



Policy Brief:

GENDER ISSUES OF ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS IN VIET NAM

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POLICY BRIEF: GENDER ISSUES OF ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS IN VIET NAM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
INTRODUCTION	4
1. GENDER ISSUES IN THE ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES AND THE LABOUR MARKET BY ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE	6
1.1 Gender issues in the access to economic opportunities of ethnic minority people	6
1.2 Gender issues in the employment of ethnic minority people	7
1.3 Policy recommendations	9
2. GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING	11
2.1 Gender issues in the education and training of ethnic minority people	11
2.2 Policy recommendations	13
3. GENDER ISSUES IN HEALTH CARE	15
3.1. Gender issues in the health care of ethnic minority people	15
3.2. Policy recommendations	16
4. UNDERAGE AND CHILD MARRIAGE	17
4.1 Child marriage in ethnic minority areas	17
4.2 Policy recommendations	21

5. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	23
5.1 Violence against women in ethnic minority areas	23
5.2 Policy recommendations	25
<hr/>	
6. UNPAID CARE WORK	26
6.1 Gender issues in unpaid care work in ethnic minority areas	26
6.2 Policy recommendations	27
<hr/>	
7. ETHNIC MINORITY CADRES AND CIVIL SERVANTS	27
7.1 Gender issues among ethnic minority cadres and civil servants	27
7.2 Policy recommendations	29
<hr/>	
REFERENCES	46
<hr/>	

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INTRODUCTION

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 recognized that *'many women face additional barriers in enjoyment of their human rights because of such factors as their race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability or socio-economic class or because they are indigenous people, migrants, including women migrant workers, displaced women or refugees'*.¹ Viet Nam has ratified a number of international conventions and treaties related to human rights, women's rights and, in particular, the rights of ethnic minority women. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and General Recommendations by UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The Government of Viet Nam has been diligently implementing international commitments, which has been highly appreciated by the international community for its significant achievements, in particular, in the field of gender equality.

Viet Nam is a multi-ethnic country with 54 ethnic groups. Apart from the Kinh ethnic group (majority), there are a further 53 ethnic minority groups. Ethnic minority and mountainous areas account for nearly three-quarters of Viet Nam's natural topography. These are the main residential areas of 53 ethnic minority groups with 14.12 million people, accounting for 14.7 per cent of the country's total population². Ethnic minority and mountainous areas are recognized as significantly important geographic locations in terms of the socio-economic dimensions, national defence, security and ecological environment. However, the ethnic minority and mountainous areas are the most disadvantaged with a poverty rate significantly higher than the national average.³

The gender gaps within and between the ethnic minority groups and the Kinh ethnic group remain substantive and persists across various socio-economic fields. In ethnic minority groups, women and girl children are more disadvantaged than men and boy children in their access to various opportunities and resources, and in their representation because social norms continue to reinforce their subordinate role, prioritizing female reproductive roles, including childbearing and home-based production. The coexistence of various forms of gender- and ethnicity-based discrimination is the principal influential factor.

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- 1 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, Chapter 4. I: Human rights, page 92, Paragraph 225
 - 2 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019.
 - 3 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019. The rate of poor and near-poor households of ethnic minority households was 35.5 per cent, 3.5 times higher than the national rate (10.2 per cent).

Towards Viet Nam's commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) following the principle of 'leave no one behind', the issues related to ethnic minorities, gender equality, and the empowerment of ethnic minority women requires special attention in the advancement of women.⁴ Viet Nam has developed a progressive national legal framework for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, including policies that promote gender equality in ethnic minority and mountainous areas. The Law on Gender Equality (2006), the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2011-2020 and National Programs on Gender Equality 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 all include provisions to promote gender equality in ethnic minority areas. In addition, there have been specific policies designed especially for ethnic minority areas such as the project on 'minimizing child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority groups 2015-2025',⁵ the project to support gender equality activities in ethnic minority areas 2018-2025⁶ and most recently, the project on socio-economic development for ethnic minority and mountainous areas 2021-2030.⁷ The goal of these policies is to create positive changes in the implementation of gender equality and to enhance the status of women in ethnic minority areas.

Since 2014, the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) promulgated the *Statistical Indicator System on Ethnic Work* with 119 statistical indicators in different fields to facilitate leadership and state management agencies in evaluation, forecasting, policymaking, and the development of socio-economic plans. To date, most of the indicators have been disaggregated by gender. Since 2015, the *National Survey on the Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups* has been conducted every 5 years. The data from this panel survey is the most important source of information for statistical work on both ethnicity and gender.

This policy brief was developed based on the results of the *Second Survey on the Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Group in Viet Nam in 2019* and other recent research results related to ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam. The policy brief aims to support the process of formulating and implementing policy for ethnic minority areas, contributing to an effective and comprehensive promotion of gender equality in ethnic minority areas as Viet Nam commits to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

4 UN Women and the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, 2018. *Policy brief to promote gender equality in ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam*.

5 Decision 498/QĐ-TTg dated April 14, 2015 of the Prime Minister

6 Decision 1898/QĐ-TTg dated November 28, 2017 of the Prime Minister

7 Resolution No. 88/2019/QH14 of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Aiden Dockery

1

GENDER ISSUES IN THE ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES AND THE LABOUR MARKET BY ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE

1.1 GENDER ISSUES IN THE ACCESS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES BY ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE

Ethnic minority women experience far more disadvantages than ethnic minority men in their access to formal credit for the development of livelihood, production, business and service activities.

A study on women's financial capacity in 27 countries⁸ shows that Viet Nam was almost ranked at the bottom of the list (25th out of 27 countries) regarding women's financial capacity. In recent years, many incentive funds have been allocated to people living in ethnic minority and mountainous areas to support their socio-economic development and poverty reduction. However, the results of the *Survey on the Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups in 2019* show that, despite ethnic minority women playing an important role in running the production, business and services related to traditional products in ethnic

minority and mountainous areas, the proportion of ethnic minority households, headed by women, receiving incentive credit loans from the Bank for Social Policies in 2019 was only 15.8 per cent. This was almost 5 percentage points lower than the corresponding rate of households headed by ethnic minority men (20.7 per cent). The total loan amount acquired by female-headed ethnic minority households was lower than that of male-headed ethnic minority households⁹, and was significantly lower than the loan limit regulated by the Bank for Social Policies.¹⁰ The reasons include: (i) production – business – services establishments and home-based businesses headed by women were small; thus, they did not need to borrow large sums of money; (ii) the ability of female-headed ethnic minority households to prepare credit loan applications as well as production and business plans was limited; thus, they were less likely to access large credit loans; (iii) small production – business and service establishments did not utilise bookkeeping procedures for

8 Sponsored by VISA

9 Results of the *Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups in 2019* show that, of the ethnic minority households receiving credit loans with the amount of 51 million VND or more, the percentage of male-headed households was higher than that of female-headed households (7.5 per cent vs. 6.2 per cent). In contrast, for a loan amount of less than 20 million VND, the percentage of male-headed households was significantly lower than that of female-headed households (27.1 per cent vs. 35.0 per cent)

10 According to the Decision No. 12/QĐ-HĐQT dated February 22nd, 2019 of the Board of Directors of the Bank for Social Policies (VBSP). The Decision regulates the increase of credit loan limits and credit loan terms for poor households to meet their financial needs for production and business development since March 1, 2019. Accordingly, the credit loan limit for the poor households to develop their production and business activities increased to 100 million VND from 50 million VND. This loan amount does not require a guarantee.

transactions, purchases and payment or generate financial statements; hence, they did not meet the requirements for a loan guarantee.¹¹

Ethnic minority women often benefit less from micro-finance schemes, experiencing a lower rate of success, and having a lower likelihood of maintaining savings groups after the support projects end.¹²

1.2 GENDER ISSUES IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE

The female ethnic minority workforce faces many disadvantages and is one of the 'disadvantaged' groups in the labour market. The technical and professional qualifications of the ethnic minority labour force have improved compared to 2015 yet they were still very low. The proportion of ethnic minority people aged 15 and over with elementary and higher technical and professional training in 2019 was 10.3 per cent (men: 11.7 per cent, women: 8.9 per cent)¹³, which was almost

equivalent to half the national corresponding rate¹⁴. Up to 18 of the 53 ethnic minority groups had a labour force with technical and professional qualifications of below 5 per cent. They include the La Hu group with 1.7 per cent (men: 2.0 per cent, women: 1.4 per cent), Xtieng group with 2.1 per cent (men: 2.8 per cent, women: 1.3 per cent), Xinh Mun group with 2.1 per cent (men: 2.9 per cent, women: 1.3 per cent), Brau group with 2.3 per cent (men: 3.0 per cent, women: 1.5 per cent), and Ba Na group with 2.3 per cent (men: 2.8 per cent, women: 1.9 per cent).¹⁵

Ethnic women tend to enter the labour force every early; the employment structure of ethnic minority groups reveals the 'double' disadvantage caused by ethnicity and gender.

