

Office of the First Lady
Press Office
Files of Lissa Muscatine
Deputy Assistant to the President and
Director of Communications to the First Lady
Contents: Files

Archived from OEOB 103 by Katie McCormick Lelyveld on January 12, 2001

Box 5 of 13

- Foreign Requests
- International Accomplishments
- Schedules
- Requests Done
- HRC Events Lists
- Convention 2000
- Chelsea
- Requests Pending
- Correspondence
- Hillary Letters
- Republican Attacks
- 1999 New York Travel Schedules
- Trip to Vietnam – 11/00
- Trip to UK – 12/00
- Declined Press Requests
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- TV/Radio
- Documentaries
- Foreign
- Other
- Save America's Treasures Tours
- HRC News Clips 2000
- Speeches – Women
- Stories & Quotes
- Media
- Washington DC

Enclosures filed in
Oversize Attachments #

21396

NARA 18581

TRIP OF THE FIRST LADY TO VIETNAM NOVEMBER 17-20, 2000

VIETNAM OVERVIEW

- Map
- Background Notes
- US/Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement
- US Investment in Vietnam
- POW/MIA Cooperation
- Demining Agreement
- Repatriation
- Agent Orange
- Human Rights
- Trafficking in Human Beings
- HIV/AIDS
- Involvement in Fourth World Conference on Women
- Women and Political Participation
- Women's Union of Vietnam
- Women and Civil Society
- Employment and Economic Status of Women
- Women in Business
- Violence Against Women
- Population and Family Planning
- Children
- Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances
- NCFAW Report on Women and Gender Equality in Vietnam
- Public Safety Campaign
- Humanitarian Assistance
- USAID Assistance
- HHS Programs
- Educational Exchange
- Environment
- National Public Radio Series on Vietnam
- Protocol

BIOS

EVENTS IN VIETNAM

HANOI

Arrival Ceremony (President's briefing)

Micro-Credit Event at Yen Tang Village

President's Speech at Hanoi University (President's briefing)

Craft Link Retail Stop

Embassy Meet and Greet (President's briefing)

State Dinner (President's briefing)
Cultural Performance (President's briefing)
JTF-FA Excavation Site (President's briefing)

Forum with Vietnamese Women

Demining Event (President's briefing)
Delegation Reception (President's briefing)
Repatriation Ceremony (President's briefing)

HO CHI MINH CITY

Next Generation Leaders Roundtable (President's briefing)

Meet and Greet with Binh Tay School Children

Wrap-Up Speech

Meet and Greet with Consulate Staff (President's briefing)

