schools, workplaces and public spaces is a serious problem in the country, and deeply rooted in gender norms.



Among the **most vulnerable groups** with limited access to education and skills training are Viet Nam's **53 ethnic minority groups**, which constitute 14.6% of the population.

## UN Women Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, UN Women works to end gender inequality at all levels of society – political, economic and social. We believe that GEWE is essential for a just society. To ensure sustainable change, we challenge the perspective that says gender inequality is acceptable and inevitable.

UN Women's work in Viet Nam is based on our triple mandate. We bring about *normative* change by supporting the government to develop gender-responsive laws and policies in line with international agreements. Through our *operational* mandate, we implement programmes and projects that make a difference on the ground. And through our *coordination* mandate, we bring together the UN agencies and our international and Vietnamese partners to deliver on our shared commitment to GEWE.



The country was ranked **16th according to the global Climate Risk Index 2020** for countries most effected by climate change disasters between 1999 and 2018.



**Women's economic empowerment** is an area of huge potential in Viet Nam. Although women-owned SMEs employ a higher percentage of women workers, women accounted for only 26.5% of SME ownership in 2018.

**We focus on three key issues:**

- **Ending violence against women (EVAW)**
- **Women's economic empowerment (WEE)**
- **Enhancing community resilience through climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (CCA/DRR)**

UN Women's technical expertise, international experience, and long-standing partnerships place us in a unique position to support Viet Nam in its efforts to advance GEWE. Most importantly, our convening role enables us to bring together stakeholders from across society – government actors, international partners, the private sector, and civil society – to drive the policy and legislative reform that is critical to sustainable change.



Photo: UN Women/Tran Van Tuy

## Leave No One Behind

The principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB) is linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and cuts across everything we do. Standing by this principle means that we put the most vulnerable communities first. Ethnic minority women and girls, women living with disabilities, rural and migrant women, single mothers and the LGBTIQ+ community, to name just a few, are examples of groups that face multiple layers of discrimination and hardship in daily life.

Our commitment to LNOB means that we combat discrimination and inequalities wherever we find them, particularly where they intersect; for example, ethnic minority women and girls in rural communities face multiple barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Although the purpose of this review is to highlight UN Women's key results over the last five years, the following pages also serve as a reminder of what remains to be done.



**LNOB means that we combat discrimination and inequalities wherever we find them.**



# COVID-19: An Unprecedented Crisis



**1737 women**

benefitted from cash grants

**6 studies**

on the impact of the pandemic from  
a gender equality perspective

**33.5 million people**

reached with communications  
on the increased risk of violence against  
women and children during COVID-19

**292**

**social workers trained**

to support GBV survivors

**1,084 hotline calls**

were received (nearly 10 times higher  
than the previous year)

**662 survivors**

of GBV received support from trained  
staff through the Peace House Shel-  
ters or a hotline operated by Viet Nam  
Women's Union

For the past two years, much of UN Women Viet Nam's work priorities have had to shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has changed everything. Progress on GEWE has stalled, and in some respects, has been reversed. Our work over the next five years will, in effect, be a response to the pandemic.

Since Viet Nam detected its first case in early 2020, COVID-19 has brought serious negative social and economic impacts. By early December 2021, over 1.3 million people have been infected and 26,700 have died. As the country emerges from its fourth wave of COVID-19, the economic shocks have decimated livelihoods and left millions out of work.

While the impacts of COVID-19 are being felt by the whole country, they have been exceptionally severe for women and girls, especially those from marginalised groups.

Strict lockdown measures have led to highly stressed home environments, putting women and children at greater risk of gender-based violence (GBV). When the economy was brought to a standstill during successive waves of the pandemic, women were hit particularly hard. Lockdowns left informal workers – two-thirds of whom are women – without a livelihood.

Over the past two years, UN Women has adapted to the context of COVID-19. With our partners, we have carried out research on the impacts of the pandemic from a gender equality perspective, ensuring the interests of women and girls is at the forefront of discussions on response and recovery. And where necessary, we have provided immediate and direct support to the women and girls most at risk from the impacts of COVID-19.



Photo: Shutterstock

**While the future remains unpredictable, we can be certain that the impacts of COVID-19 will be felt for years to come.**

Improving services for survivors of gender-based violence has been a critical part of our response. Together with the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) and Peace House Shelters, and with funding from the Government of Australia under a joint programme with UNFPA and UNICEF, we enhanced the women's shelters facilities in Hanoi and Can Tho and upgraded a telephone hotline for women survivors of violence. To increase access to these services, we trained 292 social workers to support women seeking help during the pandemic.

We have taken the issue of GBV to the whole country. Through online and offline media campaigns, we have raised awareness of the heightened risk of GBV. Documentaries, talk shows and radio spots publicising GBV support services have aired widely on national television and radio channels. To date, our efforts to address GBV during the pandemic have reached over 33.5 million people.

In line with our commitment to prioritise the needs of those most at risk, with our partners, we have made unconditional cash transfers to over 1737 vulnerable women. Cash transfers have a positive impact during times of economic crisis and food

insecurity, particularly when made to women. The transfers have enabled the women to provide food for their families, build back their livelihoods, and meet education and healthcare costs.

Through our contribution to research, we have supported the development of evidence-based COVID-19 policies and programmes. In collaboration with other UN agencies, government, and international partners, we have carried out a range of studies on the impacts of COVID-19. For example, together with Irish Aid and the Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs, we assessed the impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority groups from a gender equality perspective, finding that incomes of women-led ethnic minority households have been particularly affected.

At the time of writing, Viet Nam is emerging from its fourth wave of the pandemic. While the future remains unpredictable, we can be certain that the impacts of COVID-19 will be felt for years to come. COVID-19 recovery and "building back better" through women's empowerment and gender equality will guide UN Women's work in Viet Nam over the coming five years.