Many ethnic minority girl children worked, in the same way as adults before they reached the age of 15 years old. At this age, most of the girl children from the Kinh ethnic group are attending school. The labour force participation rate¹⁶ of ethnic minority people aged 15 and over was 83.3 per cent

11 Loan guarantee comprises the conditions set, based on a borrowers' actual ability to repay a loan on time. According to Clause 1, Article 2 of Decree No. 178/1999ND-CP, the loan guarantee means that credit institutions apply measures to prevent risks and set up economic and legal regulations for collecting debts owed by customers.

12 World Bank, 2019. Research Report: Drivers of Socio-Economic Development among Ethnic Minority Groups in Viet Nam.

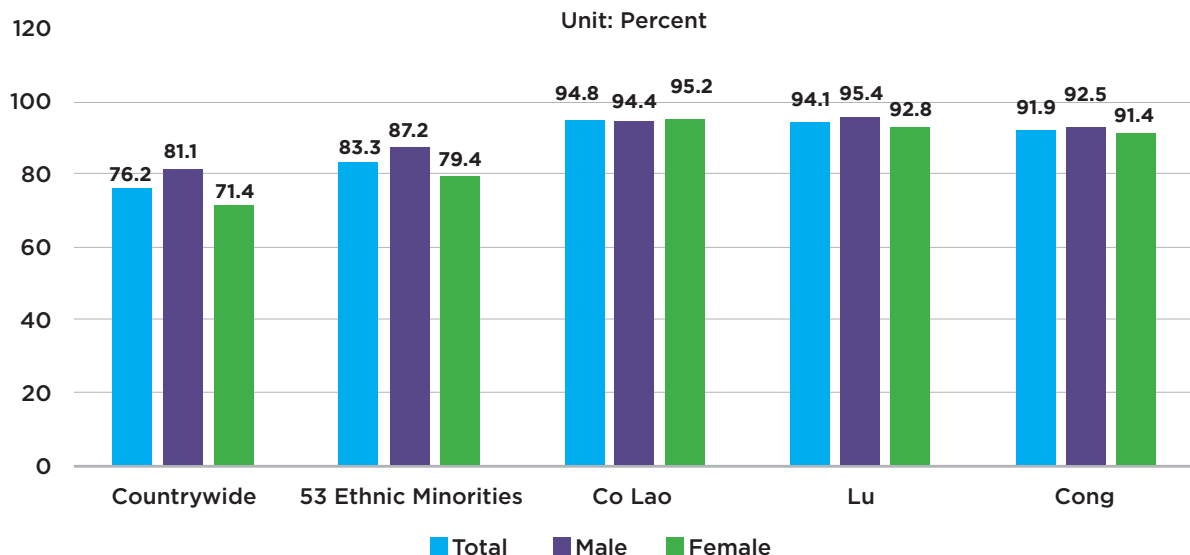
13 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019.

14 GSO, 2019. Results of the Labour Force Survey 2019.

15 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019.

16 General Statistics Office. The labour force participation rate is the percentage of people in the labour force over the total population aged 15 and over.

Figure 1. Labour force participation rate by gender and ethnic group in 2019



Source: GSO. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019 and Results of the Labour Force Survey 2019

(men: 87.2 per cent, women: 79.4 per cent), which was higher than the national rate, at 76.2 per cent (men: 81.1 per cent, women: 71.4 per cent). Nine ethnic minority groups had a high rate of labour force participation, at 90 per cent or more. Some of them include the Co Lao group with 94.8 per cent (men: 94.4 per cent, women: 95.2 per cent), Lu group with 94.1 per cent (men: 95.4 per cent, women: 92.8 per cent), and the Cong group with

91.9 per cent (men: 92.5 per cent, women: 91.4 per cent)¹⁷. These were also the ethnic minority groups with a high proportion of population engaged in the agricultural and forestry sector. Ethnic minority people often start to participate in agricultural and forestry production with their family when they are attending lower secondary school. Moreover, ethnic minority people tend to continue working even when they reach the retirement age.

17 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019 and Results of the Labour Force Survey 2019.

Female ethnic minority workers were engaged in more unstable and vulnerable jobs than male ethnic minority workers and Kinh female workers. Up to 76.4 per cent of female ethnic minority workers were working in the agricultural and forestry sector, which was nearly six percentage points higher than that of ethnic minority male workers (70.5 per cent) and twice as high as that of female workers nationwide (35.9 per cent). 24 ethnic minority groups had a rate of female workers working in agriculture and forestry of over 90 per cent.¹⁸ In terms of employment status, the proportion of female ethnic minority workers doing 'unpaid household work' was 52.0 per cent, which was almost twice as high as that of ethnic minority male workers (26.6 per cent) and 2.5 times higher than that of female workers nationwide (19.4 per cent)¹⁹. This represents an unstable employment group with poorer working conditions than that of employment in other sectors. Moreover, people engaged in this kind of work are not eligible for compulsory social insurance, unemployment insurance or health insurance.

There are many barriers for female ethnic minority workers to move out of employment in the agriculture and forestry sector and access wage employment in local factories, businesses, and industrial zones or even going to work abroad. The reasons include: (i) due to their gender roles, ethnic minority women are still more involved in unpaid housework and family care than ethnic minority men; (ii) stereotypes against women working away from home persist in some ethnic minority groups; (iii) ethnic minority women are illiterate, highly re-illiterate,²⁰ and unable to communicate in the national language (Vietnamese), low educated, and restricted to technical and professional training; (iv) ethnic minority women lack fundamental skills such as communication skills, information technology and lack understanding of labour and employment laws and policies, etc. for safe and effective labour migration.

18 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019.

19 GSO. 2019. Results of the Labour Force Survey 2019.

20 Currently, women aged over 35 years old in some ethnic minority groups are unable to understand a simple sentence in Vietnamese or speak a simple sentence in Vietnamese; inability to read and write a simple sentence in Vietnamese; or in the past they had this ability but now they cannot do it.

Finding irregular employment beyond the national border is a last resort for disadvantaged female ethnic minority workers.

For disadvantaged female ethnic minority workers who fail to meet the recruitment conditions in local factories and enterprises or to work abroad under fixed-term contracts, would need to find irregular employment beyond the national border, which is becoming an increasing trend.²¹ Although this employment choice might bring immediate income to disadvantaged ethnic minority women, it often brings many risks, in particular that of human trafficking, when working abroad illegally.

Recent studies on the livelihoods of ethnic minority households in ethnic minority and mountainous areas all show that, ***the level of access to opportunities for livelihood development and income generation of ethnic minority women is far less than that of ethnic minority men***²² because they experience a ‘double disadvantage’ – that of ethnicity and gender. Lessons learned from the development of value chains for poor and ethnic minority people indicate that the identification

of value chains with many female beneficiaries and women’s participation in key positions in production groups and start-up activities are important factors affecting desired outcomes.²³ However, ethnic minority women’s participation in key positions often face more difficulties and challenges than men do. These challenges may include financial barriers, competitiveness, limited mobility, family relationships, lack of professional training and an inability to cope with risk.²⁴



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Aiden Dockery

21 World Bank, 2019. Research Report: Drivers of Socio-economic development among ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam

22 Research paper by CEMA and WB (2019), CEMA, Irish Aid, UNW (2017) based on the 2015 Survey on the Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups.

23 As in the projects funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT): WEAVE Project by CARE, Oxfam, SNV (implemented in Lao Cai and Bac Kan) or the GREAT Project (implemented in Son La and Lao Cai)

24 Dr Nguyen Thi Thanh Tam and Trinh Thi Nhuan, MSc. of the Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business Administration – Hanoi Trade University. Drivers and barriers faced by Vietnamese women in their start-up process.

1.3 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Increasing opportunities for disadvantaged ethnic minority women to access and benefit from policies, services and resources, with respect to economic development and labour market assistance, to improve their employment and economic status.

Solutions for recommendation 1:

Solution 1:

Reinforcing communication and propaganda to raise the awareness of ethnic minority men and women about equal rights in land and property ownership and equal participation in economic decisions in their household and community. In addition, promoting capacity building training for ethnic minority women so they possess sufficient knowledge and skills to achieve full access to property rights and equal participation in their household and community. Thus, gender equality can be realized.