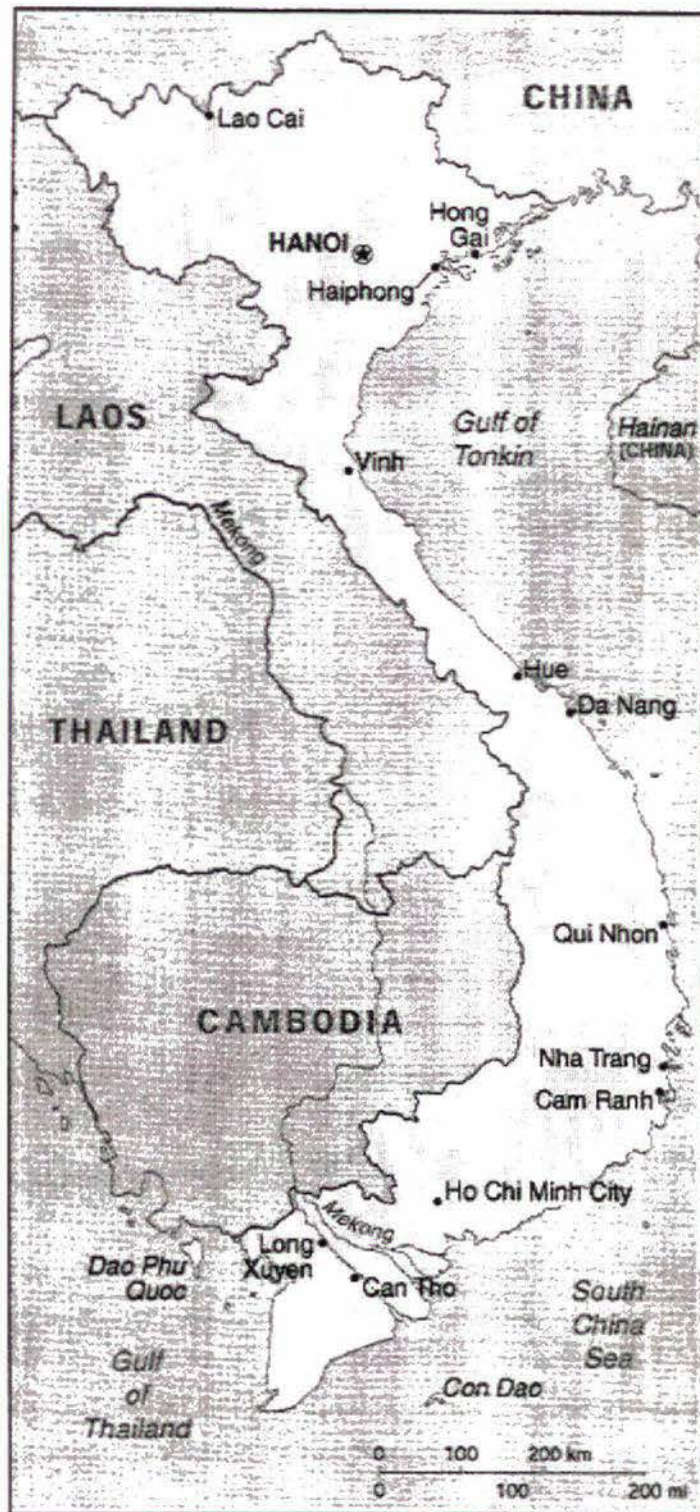
Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

BACKGROUND ON VIETNAM

Divider Title: _____





Background Notes: Vietnam

Official Name:
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

People

History

Government and Political Conditions

Economy

Foreign Relations

U.S. Relations

Travel/Business

Geographic Learning Site

Home Page

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 329,560 sq. km. (127,243 sq. mi.); equivalent in size to Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee combined.

Cities (1999): *Capital*--Hanoi (2.6 million). *Other cities*--Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon; 5 million), Hai Phong (1.6 million).

Terrain: Varies from mountainous to coastal delta.

Climate: Tropical monsoon.

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*--Vietnamese (sing. and pl.).

Population (1999): 77.3 million.

Annual growth rate (1999): 1.37%.

Ethnic groups: Vietnamese (85%-90%), Chinese (3%), Hmong, Thai, Khmer, Cham, mountain groups.

Religions: Buddhism, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Christian (predominantly Roman Catholic, some Protestant), animism, Islam.

Languages: Vietnamese (official), English (increasingly favored as a second language), some French, Chinese, and Khmer, mountain area languages.

Literacy (1998): 89.47%.

Health (1999): *Birth rate*--20.78/1,000. *Infant mortality rate*--34.84/1,000. *Life expectancy*--65.71 yrs. male, 70.64 yrs. female. *Death rate*--6.56/1,000.

Government

Type: Communist Party-dominated constitutional republic.

Independence: September 2, 1945.

New constitution: April 15, 1992.

Branches: *Executive*--president (head of state and chair of National Defense and Security Council) and prime minister (heads, cabinet of ministries, and commissions).

Legislative--National Assembly. *Judicial*--Supreme People's Court; Prosecutorial Supreme People's Procuracy.

Administrative subdivisions: 61 provinces, 3 municipalities (Hai Phong, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh).

Political party: Vietnamese Communist Party, formerly (1951-76) Vietnam Worker's Party, itself the successor of the Indochinese Communist Party founded in 1930.

Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Economy

GDP (1999): \$28.6 billion.

Real growth rate (1999): 4.8%.

Per capita income (1999): \$372.