## Our Stories:

### Supporting survivors of gender-based violence during COVID-19

As COVID-19 lockdown restrictions began to take hold in Da Nang in August of 2020, reports began to emerge of increased levels of gender-based violence (GBV). Hoang Thi Thu Huong, Chairperson of Da Nang Women's Union, took immediate action.

Using a combination of online and offline media, the Da Nang Women's Union began raising awareness about the heightened risk of GBV. Through the campaign, the Women's Union was able to publicise GBV support services, showing survivors how and where to get help.

*"I wanted to get the message out that violence against women and children is never acceptable, and there are places survivors can go to get support and escape the violence, even during lockdown,"* said Hoang Thi Thu Huong.

Under Huong's leadership, the Women's Union established a steering committee to curb violence against women and girls after a surge in infections forced the whole of the city into lockdown from July to August, 2020. The committee mobilised over 500 men through 16 Male Advocates Clubs to share information on hotline numbers, safe shelters, and other support services with women in their communities.

Phan Thi Tu Oanh, a steering committee member and administrator of the Women's Union Facebook page, regularly received requests for help from GBV survivors through Facebook and Zalo, a popular messaging app in Viet Nam. She connected them with psychological counselling, healthcare, and legal services. "The most important thing is to ensure their safety without the perpetrators finding out," she said.

The Women's Union campaign is supported by the *"Emergency Prevention and Response to Violence against Women and Children in the Context of COVID-19"* project. The project, jointly implemented by UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund, and the United Nations Children's Fund, and funded by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), promotes knowledge and awareness about domestic violence and improves services for survivors.

As part of the project, UN Women worked with the Women's Union to identify 100 survivors of GBV and provided them with cash grants. Priority was given to the most vulnerable families, such as those with pregnant or elderly women.

Nguyen Thi Hanh's household was particularly vulnerable – their income from her small business and her husband's construction work had all but disappeared.

*"It caused stress and conflict, and I was very afraid violence could happen at any time,"* she said.

Although lockdown restrictions have eased, violence against women and children persists. "We have to do more to engage all of society," said Huong.



Hotline numbers:

**Child Protection Hotline: 111**

**Peace House Shelter: 1 900 969680**

**Sunshine House: 1 800 1769**

**CSAGA Centre: 024 3333 5599 or 09 4140 9119**

# Our Impact

UN Women makes a difference in Viet Nam by changing perspectives and practices about gender. Our work advances the idea gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) are essential for a fairer society; for a society that provides opportunities for women and girls to reach their full potential.

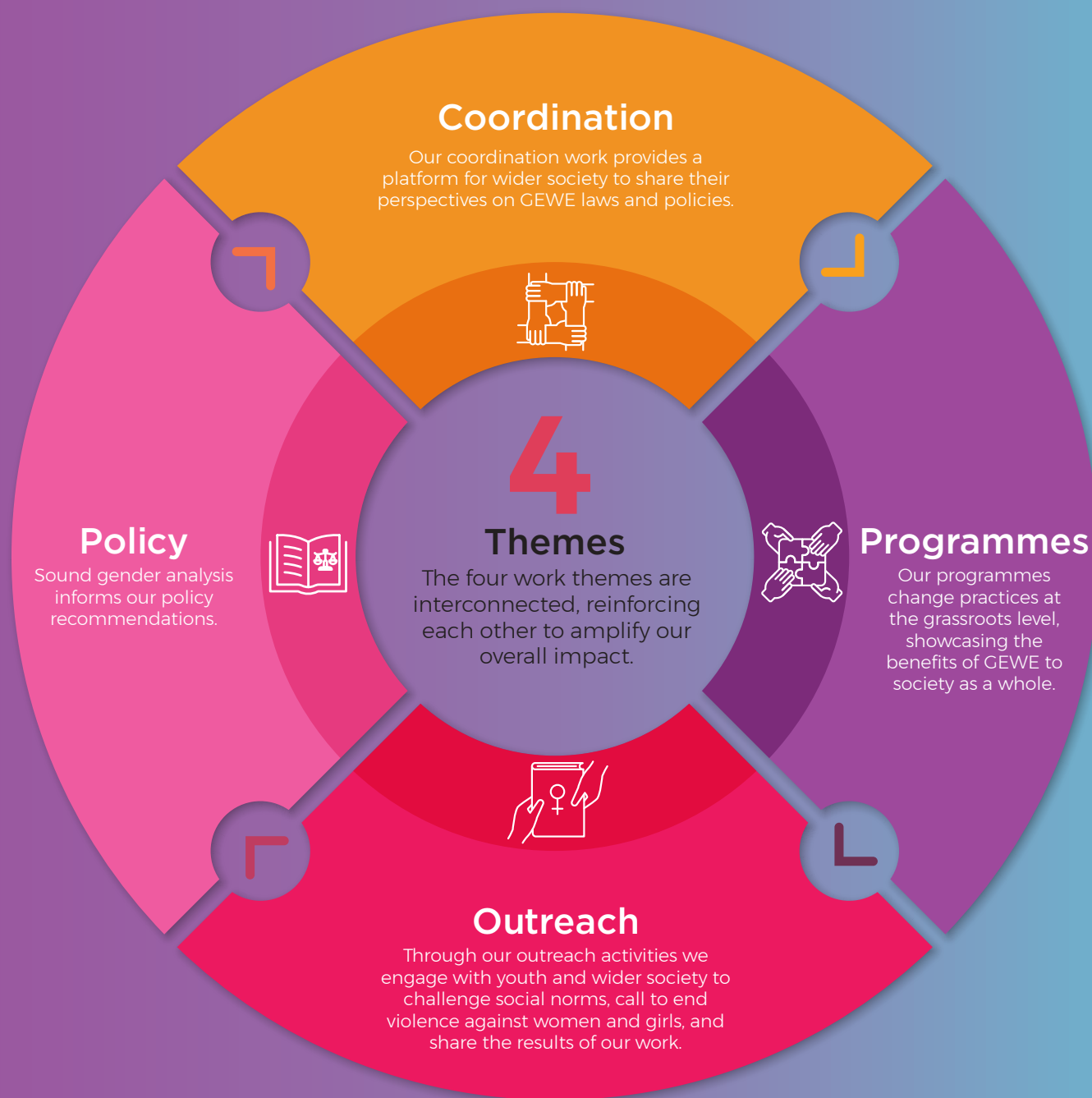
All of our work – policy advocacy, programmes, our coordination activities, and our public outreach – is geared towards achieving this goal.