Solution 2:

Strengthening support for women of the most vulnerable ethnic minority groups to gain equal access to, and enjoy the resources of, the National Target Program for Socio-Economic Development

in Ethnic Minority and Rural Areas in the period of 2021 to 2030. Specifically: Ensuring gender mainstreaming in Project 3 entitled ***Development of agricultural and forestry production to bring into full play the strengths and potential of regions for commodity production in line with the value chain***:

- (i) stipulating the proportion of ethnic minority women and men participating in the planning and implementation of the activities of the Project 3. The proportion should not be less than 30 per cent for each gender in the 2021-2025 period and not less than 40 per cent for each gender in the 2026-2030 period;
- (ii) at least 30 per cent of the budget of the 3 components of the Project 3 to be allocated to: projects, models, and activities proposed and implemented by poor households headed by ethnic minority women and single mothers, production and cooperation groups headed by women and cooperatives and enterprises owned or co-owned by women;
- (iii) it should organize training courses to improve knowledge and skills for the most vulnerable groups of ethnic minority women, such as middle-aged women who cannot speak, read and write the national language, women with low educational attainment and/or

raising small children, in terms of science and technology, cost estimate and the production of goods along with the value chains. The training courses should be gender responsive, suitable to the needs and practical conditions of disadvantaged ethnic minority women. This would include: the facilitation of training and practice in ethnic minority languages, mentoring, in-field practices, longer training time and cost support or babysitting arrangements during ethnic minority women's participation in the training courses.

- (iv) building capacity for ethnic minority women who are the owners of businesses, production - business - services establishments and cooperatives in ethnic minority and mountainous areas in terms of foreign language skills and the ability to access domestic and foreign market information.

Solution 3:

Strengthening the provision of information on migration, including propaganda and services to support safe labour migration and the prevention of human trafficking for female ethnic minority workers and those female ethnic minority workers who have been involved in or are at risk of irregular migration. Forms of support may include counselling on career orientation, vocational

training, job placement, working abroad under fixed-term contracts, legal aid in industrial relations; financial management and sending remittances home; and counselling to deal with crises and difficulties in the labour migration process as well as providing services to support trafficked victims.

Solution 4:

Promoting the participation of ethnic minority women, and their representative organizations, in the process of formulating, governing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies, programs and projects to support the development of productive activities, job creation and job transition in ethnic minority areas. Specifically, based on the context of gender inequality in ethnic minority areas to (i) regulate the proportion of ethnic minority men and women participating in the process of formulating, governing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies, programs and projects; and (ii) piloting models to support ethnic minority women's participation in the process of formulating, governing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies, programs and projects. After piloting the models, it is necessary to review; drawing on good practice and replicate it.



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Aiden Dockery

2

GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 GENDER ISSUES IN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE

There has been a reversal in the gender gap in access to education between ethnic minority boys and girls. In the past, ethnic minority girls had a lower rate of attending school at the stipulated age. They also dropped out of schools more than ethnic minority boys. However, in recent years, this trend has gradually reversed. Currently, ethnic minority girls have a higher rate of attending school at the stipulated age and a lower school dropout rate than ethnic minority boys.

The school attendance rate at the stipulated age²⁵ of ethnic minority girls was higher than that of ethnic minority boys at all educational levels. The higher the educational level of ethnic minority children the greater the gender difference experienced. At the primary level, the gap was only 0.2 percentage points; however, at the lower secondary level, this gap increased to 3.3 percentage points, and at the upper secondary level, the gap reached 7.5 percentage points²⁶.

In the 10 years since the 2009 Population and Housing Census, the proportion of ethnic minority children dropping out of school²⁷ decreased from 26.4 per cent in 2009 to 15.5 per cent in 2019. However, the school dropout rate of the 53 ethnic minority groups was nearly twice as high as the national rate and almost three times higher than the corresponding rate of the Kinh ethnic group. The proportion of ethnic minority boys school dropout was higher than that of ethnic minority girls. The difference was 1.9 percentage points (16.4 per cent vs. 14.5 per cent). The reasons for ethnic minority children school dropout include early engagement in economic activities, child marriage or the long distance from home to schools.

Access to quality education continues to be a challenge for ethnic minority children.

The proportion of preschool children in ethnic minority and mountainous areas in the period of 2011 to 2019 was 56.2 per cent (nationwide: 88.5 per cent); the rate of children attending kindergarten was 11.8 per cent (nationwide:

25 The rate of school attendance rate at the stipulated (compulsory) age is the number of school-age students of a general education level participating in that level over 100 school-age people of that level. The general school attendance rate is the number of students participating in a level of general education (regardless of age) over 100 school-aged people of that level.

26 GSO. 2019. Results of the Population and Housing Census 2019.

27 Out-of-school ethnic minority children are those who are at high school age (born in the period of 2001 to 2012) but have never gone to school or have quit school. The proportion of out-of-school ethnic minority children represents the number of ethnic minority children at the age of attending general education but not attending school out of the total ethnic minority population of this age group.

25.8 per cent)²⁸. Ethnic minority children are not proficient in the Vietnamese language while teachers have limited ethnic minority language skills, this has hindered children's attendance at kindergartens and reduced the quality and efficacy of preschool education in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

The average distance to high schools for ethnic minority children was 10.9 km. Children of 14 out of the 53 ethnic minority groups had to travel a distance of between 20km to more than 50 km along craggy mountainous roads to go to school²⁹. In the 2018-2019 school year, there were a total of 316 boarding schools for ethnic minority students in 49 provinces/cities and 1,097 semi-boarding schools in 28 provinces/cities, of which, 15 per cent were certified to meet the national standard. The more mountainous and remote the area, the more fragmented the school and class system. Moreover, the rate of permanent or solid schools and classes reduces accordingly. Mixed schools and classes continue to operate in several ethnic

minority and mountainous areas. There are areas which still have temporary classrooms while the availability of functional rooms is restricted. In general, sanitary facilities are inadequate and there is a lack of amenities providing potable water. The system of ethnic boarding and semi-boarding schools lacks accommodation, kitchens, potable water, and sanitary facilities. Young teachers lack practical experience, so their ability to advocate for improved school attendance of ethnic minority students remains limited. These teachers also have little knowledge of ethnic minority culture and they lack ethnic language skills, so they face significant difficulty in fulfilling their professional duties³⁰. Teaching in ethnic minority languages has not been extensively deployed. Only a few ethnic languages have been used in ethnic minority schools and classes³¹. Education in ethnic minority group cultures in ethnic minority and mountainous schools still has many limitations in developing and implementing educational programs and materials. Thus, educational quality has not met the national standard³².

28 Ministry of Education and Training. The summary report on 10 years of implementation of the Viet Nam Education Development Strategy for the 2011-2020 period.

29 The average distance to high schools was 10.9 km. Children of 14 ethnic minorities had to cross the distance from 20 to more than 50 km through craggy mountain roads to go to schools.

30 Ministry of Education and Training. Report on 10 years of implementation of the Viet Nam Education Development Strategy 2011-2020.

31 From 2011 to 2020, ethnic minority language teaching was officially deployed in 756 high schools for 5,267 classes or 174,562 students in 22 provinces/ cities with six ethnic minority languages (Mong, Ede, Gia Rai, Ba Na, Cham and Khmer).

32 Ministry of Education and Training. Report on 10 years of implementation of the Viet Nam Education Development Strategy 2011-2020.

Literacy rate in the national language³³ of ethnic minority people reached 80.9 per cent (men: 86.7 per cent, women: 75.1 per cent), which was significantly lower than the corresponding rate of Kinh ethnic group (men: 97.0 per cent, women: 94.6 per cent)³⁴. The higher the age groups, the lower the proportions of ethnic minority people, in particular, ethnic minority women, that can read and write Vietnamese. In the age group 35-44, 30.3 per cent of ethnic minority women could not read or write Vietnamese³⁵. A significant obstacle for middle-aged ethnic minority women who wish to participate in the vocational training, agricultural, forestry and fishery extension courses that are regularly held in their localities.

Most of the current educational and vocational education policies for ethnic minority students claim to be 'gender neutral'. Nevertheless, although these policies do not directly address women or men, they can exacerbate existing gender inequalities in education and vocational training. For instance, the Education Law (2019) and the Law on Vocational Education (2014)

regulate a number of measures to narrow gaps in access to general education and vocational education for ethnic minority people yet most of the provisions are 'gender neutral' rather than gender responsive.³⁶ The Law on Gender Equality (2006) contains provisions on ensuring gender equality in the field of education yet it fails to address specific gender issues existing in ethnic minority groups.