Inflation rate (1999): 0.1%.

External debt (1999): 37.1% of GDP, \$10.6 billion.

Natural resources: Coal, crude oil, zinc, copper, silver, gold, manganese, iron. Agriculture and forestry (22.3% of GDP; 1999):

Principal products--rice, maize, sweet potato, peanut, soya bean, cotton, coffee, cashews. *Cultivated land*--12.2 million hectares per year.

Land use--21% arable; 28% forest and woodland; 51% other.

Industry and construction (34.5% of GDP; 1999): *Principal types*--mining and quarrying, manufacturing, electricity, gas, and water supply.

Services (40.1% of GDP; 1999): *Principal types*--wholesale and retail, repair of vehicles and personal goods, hotel and restaurant, transport storage, telecommunications.

Trade (1999): *Exports*--\$11.5 billion. *Principal exports*--garments/textiles, crude oil, footwear, rice (second-largest exporter in world), sea products, coffee rubber, handicrafts. *Major export partners*--Japan (16%), China, Singapore, Australia, Taiwan, and Germany. *Imports*--\$11.6 billion. *Principal imports*--machinery, oil and gas, garment materials, iron and steel, transport-related equipment. *Major import partners*--Singapore (16%), Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, and Thailand. *Exports to U.S.*--\$655 million. *Imports from U.S.*--\$291 million (1999).

PEOPLE

Originating in what is now southern China and northern Vietnam, the Vietnamese people pushed southward over two millennia to occupy the entire eastern seacoast of the Indochinese Peninsula. Ethnic Vietnamese constitute about 90% of Vietnam's 77.3 million population.

Vietnam's approximately 2.3 million ethnic Chinese, concentrated mostly in southern Vietnam, constitute Vietnam's largest minority group. Long important in the Vietnamese economy, Vietnamese of Chinese ancestry have been active in rice trading, milling, real estate, and banking in the south and shopkeeping, stevedoring, and mining in the north. Restrictions on economic activity following reunification in 1975 and the subsequent, but unrelated general deterioration in Vietnamese-Chinese relations sent chills through the Chinese-Vietnamese community. In 1978-79, some 450,000 ethnic Chinese left Vietnam by boat as refugees (many officially encouraged and assisted) or were expelled across the land border with China.

The second-largest ethnic minority grouping, the central highland peoples commonly termed Montagnards (mountain people), comprise two main ethnolinguistic groups -- Malayo-Polynesian and Mon-Khmer. About 30 groups of various cultures and dialects are spread over the highland territory.

The third-largest minority, the Khmer Krom (Cambodians), numbering about 600,000, is concentrated near the Cambodian border and at the mouth of the Mekong River. Most are farmers. Other minority groups include the Cham (remnants of the once-mighty Champa Kingdom, conquered by the Vietnamese in the 15th century), Hmong, and Thai.

Vietnamese is the official language of the country. It is a tonal language with influences from Thai, Khmer, and Chinese. Since the early 20th century, the Vietnamese have used a Romanized script introduced by the French. Previously, Chinese characters and an indigenous phonetic script were both used.

HISTORY

Vietnam's identity has been shaped by long-running conflicts, both internally and with foreign forces. In 111 BC, China's Han dynasty conquered northern Vietnam's Red River Delta and the ancestors of today's Vietnamese. Chinese dynasties ruled Vietnam for the next 1,000 years, inculcating it with Confucian ideas and political culture. In 939 AD, Vietnam achieved independence under a native dynasty. After 1471, when Vietnam conquered the Champa Kingdom in what is now central Vietnam, the Vietnamese moved gradually southward, finally reaching the rich Mekong Delta, encountering there earlier settled Cham and Cambodians. While Vietnam's emperors reigned ineffectually, powerful northern and southern families fought civil wars in the 17th and 18th centuries.