Through our **policy advocacy** efforts, we provide analysis and evidence to inform policy dialogue, bringing gender equality and women's empowerment perspectives to the table of conversations taking place at the highest levels of government.

Our **programmes** implement sustainable examples of GEWE on the ground. They change perspectives and practices at the grassroots level by demonstrating the benefits of GEWE to society as a whole. They promote trust and buy-in from participants, including men and boys, and their wider communities, challenging the way society perceives the roles of women.

Our **coordination** activities provide a platform for stakeholders from government, the international community, including the United Nations system, and wider society to discuss and refine ideas on advancing GEWE in Viet Nam. By bringing people together, we ensure women have a say on the policies and programmes that affect their lives.

And through our public **outreach** work, we bring GEWE perspectives to the entire country. We engage with youth, men, and boys to challenge social norms and traditional gender roles and end violence against women and girls. We promote reflection about the importance of gender-responsive policies, and showcase how GEWE programmes are transforming lives. Finally, we give voice to those striving for gender equality.



## Policy Advocacy

**Gender-responsive laws and policies are essential for sustainable, lasting change. Without a strong policy foundation, advances in gender equality and women's empowerment are unsustainable. This is why policy advocacy is such an important part of what we do.**

Over the last five years, UN Women has made a meaningful contribution to a number of key laws and policies in Viet Nam.

**The amended Labour Code** marks a significant breakthrough for women's rights at work. The new law, passed by the National Assembly in 2019, shifts the focus from protecting women at work to promoting gender equality in the workplace.

Working closely with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), UN Women supported the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs to identify gender gaps in the existing law, and organised consultations with a range of stakeholders, including employers, workers, and civil society. And we listened.

Based on their feedback, we developed a number of gender-responsive recommendations for the new Labour Code. We built consensus among stakeholders and advocated at the highest levels of government. Five of the recommendations were adopted in whole or in part; their promulgation into law marks the government's commitment to gender equality in the workplace (see the chart opposite).

Women and men experience the impacts of climate change differently. Existing gender inequalities place women at greater risk of death,

### **Examples of key legislation/policy/strategies for advancing GEWE that UN Women contributed to 2017-2021:**

- Review of the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2011-2020) for development of the new national Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030
- Revision of the Labor Code
- Master Plan on Social Economic Development of the 53 Ethnic Minority Groups
- Viet Nam's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement
- State Budget Law
- Decree No. 80/2017/ND-CP on safe, healthy, friendly and non-violent educational environments
- Circular 31/2017/TT-BGDĐT on guidance to implement counselling services in schools to respond to school-related GBV cases
- 2017 National Action Plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Decree No. 80/2021/NĐ-CP on guiding implementation of specific articles in the SME Law

injury, and loss of livelihoods. Climate change policies that fail to address gender differences are not just ineffective, they have the potential to worsen existing inequalities.

UN Women's contribution to **Viet Nam's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change** directly addresses gender differences by ensuring women are able to participate in, lead, and benefit from climate change programmes.

Together with our partners, the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the NGO Network on Climate Change, we provided support to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment on integrating gender issues into the NDC, and enabled women's organisations and other stakeholders to participate in the policy-making process. Viet Nam was one of the first countries to successfully submit its updated NDC, becoming the 12th country to do so in September 2020.

### Prohibited occupations

Removal of the list of prohibited occupations for female workers given the risk for their reproductive and child-rearing functions. Instead, it now requires the government and employers to protect and inform both male and female workers about risks so that they can make their own decisions. (Art.142).

### Supporting workers

Supporting workers (both male and female) to access childcare by requesting the State and employers to plan and organise day care facilities and kindergartens in areas where there are a large number of employees (Art.135), and not only for female employees as in the previous Labour Law.

### Reproductive health care

Ensuring equal rights to reproductive health care and child-rearing by recognising male workers' entitlement to paternity leave (Art.139). In the past, these entitlements were only provided to women.

### Sexual harassment at the workplace

The amended Labour Code has an improved definition of sexual harassment at the workplace (Art.3). Although it is not as comprehensive as international standards, the law now requires employers to develop and implement measures and procedures to address sexual harassment (Art 6).

### Narrowing inequality

Narrowing the gap in retirement age between men and women from 60 and 55, respectively, to 62 and 60. (Article. 169).



## 5 Recommendations

The five recommendations by UN Women and its partners that were adopted in the Labour Code:

**The National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE)** directs GEWE interventions at all levels of government in Viet Nam. In 2019, as the NSGE 2011-2020 came to a close, together with Australia's DFAT, we worked with the government to undertake a 10-year review, identifying lessons learned from its implementation and setting priorities for the new strategy. Based on this work, we supported the government to ensure the 2021-2030 Strategy reflects the realities of gender inequality in the next decade.