33 Ability to read and write a simple sentence in the national language (Vietnamese)

34 General Statistics Office. The 2019 Population and Housing Census.

35 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019.

36 Gender-neutral policies are believed to affect both genders; however, they can have different effects on women and men, in particular, for the disadvantaged groups. Gender-neutral policies do not promote gender equality. For more information, please see the European Institute for Gender Equality and Canadian Public Health Agency - Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response. Gender Mainstreaming in Emergency Management: Opportunities for building community resilience in Canada, 2008.

2.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 2.

Ensuring access to quality education and training for ethnic minorities and people and narrow gender gaps in this field.

Solutions for recommendation 2

Solution 1:

Promoting the mobilization of ethnic minority children to attend school at all educational levels, from preschool to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools.

- To mobilize ethnic minority boys and girls who are at risk of school dropout not to engage in economic activities and child marriage. Based on their actual situations, local authorities need to propose feasible solutions, in which, they should combine efforts in communication, propaganda, and advocacy for raising public awareness and supporting ethnic minority households in economic development and income improvement.
- Strengthening vocational education and quality employment counselling activities for

ethnic minority children at lower and upper secondary schools.

- Promoting career orientation services for ethnic minority students graduating from lower secondary schools; guiding individual ethnic minority students to choose a vocational education institution relevant to the demands of the local labour market. Specific guidance should be given to the students who intend working in the local market or going abroad to work on contract.

Solution 2:

Ensuring opportunities for ethnic minority preschool children, boys and girls, to have equal access to incentive policies on enrolment and study support.³⁷

Specifically:

- Ensuring that the proportion of men and women subject to the incentive policies on enrolment and study support in cash does not exceed 60 per cent for each gender;
- Determining the prioritized enrolment rate must be based on the gender inequality status in each locality and by gender (male-female);

³⁷ According to Decree No. 57/2017/ND-CP stipulating the incentive policies on enrolment and study support for ethnic minority students at preschools, primary, secondary schools, colleges and universities. Specifically, ethnic minority students are given priority to study at appropriate educational institutions according to their expectations (they are admitted directly without attending entrance exams). They are also eligible for study support in cash. The level of support is varied depending on the level of education and is estimated according to the base salary announced annually by the Government.

- Developing and maintaining a gender responsive monitoring and evaluation system for the work of prioritized enrolment and the provision of study support for ethnic minority students.

Solution 3:

Promoting the development of a quality preschool system in ethnic minority areas to ensure 100 per cent of ethnic minority children aged 4 and 5 years attend school; assisting ethnic minority children to acquire essential Vietnamese language skills before attending primary school.

Solution 4:

Promoting the development of physical conditions to ensure the quality of education in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

- Focusing on investing in essential school facilities such as functional classrooms, sanitary toilets, and sanitary water.
- Boarding and semi-boarding schools for ethnic minority students must guarantee sufficient accommodation, kitchens, sanitary facilities, and potable water; ensuring security and safety to meet specific needs of both ethnic minority boys and girls.
- Strengthening education on the prevention of all forms of violence, including gender-based violence in schools, in particular, in boarding and semi-boarding schools.

Solution 5:

Facilitating the teaching of ethnic minority languages in all ethnic minority areas; increasing the number of ethnic minority languages taught (currently six ethnic minority languages taught); promoting the development of ethnic minority language teaching materials and programs that meet national standards.

Solution 6:

Taking into consideration the application of measures to promote gender equality in access to vocational education, agriculture - forestry - fishery extension studies for middle-aged ethnic minority women who cannot speak, read and write in the Vietnamese language; organizing more training courses relevant to the needs and practical conditions of ethnic minority women, which focus on in-field practices, developing training materials in ethnic minority languages, using visual aids such as pictures and video clips.

Solution 7:

promoting gender-segregated data collection and analysis in education and training to detect emerging/deteriorating gender issues, making recommendations and introducing solutions to address specific gender issues.



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Aiden Dockery

3

GENDER ISSUES IN HEALTH CARE

3.1. GENDER ISSUES IN THE HEALTH CARE OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE

Although general health care and reproductive health for ethnic minority women have made significant progress in recent years, significant gaps persist in comparison with Kinh and Hoa ethnic women.

In recent years, the health sector has focused its efforts on improving the quality of reproductive health care services in ethnic minority and mountainous areas. Actions taken include developing and training a contingent of midwives, obstetricians and paediatricians in commune health clinics; training and using village midwives who are ethnic minority women; providing birth delivery packages and promoting the implementation of the 'Safe motherhood' project³⁸.

According to the results of the 2019 Population and Housing Census, the maternal mortality rate decreased to 46 per 100,000 live births in 2019, a decrease of 23 cases per 100,000 live births compared to 2009. Even so, this rate was three

times higher in ethnic minority and mountainous areas. Moreover, in several ethnic minority groups this rate was four times higher than the corresponding rate of Kinh ethnic women.³⁹

The number of pregnant ethnic minority women aged 10-49 who visited health facilities for antenatal care in 2019 was 88.0 per cent, an increase of 17.1 per cent compared to that in 2015⁴⁰; however, it was significantly lower than the corresponding rate for Kinh women (99 per cent)⁴¹.

The proportion of ethnic minority women aged 10-49 giving birth at home and without professional support in 2019 dropped to 9.5 per cent, a sharp decrease of 26.8 percentage points compared to that in 2015; however, it was significantly higher than the rate of Kinh women (0.5 per cent)⁴².

The proportion of ethnic minority women aged 10-49 giving birth at health clinics was 86.4 per cent, an increase of 22.8 per cent compared to that in 2015, but it was significantly lower than the corresponding rate of Kinh women (over 99 per cent). Notably, the difference between urban and rural areas was

38 Report of the Ministry of Health on the implementation of national target program on gender equality in 2018.

39 Report of the Ministry of Health on the implementation of national target program on gender in 2019.

40 In 2015, this indicator was calculated for the population aged 12-49 years; in 2019 this indicator was calculated for the population aged 10-49 years.

41 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019.

42 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019.

12.8 percentage points (urban areas: 98.0 per cent vs. rural areas: 85.2 per cent). Moreover, disparities between socio-economic regions were large. The rate of ethnic minority women aged 10-49 giving birth at health clinics in the Central Highlands was 84.2 per cent or 14.2 percentage points lower than the corresponding rate of the Mekong River Delta region, at 98.4 per cent. There were three ethnic minority groups where the proportion of women giving birth at health clinics was less than 50 per cent. They include the Mong group with 49.6 per cent, Mang group with 44.5 per cent and La Hu group with 34.7 per cent.⁴³ The reasons why ethnic minority women did not give birth at health clinics include precarious travelling conditions, poor economic circumstances and customary practices that do not permit ethnic minority women to give birth in health facilities.

The causes of the disparities in access to health care between ethnic minority women and Kinh and Hoa ethnic women include: (i) limitations and weaknesses of the health system in ethnic minority areas. Commune health clinics have limited capacity in providing general and reproductive healthcare to meet the needs of ethnic minority men and women. (ii) Existing language barriers between health workers and ethnic minority

people; (iii) long-standing cultural practices of several ethnic minority groups do not allow women to go to health clinics for antenatal care and birth delivery; (iv) women wish to only be examined by a female health worker but the health clinics only have male workers; (v) ethnic minority people are unable to pay for health costs; and (vi) in some mountainous areas, travelling conditions are poor; and the long distance from ethnic minority households to medical facilities is a serious obstacle to ethnic minority women visiting health facilities for antenatal care and birthing.⁴⁴

3.2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking measures to promote substantial gender equality and eliminate multifaceted discrimination against ethnic minority women in the process of accessing maternal, infant and child health services.

Recommendation 3:

Further reducing the maternal mortality rate and strengthening health care for ethnic minority infants and children through improving the quality and availability of maternal and child health care services in ethnic minority areas.

43 GSO, 2019. Survey on Socio-Economic Situation of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups of Viet Nam 2019.

44 Nicola Jones, *Double risk: social norms based on ethnicity and gender have shaped the lives of H'mong teenage girls in Viet Nam.*

Solution 1:

Increasing ethnic minority women's access to quality maternal health care services before, during and after birth delivery. This includes improving the quality, the geographical coverage as well as the cultural and language relevance of reproductive health, maternal and child healthcare services in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

Solution 2:

Strengthening communication and propaganda activities, raising awareness for ethnic minority people, especially ethnic minority women of reproductive age regarding reproductive health care, maternal, infant and child health care; mobilizing ethnic minority people to practice birthing with the support of trained medical workers and ensure appropriate nutrition for the physical and mental development of children in line with age growth patterns.