To enable wider society to have their say, UN

Women held a series of stakeholder fora that were attended by over 700 participants. Representatives from government and civil society, women with disabilities, and the LGBTIQ+ community provided essential inputs into the new strategy.

The result is a strategy that prioritises strengthening responses to gender-based violence, enhancing women's leadership in government, and better access to post-graduate education for women. For the first time, the NSGE addresses the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community, signalling a major shift in the government's approach to gender equality.



**For the first time, the NSGE addresses the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community, signalling a major shift in the government's approach to gender equality.**

Photo: Shutterstock





Photo: UN Women / Lê T n Thanh

**The Master Plan for the Social Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Remote Areas (2021–2030)** is an example of UN Women’s commitment to the principle of leaving no one behind. We ensured the integration of GEWE through two key contributions.

Our research activities provided evidence on the social and economic situation of ethnic minority women and girls. We backed this up by facilitating dialogue between the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs, the Viet Nam Women’s Union (VWU), local authorities, and over 300 ethnic minority women.

As a result, the National Assembly issued a Resolution<sup>3</sup> on the importance of mainstreaming gender equality in the Master Plan, and state resources were allocated for a VWU project to promote gender equality in ethnic minority groups.

While UN Women’s policy work is specific to the Vietnamese context, it is also aligned with regional and international standards on GEWE. Together with our partners, we support Viet Nam to meet its international commitments, particularly regarding Sustainable Development Goal 5 to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Most recently, our work on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) has been gaining momentum in Viet Nam. The global conference on WPS held on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Hanoi, December 2020), has led to our current efforts to support the country on the development of a National Action Plan on WPS. We expect to see much more progress in this area in the future.

3. Resolution No. 88/2019/QH14 dated November 18, 2019 of the National Assembly on approving the overall scheme on socio-economic development of ethnic minority and mountainous regions in 2021-2030.

## Our Stories:

# Gender-responsive budgeting puts women's interests to the forefront



Photo: UN Viet Nam/Aidan Dockery

**Criteria for using safe toilets are often neglected in the planning and construction of infrastructure.”**

*Tran Thi Kim Thanh, Head of the Children's Affairs and Gender Equality Division of the Ho Chi Minh City DOLISA,*

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam's largest municipality with a population of over 10 million, has just 200 public toilets, many of which can be risky places for women.

“Toilets are very dark and mostly located in places like parks, markets or bus stations. I don't dare to use them in the evening,” said Chau Le, a young female worker. “Even in daylight, I'll only use them when there are lots of people around.”

A 2017 study by the Department of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA) and UN Women found that the city's toilets – along with parks, restaurants, bars and pubs – carry a high risk of sexual harassment and violence.

As part of a five-year cooperation project (2017-2021) between UN Women and DOLISA to build Safe Cities for women and girls, a series

of workshops on gender-responsive budgeting were held to tackle the issue. Through the workshops, organised in collaboration with District 10 People's Committee, participants from district authorities learned how to identify and resolve gender-specific problems in infrastructure.

At one of the workshops, Tran Thi Kim Thanh, Head of the Children's Affairs and Gender Equality Division of the Ho Chi Minh City DOLISA, noted that the 2017 study found that public toilets lacked hygiene, lighting, space, and convenience.

“Criteria for using safe toilets are often neglected in the planning and construction of infrastructure,” she said. “The process is less likely to consider risk and safety factors for women and girls so it is vital to mainstream gender into planning and budgeting.”

Bui The Hai, Vice President of District 10 People's Committee believes gender-responsive budgeting is a must. “This year, when school, market and park authorities submit their plans to build or improve public toilets, I will request them to collect and analyse data on the needs of women and children,” he said.

Ho Chi Minh City was one of the first cities in Viet Nam to commit to gender-responsive budgeting. Lessons learned have been shared with the National Assembly and government ministries, supporting the adoption of gender equality principles in the State Budget Law.



## Our programmes

Through our programmes, we demonstrate the benefits of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in practice. Our programmes show that GEWE benefits society as a whole, inspiring buy-in from participants and their communities. By showing that GEWE works, our programmes change perspectives at the grassroots level and influence laws and policies at the government level.

UN Women implements projects under three broad programmes that are aimed, respectively, at:

- **Ending violence against women (EVAW)**
- **Women's economic empowerment (WEE)**
- **Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (CCA/DRR)**

Photo: UN Viet Nam/Aidan Dockery



Photo: UN Women/Doan Thi Ngoc Huyen

## Ending violence against women and girls

**Violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights.**

It can take many forms: physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, economic. It can also be exercised through controlling behaviours; and it can happen at any place at any time – home, school, work, public places.

Women are forced to live with the prospect of violence throughout their lives. It is used by men to exercise power, to remind women of their place and the expectations society has for them. It is the ultimate expression of gender inequality.

In Viet Nam, UN Women works to end all forms of violence against women and girls by challenging the gender norms that sustain it. We work to prevent violence against women and children at community and society levels, and we strengthen

the capacity of response services – health, police, justice, and social services – to coordinate as part of an essential service package for survivors of violence.

As part of the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls – a global, multi-year initiative between the European Union and the UN – the programme “Safe and Fair: ‘Realising the rights and opportunities for women migrant workers in the ASEAN region” epitomises our efforts to end violence against women and girls. In Viet Nam, UN Women is working with the Viet Nam Women’s Union, the Ministry of Labour - Invalids, and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Justice to implement the programme from 2018 to 2022.

## In focus: Safe Cities Viet Nam

**The “Safe Cities Viet Nam” project began in 2016 as part of the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Flagship Program Initiatives.**

The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of city authorities to address violence and discrimination against women to create safe and gender-sensitive public spaces. The project works to develop definitions of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public places, and strengthen legal frameworks through research, communications campaigns, capacity building, and targeted interventions.

In 2019, the project decorated buses and bus stations in the most crowded areas of Ho Chi

Minh City in the colour orange – a symbol of a brighter future where women and girls can live free from violence. The message was reinforced by communications on sexual harassment and sexual violence prevention and response targeted at bus drivers, conductors, and passengers.

Following support from UN Women on gender-responsive budgeting, in 2020 Da Nang City issued Directive no. 39-CT/TU on “Building a safe city without violence against women and girls”, and Ho Chi Minh City developed policy recommendations on gender-responsive budgeting in the transport sector.



Photo: UN Women/Nguyen Minh Duc

## In focus: Connect with Respect

The project was jointly implemented by the Department for Political Education and Student Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Training, and UN Women from 2018 to 2020 in five secondary schools in Ha Giang, Ha Noi, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh cities under the regional programme **“Stepping Up Solutions to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls in Asia and the Pacific 2017-2021”** funded by the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Korea.

The project provided 58 teachers (23 males, 35 females) and 1025 students (495 males, 530 females) with the knowledge and skills to prevent gender-based violence and promote respectful relationships through age-appropriate learning activities.



**58 Teachers trained**  
(23 males, 35 females)



**1025 students reached**  
(495 males, 530 females)



**“No matter who you are – a girl or a boy – be yourself, do what you like, and keep it real.” - Tran My Anh.**

Photo: UN Women/ Nguyen Minh Duc

## **Our Stories:** Be yourself and keep it real

**By Tran My Anh, Class 8B,  
Experimental School of Education Science, Hanoi**

The length of our hair doesn't determine whether we are male or female. The most important quality is "how we are". That's what I think after learning about gender equality and respecting differences in the **“Connect with Respect”** Toolkit.

I've been passionate about basketball since elementary school. I told my parents that I would cut my hair short so it wouldn't get in the way when I was playing, and they supported me. When people saw me with short hair, everyone – even my friends – said, “Why would a girl cut her hair short like a boy? Where's your feminine side?”

In my first few days in Grade 6, my classmates thought I was a boy. They were quite surprised and saw that I was a little “unusual” compared to the other girls in the class. They didn't make fun of me, but I could feel it was hard for them to accept a girl with short hair; a girl that looked like me.

Whenever the class was divided into teams to play basketball, the girls often liked to have boys in the team so they would be stronger. And there were times when my team had more girls, and the boys in the other team told each other to go easy on us. I thought this was wrong but didn't say anything because I wasn't sure whether they were right or I was just being odd.

At the end of Grade 6 our class was taught subjects from the “Connect with Respect” Toolkit, including 'gender equality' and 'appreciating differences'. From what I've learned, I see that what I have been doing and thinking is right. My classmates have gradually changed; the distance between the short-haired girl and everyone else is closer. Now, our basketball games are “fair play” and I'm considered a real talent. No matter who you are – a girl or a boy – be yourself, do what you like, and keep it real.



## Women's economic empowerment

Until women are able to participate equally in economic activity, gender equality will remain out of reach.

Women's economic empowerment means giving women equal access to markets, to credit, and to productive resources. It means decent work; work that is fairly paid where women feel safe, are treated with respect, and are given equal opportunities.

Through our WEE projects we empower women to play an equal role in the economy, and as climate-related disasters become more severe, we support women in high-risk areas to build resilient livelihoods.

We work with the private sector to promote Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) – principles that guide businesses on how to provide the opportunities and conditions for women to thrive as workers, leaders, and entrepreneurs. We challenge the perception that a woman's place is in the home.

But women's economic empowerment is not only about women. When women are empowered to participate equally in the economy, it results in stronger and more sustainable development for all.

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**Through our WEE projects we empower women to play an equal role in the economy.**

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## In focus:

# The WeEmpower Viet Nam programme

**Funded through the European Commission and implemented by UN Women, the programme works with women’s networks, public institutions, and the private sector to build an enabling business environment for women’s economic empowerment.**

Through the programme, UN Women is forging partnerships with the private sector to promote adoption of the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs). As a result, 120 companies had signed up to the WEPs by September 2021, committing to promote GEWE in the workplace, the market place, and in the communities they work with. Moreover, 174 business leaders have applied the WEPs Analysis Tool to assess gender equality in their companies.

An important part of the programme’s work is centred on improving the skills of women in business. In January 2020, UN Women launched an e-learning platform for women business owners, CEOs, and managers with courses on ‘Leadership and Management’ and ‘Women’s Entrepreneurship’. In 2021, more than 1,550 learners participated in the courses.

Through a series of workshops to support women-owned businesses during COVID-19, the programme has trained 1,981 women entrepreneurs on change management, smart marketing, business continuity planning, and company leadership in the ‘new normal’.

In 2021, more than **1,550 learners** studied business skills on e-learning platforms.



**An important part of the programme’s work is centred on improving the skills of women in business.**

Photo: UN Women/Ph m Qu c H ng



## Our Stories: Strengthening women's resilience to disasters and climate change

When Tran Thi My Linh said she was going to replace her rice fields with lotus, she raised quite a few eyebrows in her village. In the little commune of Hoa Dong in Phu Yen province, just south of Ha Noi, villagers have been planting rice for generations. However, changing weather patterns in recent years have affected millions in rural areas, and people have started looking for new ways to make a living.

When Linh heard that a new livelihoods project was planning to work in her village, she persuaded her husband and her neighbours to take part. Besides Linh's family, 25 other households participated in the project.

The "Strengthening women's livelihoods and participation for greater resilience to disasters and climate change in Viet Nam" project is funded by Fondation Chanel and implemented by UN Women, the Viet Nam Women's Union, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the National Agriculture Extension Centre.