Solution 3:

Allocating sufficient resources from the national budget for health care, with an emphasis on ethnic minority mothers and children.

Solution 4:

Further strengthening the capacity of the grassroots health care system in ethnic minority and mountainous areas to provide flexible,

accessible, and free, quality reproductive health care services for ethnic minority women and men, in particular those in the adolescent group. The services include counselling and provision of family planning measures; mobilizing them to participate in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV; and preventing and treating sexually transmitted diseases.

Solution 5:

Equipping health workers with the requisite knowledge and skills for ethnic minority areas regarding gender equality, ethnic minority languages and ethnic minority cultural adaptation in reproductive health care for ethnic minority men and women, in maternal and child health care.



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Aiden Dockery



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Aiden Dockery

4

UNDERAGE AND CHILD MARRIAGE

Underage and child marriage⁴⁵ threatens the present and future lives of women and girls around the world, depriving them of the right to self-determination, losing their educational and training opportunities; making them more vulnerable to violence, discrimination and abuse; limiting their participation in the economic, political and social spheres. Moreover, underage and child marriage are often associated with early pregnancy and a high birth rate, leading to increased maternal mortality.⁴⁶

4.1 CHILD MARRIAGE IN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS

Child marriage among ethnic minority groups has been reduced but it is still a complex issue. Some ethnic minority groups have a child marriage rate of over 50 per cent. Although banned under the Law on Marriage and Family, child marriage and consanguineous marriage persists among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam, causing many health related problems, negatively influencing the quality of human resources, and is one of the obstacles to the sustainable socio-economic development of ethnic minority areas.

The results of the Survey on the Socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minority groups in 2019 show that, the proportion of child marriage in ethnic minority areas in 2018 was 21.9 per cent, a decrease of 4.7 percentage points compared to 26.6 per cent in 2014. However, the rate of child marriage remains high in the regions with an elevated concentration of ethnic minority groups. For instance, the Central Highlands had a child marriage rate of 27.5 per cent, the Northern Midland and Mountainous region, at 24.6 per cent and the North Central and Central Coast, at 22.4 per cent. By ethnic group, the highest rate of child marriage belongs to the Mong group with 51.5 per cent (men: 52.7 per cent, women: 50.4 per cent), Co Lao group with 47.8 per cent (men: 34.0 per cent, women 63.0 per cent), Mang group with 47.2 per cent (men: 42.7 per cent, women: 50.7 per cent), Xinh Mun group with 44.8 per cent (men: 42.5 per cent, women: 46.9 per cent), Ma group with 39.2 per cent (men: 31.7 per cent, women: 51.3 per cent). The rate of child marriage among ethnic minority women was higher than that of ethnic minority men (men: 20.1 per cent, women: 23.5 per cent). By technical and

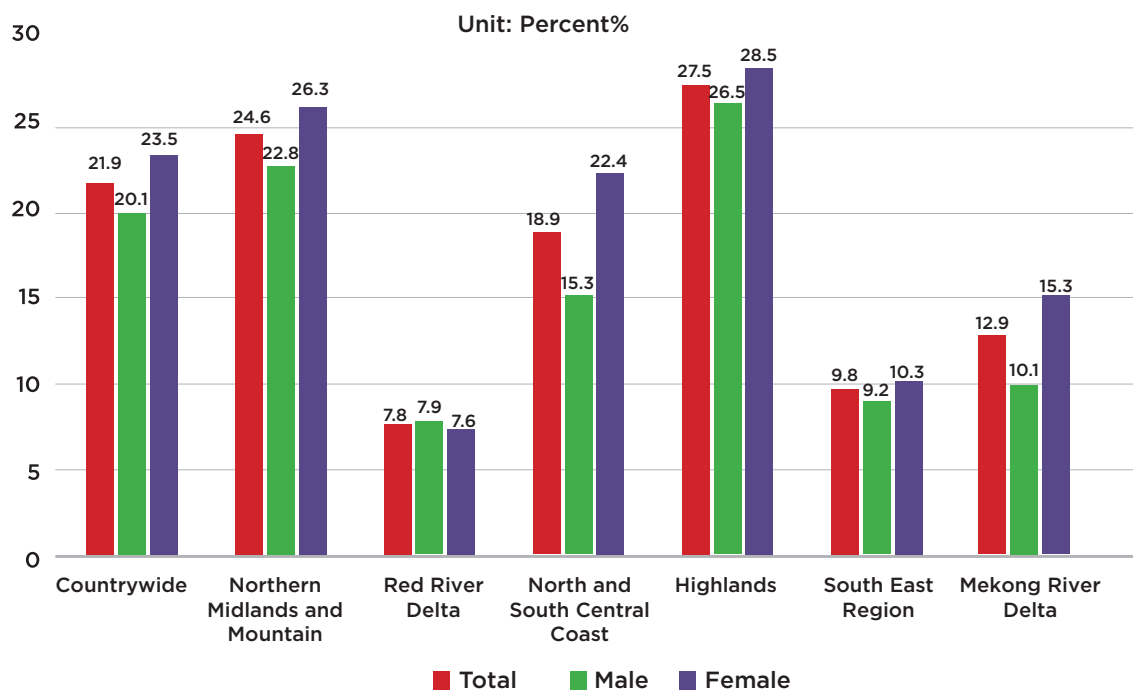
45 Law No. 102/2016 /QH13 on Children, Article 1: Children are the people under 16 years old

46 United Nations, Child, early and forced marriage, including in humanitarian settings (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/ChildMarriage.aspx>)

professional qualification⁴⁷, only 1.1 per cent of ethnic minority people engaged in child marriage had technical qualifications while the proportion of ethnic minority people that did not engage in child marriage was nearly 18 times higher (18.8 per

cent). In 31 of the 53 ethnic minority groups 100 per cent of its unskilled population engaged in child marriage. The mean age of ethnic people engaged in child marriage in 2018 was 17.5 years for men and 15.8 years for women.

Figure 2. Child marriages rate of EM people by sex and socio-economic region, 2018



Source: GSO. Results of the Surveys on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minority groups in 2019.

47 According to the General Statistics Office, professional and technical qualifications include elementary, intermediate, college and university or higher. A person is recognized to have an "Elementary" level, if he/she been trained and certified as completing the elementary or vocational training for less than 3 months. A person is recognized to have an "Intermediate" level, if he/she been trained and certified as completing the professional intermediate or vocational intermediate training. A person is recognized to have a "College" degree, if he/she been professionally and technically trained and granted a diploma as a college or vocational college. A person is recognized to have a degree of "University or higher", if he/she has been trained and granted a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree.

Consequences of child marriage: Engaging in child marriage, getting pregnant and giving birth to children in adolescence when the mothers' body has not fully developed, in addition to the lack of basic reproductive health knowledge, experience and psychological preparedness to have a child has adversely affected maternal health and the normal development of fetuses and newborn babies.⁴⁸ This is also a cause of the increase in the malnutrition rate among ethnic minority children⁴⁹ and the mortality rate among children under 1 and under 5 years old.⁵⁰ Child marriage has also led to an increase in the maternal mortality rate among ethnic minority mothers.⁵¹

Causes of child marriage: Child marriage among ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam is a contextual issue shaped by historical context and changes in political, economic and social life. This is not merely a social issue but also concurs simultaneously with

the cultural practices of ethnic minority groups. In other words, ethnic culture is a contributing factor to an increase in child marriage⁵². Some specific causes include: (i) Economic hardship is a factor leading to child marriage among ethnic minority groups. Because of unfavourable natural conditions for livelihood development, persistent poverty in ethnic minority and mountainous areas continues to make child marriage a coping mechanism and as such becomes a "strategy" for livelihood security⁵³. Marriage is synonymous with creating livelihood security. After getting married, ethnic minority girls would become the principal home workers in their husband's families and are responsible for most of housework and family care⁵⁴; (ii) Harmful beliefs, customs and practices of ethnic minority groups continue to underwrite the pressures on child marriage and consanguineous marriage among ethnic minority people. Social

48 Ngo Thi Van Phong, 2019. *Child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas*.

49 World Bank and National Nutrition Institute. 2019. Report *Persistent Malnutrition in Ethnic Minority Communities in Viet Nam: Problems and Solutions*: one in three ethnic minority children is physically stunted and 1 in 5 children are underweight.