Linh's family and the other households were trained to plant lotus following VietGAP (Vietnamese Good Agricultural Practices) standards. They also learned about the market, doing business, and how to build a strong brand for their products. The effect



Photo: UN Women/Thao Hoang

on incomes was almost immediate. After just four months growing lotus, the households were earning four times what they had from growing rice.

"The project hasn't only brought new opportunities for local women to build their resilience; more importantly they are able to participate in decision-making processes throughout project implementation," said Dang Thi Hong Nga, Chairwoman of the Phu Yen Women's Union.

The project provides equal access to support services for vulnerable women. To date, these activities have reached over 25,000 extension workers from 37 provinces, who in turn are sharing what they learned with their communities, benefiting the wider rural community.

As the impacts of climate change and disasters intensify, it is vital that vulnerable rural communities are included in the planning and implementation of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction activities. This is particularly the case for rural women, most of whom are engaged in smallholder farming and lack access to information, resources, and extension services, especially women from poor and ethnic minority households.



Photo: UN Women/Thao Hoang



Photo: UN Viet Nam/Aidan Dockery

## Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

In Viet Nam, climate change is not about future scenarios.

The impacts are threatening livelihoods and food security for millions of people today. Viet Nam's coastal, mountainous, and delta regions make the country especially vulnerable. Tropical storms are more destructive and frequent. Sea level rise, flooding, drought, and landslides do more damage each year.

Because of gender inequality, women and girls are more at risk. They are under-represented in disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies and

lack access to DRR training and knowledge. They tend to be perceived as victims of climate change instead of agents of change for their own futures.

To ensure the resilience of vulnerable communities in high-risk areas, our projects include women in all aspects of DRR planning and implementation. When disasters occur, resilient communities are able to mitigate the effects and recover more quickly.

## In focus:

# EmPower: Women for Climate Resilient Societies

Empower is a four-year (2018-2022) regional project implemented by UN Women in partnership with the UN Environment Programme and financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The project addresses key drivers of gender-based vulnerability through mainstreaming gender and human rights concerns into climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) actions in Asia and the Pacific.

In Viet Nam, 25 women-led organisations joined the “Network of Women Pioneering in CCA and DRR” led by the Centre for Environment and Community Research (CECR). This network has issued three bulletins; on good practices for key gender and climate change issues; on challenges in contributing to climate policies; and on ways to strengthen the network’s role in policy advocacy.

In addition, CECR has led advocacy efforts to raise the importance of gender and women’s participation in waste management. With support from the project, CECR developed a toolkit to measure women’s contributions in emission reductions from the solid waste sector. This policy advocacy message is vital for NDC implementation in Viet Nam.



**To ensure the resilience of vulnerable communities in high-risk areas, our projects include women in all aspects of DRR planning and implementation.**

## Our Stories: Women take the lead in disaster prevention and response



Photo: UN Women/Nguyen Minh C

**After two years free from the usual flooding, in October 2016, Le Thuy district's luck took a turn for the worse.**

Le Thuy district, located along the Kien Giang River, is a high-risk flood zone in Quang Binh province, central Viet Nam. After two years free from the usual flooding, in October 2016, Le Thuy's luck took a turn for the worse.

"Most of the villagers were sleeping when the flood came rushing in," recalls Huong Duong, a shopkeeper from My Thuy, a commune situated close to the river.

The rising waters flooded Duong's house almost immediately, but resulted in little damage. Before the flood, she had placed all her furniture and chickens on higher ground. Because Duong's

timely preparations had been replicated by her neighbours, flood damage in the village was kept to a minimum.

Duong is one of 30 active 'communicators' in My Thuy commune. She was trained by the "Strengthening Women's Capacity in Disaster Risk Reduction to Cope with Climate Change" project, implemented jointly by the Viet Nam Women's Union and UN Women. The project trains communicators about disaster preparedness. In disaster-prone Viet Nam, where on average 400 lives are lost every year, the training can be the difference between life and death.

"When I know a storm is coming, I inform the rest of the village. We help each other to reinforce our houses," said Duong. "I also remind my neighbours to stock up on food and keep a portable kerosene or wood stove handy, so we can cook without electricity during the storm."

*"The project has given us the chance to learn how to prepare before the storms come; by harvesting crops earlier, strengthening our shelters, preparing sufficient food, and storing clean water, lamps, firewood, flashlights, and medicine,"* said Ly Nguyen, a local leader from Phong Thuy commune in Le Thuy district.

Through advocacy efforts supported by UN Women and our partners, women's leadership in disaster management and risk reduction is formally recognised and promoted in Viet Nam. A government decree issued in September 2013 provided – for the first time – a seat for the Women's Union on decision-making boards of the Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control. This means that women like Nguyen and Duong will now have a say on DRR strategies.

## In focus:

# Empowering ethnic minority women in Viet Nam through gender-responsive policies and programmes

Through an Irish Aid-funded project running from 2017-2021, we aimed to ensure that ethnic minority women and girls benefitted equally from poverty reduction and development programmes, enabling them to develop to their full potential.

Through the project, UN Women works with the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs and the Department of Ethnic Minorities to include the specific needs of women and girls in laws, policies, and plans on rural development, poverty reduction, and climate change adaptation.

The project's research activities have contributed to the evidence base for key gender-responsive policies, including the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030, the National Target Programme on the Socio-economic Development of 53 Ethnic Groups and Mountainous Areas (2021-2030), and gender-responsive budgeting in the State Budget Law.

The project also provides UN Women with the opportunity to extend its work as a member of the Ethnic Minority Partnership for Resilience and Opportunity. The partnership brings together government and non-government organisations to multiply the impact of their work.