50 General Statistics Office, 2019. Results of the 2019 Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities show that the infant mortality rate (IMR) of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 was 22.13 ‰; in which, for males was 24.82‰ and for females was 19.29‰. There is quite a big difference in IMR among ethnic groups. IMR of La Hu ethnic group was the highest among ethnic minorities (66.23‰) or 5.5 times higher than IMR of Hoa ethnic group (11.94 ‰).

51 UN Women and Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (2015). A summary on the situation of ethnic minority women and girls in Viet Nam. The maternal mortality ratio in some ethnic minority groups (Mong, Thai, Ba Na, Tay, Dao, Nung), was still four times higher than that of Kinh and Hoa ethnic women.

52 UN Women and Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, 2018. Policy briefs to promote gender equality among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

53 iSEE Viet Nam, 2019. *Child marriage in some ethnic minority communities in Viet Nam: An analysis from an anthropological perspective*.

54 The report presented in *the National Workshop on Preventing and Ending Underage and child marriage: Lessons Learned from Practices*, pages 8, 9. Committee for Ethnic Minorities and UN Women, June 2017.

pressures can influence a girls' decision to get married early. These pressures are often related to protecting their family honour. Under economic and family pressures, parents in ethnic minority households often agree to their children's marriage decisions, even though they have not reached marriageable age as prescribed by law. Marriage can be seen as the expectation to fulfil gender roles. In many cases, children are the ones who make the decision to get married early despite their parents' objections. Girls often decide to get married early when they are concerned about the difficulty of getting married when they are older⁵⁵; (iii) socio-economic life in ethnic minority and mountainous areas keeps embracing modernization, which is increasing the risk of child marriage, and increasing the risks and vulnerabilities for ethnic minority children. In recent years, in ethnic minority and northern regions, there has been solid investments in developing information technology and internet infrastructure. In addition, personal technological devices such as mobile phones, computers connected to the

internet, social networking sites and modern entertainment services are now common and are a strong attraction for ethnic minority youth. Ethnic minority children are increasingly exposed to harmful information from the internet and influenced by snobbish lifestyle and 'disguised' unhealthy local entertainment services such as billiards and karaoke while, they are not well supervised and educated by their parents and schools. This is also a further cause of child marriage⁵⁶; (iv) Legal regulations on prohibiting and punishing the act of child marriage is not effective⁵⁷. It is difficult for local authorities in ethnic minority and mountainous areas to monitor or control the cohabitation of underage married couples. The imposition of bans sometimes creates conflicts between local authorities and ethnic minority communities as well as among community members.⁵⁸ Local authority accountability for handling and intervening in child marriage cases lacks both strength and determination. While law enforcement officials at the grassroots level have failed to rigorously address this type of

55 UN Women and Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, 2018. Policy briefs to promote gender equality among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

56 iSEE Viet Nam, 2019. *Child marriage in some ethnic minority communities in Viet Nam: An analysis from an anthropological perspective*.

57 *Law on Marriage and Family* (2014), Article 10, Article 10, Clause 3 stipulates, «Individuals, agencies and organizations, if detecting an illegal marriage, have the right to request the agencies and organizations stipulated at Points b, c and d, Clause 2 of this Article to make a request to the Court to cancel the illegal marriage.» In case of applying administrative sanction: Article 47 of the Decree No. 110/2013/ND-CP stipulates the act of child marriage and the organization of underage marriage as follows: "Warning or applying a fine of 500,000 VND to 1,000,000 VND for the act of organizing marriage or getting married for a person under marriage age; a fine from 1,000,000 VND to 3,000,000 VND shall be imposed for deliberately maintaining the illegal marital relationship with the person under the age of marriage, despite the decision of the People's Court that has forced the termination of that relationship". The Decree No. 82/2020/ND-CP additionally stipulates that "a fine of 1,000,000 VND to 3,000,000 VND shall be imposed for the organization of marriage for a person under marriageable age; A fine of from 3,000,000 VND to 5,000,000 VND shall be imposed for the unlawful maintenance of a husband or wife relationship with a person under the age of marriage despite the legally effective court judgment or decision".

58 UN Women and Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, 2018. Policy briefs to promote gender equality among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

violation. The most common measures which local authorities have used to address child marriage include applying administrative punishments and not allowing the child couples to apply for marriage registration certificates. When there are intentional violations of legal regulations on child marriage, local governmental bodies are often passive and fail to address the issue⁵⁹; (v) Ethnic minority people, for their part, are still ill-informed with respect to the Law on Marriage and Family and their responsibility for complying with state laws.⁶⁰ Furthermore, ethnic minority people are not entirely aware of the consequences of child marriage⁶¹.

4.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 4A:

It is necessary to adopt a multidimensional comprehensive approach to develop a sustainable intervention strategy for underage and child marriage in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

Solution 1:

Empowering ethnic minority girls, targeting ethnic minority girls as the key intervention groups

in the strategies for combating child marriage in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; increasing access to information and education for ethnic minority people aged between 13 and 18 years on reproductive health and marriage. The information and communication methods need to be commensurate with the cultural characteristics of the different ethnic minority groups in both schools and the community; universalizing the notion and use of contraception in ethnic minority groups; ensuring that ethnic minority youth (men and women) have the ability to access quality services on reproductive healthcare; psychological and sexual counselling services; safe shelters and other social services.

Solution 2:

Increasing ethnic minority boy and girl children's access to good employment opportunities in the labour market and in community activities. Specifically, expanding opportunities for ethnic minority children to participate in quality and age-appropriate vocational courses; creating opportunities for them to access quality jobs.

59 Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs. 2020. Preliminary Report on 5-year implementation of the Prime Minister's Decision No. 498/QĐ-TTg dated April 14, 2015 on the Project on minimizing the status of child and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas (the period of 2015 to 2020) and implementing the tasks for the period of 2021 to 2025.

60 Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs. 2020. Preliminary Report on 5-year implementation of the Prime Minister's Decision No. 498/QĐ-TTg dated April 14, 2015 on the Project on minimizing the status of child and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas (the period of 2015 to 2020) and implementing the tasks for the period of 2021 to 2025.

61 Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs. 2020. Preliminary Report on 5-year implementation of the Prime Minister's Decision No. 498/QĐ-TTg dated April 14, 2015 on the Project on minimizing the status of child and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas (the period of 2015 to 2020) and implementing the tasks for the period of 2021 to 2025.

Solution 3:

Increasing the participation of ethnic minority boy and girl children in the decision-making processes related to children; initiating capacity building for children so that both boys and girls can be confident and independent when attending schools and community activities.

Solution 4:

Expanding the provision of counselling and intervention support services for ethnic minority men and women under 18 years old; revising the legal provision age of Vietnamese children which should be under 18 years old rather than 'under 16 years old' as stated in current regulations⁶². Reinforcing the technical support and providing guidelines for officials of local socio-political agencies and organizations to perform their duties of investigating and detecting potential cases of child marriage effectively; while providing timely and effective counselling and intervention services to prevent child marriage.

Solution 5:

Closely collaborating and judiciously sharing information across the relevant ministries, agencies and organizations are the basic conditions for the successful application of a multi-dimensional, comprehensive and sustainable approach in the prevention and control of child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

Solution 6:

There is a need to ensure the planning and implementation of cultural and gender responsive strategies, solutions and interventions. Boys and girls, the families and communities need to be equally and substantially involved in the entire process of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

Solution 7:

Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of planning and implementing the strategies and policies to guarantee their enforcement; the timely detecting of disadvantaged people to participate in, and benefit from, the strategies and interventions on preventing and combating child and consanguineous marriage.

RECOMMENDATION 4B:

Promoting effective communication on child marriage in ethnic minority and mountainous areas

- Analysing the needs of male and female groups in ethnic minority communities before developing training plans, content, methods as well as the relevant training and communication materials on minimizing child marriage in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.
- Compiling communication materials that are simple, succinct, easy to understand, and suitable for the staff and the community people in the ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

62 Law on Children (2016), Article 1 stipulates "a child is a person under 16 years old".

The materials should be compiled and translated into ethnic minority languages; giving priority to translating the materials into ethnic minority languages of those groups with a high incidence of child marriage and the ethnic minority groups having their own written scripts such as Mong, Khmer, Gia Rai, Ede, Ba Na, Cham, Co Ho, Co Tu, Bru Van Kieu, Xo Dang, Muong , etc.

- The forms of publicity must target a particular ethnic minority audience and ethnic minority area. Moreover, they should be associated with the situations arising in daily life, consistent with the customs and culture of ethnic minority groups. It is crucial to use information technology for the dissemination of information and publicity.
- Promoting the role of local reporters, communicators and propaganda collaborators to coordinate the dissemination and education of the Law on Marriage and Family, Law on Children, Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, Law on Gender Equality, Regulations on Population and Family and other related documents. Coordinating with border guards, associations, unions, village elders, reputable people, and village heads in ethnic minority areas to combine the propaganda and communication on child and consanguineous marriage with the propaganda on family planning and sex education.

RECOMMENDATION 4C:

Conducting comprehensive and in-depth research on the situation and causes of child and consanguineous marriage in each community, each ethnic group, and each locality (research, mapping and evaluation) to obtain qualitative information as a basis for proposing appropriate strategies, interventions and responses. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods is needed to accurately identify the causes of child and consanguineous marriage in different communities and localities.⁶³

Specific studies that might be implemented include: (i) research on sexual behaviour, reproductive health and sexual health; social norms related to marriage, child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority communities; (ii) case studies on less common forms of child and consanguineous marriage (for example, child and consanguineous marriage in urban areas, among Kinh ethnic people, amongst well-educated groups), through which, an overall picture of the situation of child and consanguineous marriage in Viet Nam can be drawn; (iii) In addition, studies on harmful norms and practices which are negatively affecting child and consanguineous marriage. It is necessary to study beneficial norms and practices to engage the whole community in the elimination of child and consanguineous marriage.

63 For example, the research using an anthropological approach was conducted by iSEE in 2018.



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Aiden Dockery

5

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

5.1 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS

Violence against women in general and against ethnic minority women, in particular, perpetrated by their husbands or partners is the most common form of violence that women experience. Forms of violence include physical, sexual, emotional, economic, and psychological violence. Results of the *National Survey on Violence against Women in Viet Nam in 2019* show that, violence perpetrated by husbands partners over a woman's lifetime and in the past 12 months⁶⁴, was significantly different amongst ethnicities. Of the 5 aforementioned forms of violence perpetrated by husbands/ partners, the proportion of ethnic minority women experiencing physical and/or sexual and emotional violence (in their lifetime and in the past 12 months) was both lower than the corresponding national rate and the rate of Kinh ethnic women. In contrast, the proportion of ethnic minority women exposed to behavioural control and economic violence was higher than the corresponding national rate and the rate of Kinh ethnic women.



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Aiden Dockery

64 Results of the National Survey on Violence against Women in Vietnam in 2019: A Journey to Change

The proportion of ethnic minority women who experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by their husbands/partners in their lifetime (29.4 per cent) and in the past 12 months (8.3 per cent) were lower than the corresponding national rate (32.0 per cent and 8.9 per cent, respectively) and lower than the corresponding rate of Kinh ethnic women (32.7 per cent and 8.3 per cent, respectively). In particular, amongst some ethnic minority groups this rate was much lower than the national rate. They include the Mong group (with 12.2 per cent and 4.8 per cent, respectively), Khmer group (with 14.6 per cent and 5.9 per cent, respectively), Thai group (with 17.4 per cent and 4.9 per cent, respectively) and Muong group (with 20.3 per cent and 4.9 per cent, respectively). Conversely, some ethnic minority groups had very high rates of physical and/or sexual violence such as the Nung group (with 42.8 per cent and 25.8 per cent, respectively).

The proportion of ethnic minority women who experienced emotional violence by their husbands/partners in their lifetime (43.7 per cent) and in the past 12 months (20.4 per cent) was both lower than the national rate (47.0 per cent and 19.3 per cent, respectively) and lower than the corresponding rate of Kinh ethnic women (47.7 per cent and 19.2 per cent, respectively). Mong women had the lowest rate of emotional violence, at 21.9 per cent in their lifetime and at 5.8 per cent in the past 12 months. The highest proportion of emotional violence was found among Nung ethnic women, with more than one third (34.9 per cent) of them experiencing emotional violence in the past 12 months.

The proportion of ethnic minority women subject to behavioural/psychological control by their husband/partner control their behaviour over their lifetime (33.8 per cent) and in the past 12 months (17.4 per cent) was higher than the national rate (27.3 per cent and 12.9 per cent, respectively) and the corresponding rate of Kinh ethnic women (26.0 per cent and 12.0 per cent, respectively). This rate was particularly high for Mong ethnic women (54.7 per cent in their lifetime and 25.6 per cent in the last 12 months) and Dao ethnic women (51.3 per cent in their lifetime and 32.0 per cent in the last 12 months) although the rates of physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by husbands/partners in these two groups were lower.

The proportion of ethnic minority women experiencing economic violence perpetrated by their husbands/partners in their lifetime (24.1 per cent) and in the past 12 months (16.4 per cent) were both higher than the national rate (20.6 per cent and 11.5 per cent, respectively) and the corresponding rate of Kinh ethnic women (19.9 per cent and 10.5 per cent, respectively). This rate was particularly high among Dao ethnic women, at 45.8 per cent in their lifetime, and at 28.6 per cent in the past 12 months.

An analysis of the qualitative information⁶⁵ indicates that level of gender based violence occurring in ethnic minority groups frequently depends on their affiliation with matriarchal or patriarchal traditions. In the ethnic minority groups affiliating patriarchy, gender roles and values are similar to that of the Kinh ethnic group, for example, the significant pressure to have a son in each family. In contrast, the women living in the ethnic groups affiliating with a matriarchal culture, such as the Cham ethnic group, seem to exercise more power and control in their family. Women in this ethnic group are under pressure to have a daughter rather than a son. A noteworthy observation is that ethnic minority women believed that they experienced less violence than Kinh ethnic women. Many ethnic minority women are more accepting of the violence perpetrated by their husbands or partners than Kinh ethnic women do, which might affect the quantitative survey results showing that ‘the proportions of ethnic minority women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence caused by their husbands/ partners in their lifetime and in the past 12 months were lower than the national rate and the rate of Kinh women’.

65 Results of the *National Survey on Violence against Women in Viet Nam in 2019: A Journey to Change*

5.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Strengthening commitments and promoting the implementation of solutions to effectively prevent and address all forms of violence against women, including gender-based violence in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

Solutions for the recommendation 5:

Solution 1:

Strengthening national commitments and national actions (policies) for the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) to realize international commitments.

- Conducting a review and revision of existing legal policies on violence against women, including GBV, to ensure that there is no gender stereotyping, in compliance with international commitments.
- Promoting information and education for both ethnic minority men and women, in particular, on the legal provisions on women’s rights and GBV prevention and control. The mechanisms and apparatuses are responsible for protecting women’s rights in addition to preventing and combating GBV at the central and local levels.

- Ensuring the adequate allocation of resources from the state budget and other sources to implement policies and interventions to prevent violence against women, including GBV.

Solution 2:

Strengthening the development and implementation of response and intervention solutions that are relevant and effective for ethnic minority women who are victims, or are at risk of becoming victims, of GBV. Further research should be conducted to replicate the 'Essential Service Package'⁶⁶ on prevention, treatment and support for victims of GBV.

Strengthening support for ethnic minority women in accessing free legal services and legal aid. Research should be conducted to apply the mobile court model in communities so that ethnic minority people can attend. This is an excellent measure to promote legal empowerment for ethnic minority women.

Solution 3:

Strengthening capacity building for the staff of agencies involved in GBV prevention and control; strengthening the capacity for law enforcement and judicial agencies in ethnic minority and mountainous areas to effectively handle complaints and prosecute acts of violence against women, including GBV. The law enforcement and judicial system, including the staff from legal aid centres, and judges should be trained on GBV policies and legislation, on the provision of gender-sensitive services for GBV victims as well as the appropriate approach to address perpetrators in ethnic minority areas.

Solution 4:

Conducting, further research to collect data on violence, including GBV against ethnic minority women, in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; identifying the nature and extent of the different forms of GBV in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; indicating the needs and capacity to access support services of ethnic minority women and girls; evaluating the effectiveness of current measures to prevent and address GBV in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; and reviewing international good practice in GBV prevention and control in ethnic minority areas.

⁶⁶ See at <https://www.unfpa.org/essential-services-package-women-and-girls-subject-violence> or www.iawg.net/resources/minimum-initial-service-package-misp-resources



Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Aiden Dockery

6

UNPAID CARE WORK

6.1 GENDER ISSUES IN UNPAID CARE WORK IN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS

The burden of unpaid care work in ethnic minority households is placed squarely on the shoulders of women and girls.