**The partnership brings together government and non-government organisations to meet the specific needs of women and girls.**

Photo: UN Women/Nguyen Minh Duc



## Coordination

**Gender equality will only be realised if different voices representing all layers of society are brought together. Through our coordination mandate, we support women to take their seat at the table, empowering them to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. We bring together stakeholders to share perspectives and shape the future of GEWE in Viet Nam.**

We forge lasting partnerships. We work with the government, our sister agencies in the UN Viet Nam Country Team (UNCT), and our international partners to build consensus and implement projects on the ground.

As **Chair of the Gender Thematic Group (GTG)**, UN Women works to facilitate gender mainstreaming across the UNCT in Viet Nam.

In 2021, we facilitated implementation of the UNCT-System-wide Action Plan (SWAP) on gender equality – an assessment that brings together all the UN agencies to measure our collective efforts to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. To follow up on this work, we oversaw implementation of the 2021 UNCT Gender Equality Action Plan developed to implement recommendations from the SWAP assessment.

UN Women also coordinates the UNCT’s inputs on Viet Nam’s progress regarding its commitments under international frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the SDGs. And each year, we support the GTG to identify, develop and implement joint UN actions in support of GEWE; for example, the 16 Days of Activism and International Women’s Day campaigns.

UN Women serves as **Secretariat of the Informal Group of Ambassadors and Head of UN Agencies on Gender Policy Coordination**, which meets three times a year to discuss issues impacting gender equality in Viet Nam. As Secretariat, we play a

significant role coordinating policy advocacy for GEWE.

One of the Group’s key advantages is its ability to engage senior-level members of the government with a common voice. By working together, the Group was able to advocate for gender-responsive amendments to the Labour Code with leaders of the Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs, resulting in the adoption of five recommendations, including articles on sexual harassment and child-care, which were passed into law in 2019 (see page 11).

Our convening power means we are at the centre of collaboration on GEWE in Viet Nam, working with a wide range of **non-government organisations (NGOs)** and networks. We support the **Gender Action Partnership (GAP)**, led by MOLISA, to coordinate discussions on gender equality between the government, UN agencies, and NGOs.

Through our work with **GBVNet** – a network of organisations and individuals working to eliminate gender-based violence in Viet Nam – we support advocacy and programming initiatives. We also collaborate with our partners in the **Climate Change Working Group** and the **Disaster Management Working Group** on mainstreaming gender into DRR/CCA strategies and policy advocacy. Over the last five years, UN Women has demonstrated a unique ability to bring together stakeholders from all spheres of society, advancing the cause of GEWE to ensure that no one is left behind.



Photo: UN Women/Nguyen Duc Hieu

## Outreach

Outreach is a vital part of what we do. It amplifies our impact, engaging the public in the cause of gender equality.

We communicate across traditional and social media to challenge gender stereotypes and give a voice to women from different backgrounds, so they can share their perspectives and experiences on gender equality and women's empowerment with the rest of society. We engage men and boys at the community level to raise awareness about the value of respectful relations among genders and their role in ending violence against women and girls.

Through our use of creative messaging, we raise awareness about the most pressing gender issues; our campaigns highlight the realities of gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and advocate for lasting change. Each year, our messages reach millions.

Facebook: @unwomenvietnam

Twitter: @unwomenvietnam

Website: <http://vietnam.unwomen.org>

# 16 Days of Activism

*“Say NO to violence against women and girls”*



UN Women Viet Nam's 16 Days of Activism initiatives are part of a larger international campaign against gender-based violence. Each year, the campaign runs from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day).

The year 2018 was a particular highlight. Throughout the campaign, we used the message #HearMeToo to draw the public's attention to the issue of GBV both online and offline through the stories of survivors and activists. White Ribbon Breakfasts were held in five provinces in 2018. Over 750 people, two-thirds of whom were men, attended the breakfasts, where they discussed the role of men in gender equality and the prevention of GBV.

In 2020, two Da Nang City landmarks, the Dragon Bridge and the Han River Bridge, were decked out in dazzling orange lights to demonstrate the city's commitment to ending violence against women and children, and building a city that is safe for everyone. The event was opened by a ceremony organised by Da Nang Women's Union with city and national leaders, which was closely followed by a passionate flash mob dance by 700 women under the rain. The two famous bridges glimmered orange from 28 November to 15 December.



Photo: UN Women/Nguyen Duc Hieu

**Since 2017, the 16 Days of Activism campaigns have generated:**



**Over 500**

news reports



**Over 11,000**

participants at offline events



**Over 3.5 million**

social media engagements



**Over 73 million**

people reached on social media





**Before the Male Advocates programme, most of the men in Tran Quoc Hung's village thought that domestic violence was a private matter and the right of the man to teach his wife how to behave.**

Photo: UN Women/Thao Hoang

## In focus: Male Advocates Clubs

In partnership with the Viet Nam Women's Union, UN Volunteers, and Partners for Prevention, UN Women is reaching out directly to men in Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh cities to end violence against women and girls.

Through Male Advocate and Volunteer clubs, we work with men of all ages to challenge the belief that women are subordinate to men. To date, 480 men in Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh cities have learned about harmful masculine behaviours and the mistaken idea that men have

to be 'tough'. They then share these perspectives with their peers to advocate for respectful relationships and the prevention of gender-based violence in their communities.

Gender equality is a societal issue that concerns everyone. It is not about the competing interests of women and men; it is a common endeavour. Change is impossible without the participation of men. Their influence on their peers will be decisive.

**It all comes down to the patriarchy, which has thrived for too many years in Viet Nam."**

- Vu Dinh Coi,  
Male Advocates Club  
member, Da Nang City.

# Looking Ahead

Through our new Strategic Note 2022-2026, UN Women will continue to set the agenda for gender equality and women’s empowerment over the course of the next five years. Although Viet Nam has taken significant steps towards GEWE, challenges remain.

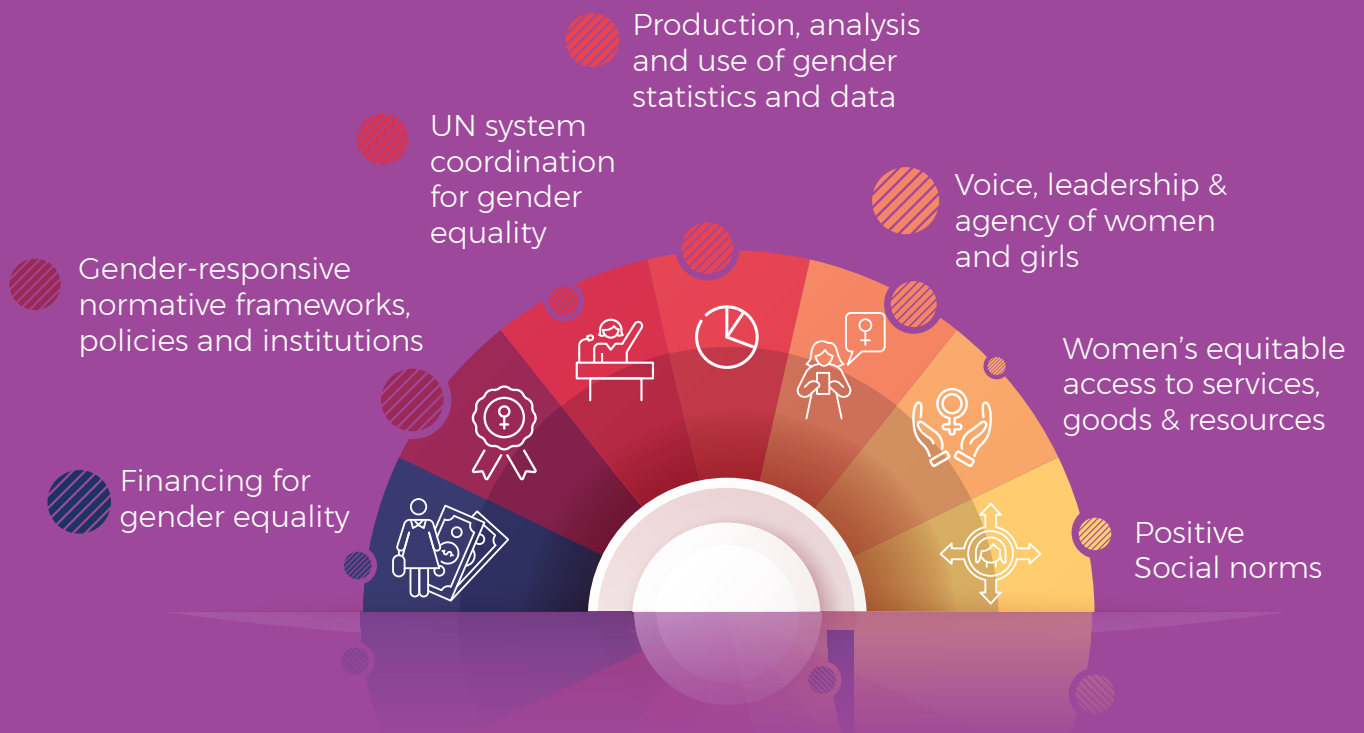
Our partners are our greatest asset. Together, we will continue to bring diverse voices to the table, building consensus on the way forward for GEWE in Viet Nam. To achieve lasting change, we are moving away from addressing specific issues to working on transformational outcomes in an interlinked and multidimensional way with the aim of achieving greater impact for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

As we look to the next five years, we remain committed to our triple mandate. We will advocate for gender-responsive laws and policies, supported by our programmes on the ground and our role as a convener for voices from across society.

With key gender legislation on the horizon, including the Gender Equality Law, the Gender Affirmation Law, and the Domestic Violence Law, the coming years offer Viet Nam the opportunity to cement the advances of the last decade, and define them for the next.

The impacts highlighted in this review are foundations to be built upon. To ensure lasting change, we will work towards transformation, advancing gender equality for all women and girls in all communities. And we will leave no one behind.

## Transformative outcomes



## Our Team

The UN Women Viet Nam Country Office is a team of like-minded individuals from many walks of life. While our backgrounds may differ, our passion for our work here in country brings us together. We are committed to making significant impact on one of the defining issues of our time, gender equality and women's empowerment. We strive to ensure dignity and respect for all, and a world where every person is empowered to reach their full potential, no matter their gender.



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam

**“ What inspires me most about working for UN Women is witnessing women strengthen their voices and play leading roles in society - to improve women’s economic empowerment, end gender-based violence, and lead others to demand greater gender equality.” - Elisa Fernandez Saenz**

**“ Working to empower women and girls is standing up for human rights.”  
- Duong Bao Long**

**“ I’m working here to enable women in Vietnam to be more independent and to value ourselves.” - Pham Linh**

**“ Gender equality is no longer a buzz word - it means concrete action to make sure no one is left behind. I’m motivated to learn more about bringing lasting change and to see the results of our work in the long run.”  
- Doan Khanh Linh**

**“ Working for UN Women Viet Nam has connected me with people who are passionate about the rights of women and girls around the globe. Collaborating with such inspiring people every day gives me hope for the future of gender equality and women’s empowerment.”  
- Clara O’Leary**

**“ This job is about creating good opportunities for women and girls so they can reach their potential. It’s about and making sure society understands that gender-based violence in all its forms is unacceptable.”  
- Nguyen Thu**



**United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and  
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