Ethnic women are mainly responsible for unpaid care work within their households and ethnic minority communities. In the context of underdeveloped infrastructure in ethnic minority areas (e.g., electricity, potable water for household use, roads, markets, schools and health clinics are limited or far from residential areas); and the lack of equipment to support housework and family care (e.g., lack of quality services for babysitting, caring for the elderly, the sick; lack of appliances to support housework in families), the burden of housework and family care is placed on ethnic minority women. 74 per cent of ethnic minority women and 5 per cent of ethnic minority girls regularly take on the work of collecting water for household use; meanwhile, while the national corresponding rates were 65 per cent and 2 per cent⁶⁷. In twenty per cent of ethnic minority

households it frequently takes more than 30 minutes to collect water for daily use; meanwhile, the national corresponding rate was almost 4 per cent⁶⁸. For the ethnic minority groups affiliating patriarchy, women are mainly responsible for income generating activities whilst also being responsible for housework and family care.

Perceptions of ethnic minority women and ethnic minority communities are heavily influenced by gender stereotypes and the gender division of household labour. Accordingly, women are responsible for and obliged to undertake housework, take care of children, the elderly, and the sick in their families.⁶⁹

There is a lack of current databases on the unpaid care work of ethnic minority men and women. In 2019, for the first time, the General Statistics Office included the content of unpaid care work in their annual Labour-Employment Survey. This is an up-to-date and reliable database for gender analysis and policy recommendations in the field. Unfortunately, this survey has no information on unpaid care work for ethnic minority groups.

67 UN Women, IFGS, the Australian Group and other partners. 2016. towards Gender Equality in Viet Nam: Making Inclusive Growth Work for Women

68 UN Women, IFGS, the Australian Group and other partners. 2016. towards Gender Equality in Viet Nam: Making Inclusive Growth Work for Women

69 UN Women, IFGS, the Australian Group and other partners. 2016. towards Gender Equality in Viet Nam: Making Inclusive Growth Work for Women

6.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Promoting the sharing of the burden of unpaid care work in ethnic minority households and communities.

Solutions for recommendation 6:

Solution 1:

Reinforcing communication activities to change gender stereotypes and roles related to unpaid care work for ethnic minority women, households and communities. The target audience should include ethnic minority women and men, boys and girls; promoting responsibility sharing and the reassignment of care work in ethnic minority households.

Solution 2:

Promoting the development of gender responsive infrastructure in ethnic minority areas such as schools, health clinics, potable water, roads and markets. Specifically, (i) it is crucial to stipulate the proportion of ethnic minority women/ representative organizations of ethnic women participating in, and having a representative voice, in the decision-making processes related to infrastructure development in their localities; (ii) promoting capacity building activities (training courses on knowledge and skills for ethnic

minority women/ representative organizations) to participate in the decision-making processes on infrastructural development.

Solution 3:

Further developing effective support services regarding caring for the elderly, young children and sick people in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; developing the potable water supply to residential clusters in ethnic minority areas to free up ethnic minority household labour for unpaid care work.

Solution 4:

Further conducting surveys and research using international methods and tools to measure the time that ethnic men and women spend on unpaid care work in their households; encouraging researchers and policy makers to apply scientific approaches to unpaid care work in policy planning and implementation for ethnic minority groups.



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7

ETHNIC MINORITY CADRES AND CIVIL SERVANTS

7.1 GENDER ISSUES AMONG ETHNIC MINORITY CADRES AND CIVIL SERVANTS

The proportion of female ethnic minority cadres and civil servants in Party bodies, People's Councils, administrative agencies and socio-political organizations in ethnic minority areas was very low and not commensurate with the size of the female ethnic minority labour force.

Results of the Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 show that, the percentage of ethnic minority female cadres in the Party bodies in ethnic minority communes was the lowest, at 6.0 per cent. The rate in People's Councils was 7.3 per cent; in administrative agencies 11.4 per cent, and in socio-political organizations it was 15.5 per cent. It is noteworthy that the lower the socio-economic conditions of the regions and localities and the higher the proportion of ethnic minority groups resident there, the higher the percentage of ethnic minority cadres and civil servants. In particular, the proportion of ethnic minority women of the total number of public officials in border and rural areas was higher than the corresponding rate in urban areas. Similarly, by socio-economic region, the Northern Midland and Mountainous region had

the highest proportion of ethnic minority women in the total number of public officials in Party bodies, People's Councils, administrative agencies, and socio-political organizations in the country, followed by the Central Highlands and the North and South-Central Coast regions.

Not only was it small in number, but the structure of ethnic minority female cadres in agencies and organizations in ethnic minority areas has been heavily affected by gender stereotypes.

Results of the Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 show that, female ethnic minority cadres represented the highest proportion in socio-political organizations, at 15.5 per cent, of which, the Women's Union had 100 per cent of female cadres. In contrast, in Party bodies and People's Councils, the percentage of female ethnic minority cadres was only 6.0 per cent and 7.3 per cent, respectively, only equivalent to one sixth of male EM cadres (the corresponding rates of male EM cadres were 36.1 per cent and 39.0 per cent, respectively). In communal administrative bodies, the percentage of female EM cadres reached 11.4 per cent, but they mainly held the low-ranking positions such as clerks, administration, accounting and financial staff.

The quality of cadres and civil servants in communes in ethnic minority areas was actually low in comparison with the regulations of the Government.⁷⁰ The results of the Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 show that, in commune administrative bodies, 1.4 per cent of ethnic minority cadres and civil servants had not received any professional training. This rate of female ethnic minority cadres and civil servants was 0.7 per cent. Up to 30.4 per cent of ethnic minority cadres had only obtained the minimum qualification of ‘intermediate’ level. The rate of ethnic minority cadres who graduated from ‘colleges’ and ‘universities or higher’ was only 6.6 per cent and 61.6 per cent, respectively. The rate of female ethnic minority cadres who attained the ‘intermediate’ level was 20.3 per cent; however, the rate of female ethnic minority cadres graduating from ‘colleges’ and ‘universities or higher’ was 7.5 per cent and 71.6 per cent, respectively.

7.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 7.

Strengthening the development of female ethnic minority cadres and civil servants in ethnic minority and mountainous areas

Solutions for the recommendation 7:

Solution 1:

Reinforcing the need to change gender stereotypes against ethnic minority female cadres in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; creating positive changes in awareness and actions of leaders at different levels toward the role and position of ethnic minority women, in particular, of ethnic minority female cadres and civil servants in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

70 Decree No. 112/2011/ND-CP dated December 5, 2011 of the Government on civil servants of communes, wards and towns, and Circular No. 06/2012/TT-BNV dated October 30, 2012 guiding responsibilities, specific standards, tasks and recruitment of commune, ward and town civil servants. In which, civil servants of communes, wards, and towns must have graduated from university or higher in the training majors that are relevant to the requirements and duties of each commune-level civil servant title. For the civil servants working in ethnic minority and mountainous communes, they must have an intermediate or higher degree.

Solution 2:

Promoting substantive gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Project on developing ethnic minority cadres, civil servants and employees in the new period⁷¹; Resolution No. 52/NQ-CP dated June 15, 2016 of the Government on Promoting human resource development of ethnic minority groups in the period 2016-2020, and the vision by 2030 and the Project *Supporting gender equality in ethnic minority areas in the period of 2018 to 2025*⁷² to create positive changes in gender equality in developing the contingent of ethnic minority cadres and civil servants.

In addition to the common conditions and standards, there should be policies/solutions to promote gender equality in cadre resourcing, recruitment, planning, training and retraining in combination with placement, use and promotion of female ethnic minority cadres. Specifically:

- (i) regulating the prioritized recruitment of ethnic minority women if they meet required standards and conditions;
- (ii) regulating the proportion of ethnic minority women participating in training and retraining courses for civil servants in ethnic minority and mountainous areas;

- (iii) organizing gender responsive training and retraining courses for civil servants: priority must be given to ethnic minority women to participate in these training courses; providing free child care or babysitting arrangements; and subsidizing travel expenses for ethnic minority women during their participation in the training and retraining courses.

Solution 3:

Promoting the inspection and evaluation of the implementation of the policies for female cadres, in particular, the policies for ethnic minority female cadres; promoting the role of socio-political organizations in monitoring the development and implementation of policies related to the policies for female cadres, including the policies for ethnic minority female cadres.

71 Decision No. 402/QĐ-TTg dated March 14, 2016 of the Prime Minister

72 Decision No. 1898/QĐ-TTg, dated November 28, 2017 of the Prime Minister

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