French Rule and the Anti-Colonial Struggle

In 1858, the French began their conquest of Vietnam starting in the south. They annexed all of Vietnam in 1885, but allowed Vietnam's emperors to continue to reign, although not actually to rule. In the early 20th century, French-educated Vietnamese intellectuals organized nationalist and communist-nationalist anti-colonial movements. Japan's occupation of Vietnam during World War II further stirred nationalism. Vietnamese communists under Ho Chi Minh organized a coalition of anti-colonial groups, the Viet Minh, though many anti-communists refused to join. After Japan stripped the French of all power in March 1945, Ho Chi Minh announced the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on September 2, 1945.

North and South Partition

France's post-World War II unwillingness to leave Vietnam led to failed talks and an 8-year guerilla war between the communist-led Viet Minh on one side and the French and their anti-communist nationalist allies on the other. Following a humiliating defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, France and other parties, including Britain, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States, convened in Geneva, Switzerland for peace talks. On July 29, 1954, an Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam was signed between France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The United States observed, but did not sign, the agreement. French

colonial rule in Vietnam ended.

The 1954 Geneva agreement provided for a cease fire between communist and anti-communist nationalist forces, the temporary division of Vietnam at approximately the 17th parallel, provisional northern (communist) and southern (non-communist) zone governments, and the evacuation of anti-communist Vietnamese from northern to southern Vietnam. The agreement also called for an election to be held by July 1956 to bring the two provisional zones under a unified government. However, the South Vietnamese Government refused to accept this provision. On October 26, 1955, South Vietnam declared itself the Republic of Vietnam.

After 1954, North Vietnamese communist leaders consolidated their power and instituted a harsh agrarian reform and socialization program. In the late 1950s, they reactivated the network of communist guerillas that had remained behind in the south. These forces (commonly known as the Viet Cong), aided covertly by the north, started an armed campaign against officials and villagers who refused to support the communist reunification cause.

American Assistance to the South

In December 1961, at the request of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, President Kennedy sent U.S. military advisers to South Vietnam to help the government there deal with the Viet Cong campaign. In the wake of escalating political turmoil in the south after a 1963 generals' coup against President Diem, the United States increased its military support for South Vietnam. In March 1965, President Johnson sent the first U.S. combat forces to Vietnam. The American military role peaked in 1969 with an in-country force of 534,000. However, the Viet Cong's surprise Tet Offensive in January 1968 deeply hurt both the Viet Cong infrastructure and American and South Vietnamese morale. In January 1969, the United States, governments of South and North Vietnam, and the Viet Cong met for the first plenary session of peace talks in Paris, France. These talks, which began with much hope, moved slowly. They finally concluded with the signing of a peace agreement, the Paris Accords, on January 27, 1973. As a result, the south was divided into a patchwork of zones controlled by the South Vietnamese Government and the Viet Cong. The United States withdrew its forces, although U.S. military advisers remained.

Reunification

In early 1975, North Vietnamese regular military forces began a major offensive in the south, inflicting great damage to the south's forces. The communists took Saigon on April 30, 1975, and announced their intention of reunifying the country. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (north) absorbed the former Republic of Vietnam (south) to form the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on July 2, 1976.

After reunification, the government confiscated privately owned

land and forced citizens into collectivized agricultural practices. Hundreds of thousands of former South Vietnamese Government and military officials, as well as intellectuals previously opposed to the communist cause, were sent to re-education camps to study socialist doctrine. While Vietnamese leaders thought that reunification of the country and its socialist transformation would be condoned by the international community, this did not happen. Besides international concern over Vietnam's internal practices, the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978 and its growing tight alliance with the Soviet Union appeared to confirm suspicions that Vietnam wanted to establish hegemony in Indochina.

Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia also heightened tensions that already existed between Vietnam and China. Beijing, which had long backed the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, retaliated in early 1979 by initiating a border war with Vietnam.

Vietnam's tensions with its neighbors and its stagnant economy contributed to a massive exodus from Vietnam. Fearing persecution, many Chinese in particular, fled Vietnam by boat to nearby countries. Later, hundreds of thousands of other Vietnamese nationals fled as well, seeking temporary refuge in camps throughout Southeast Asia.

The continuing grave condition of the economy and the alienation from the international community became focal points of party debate. In 1986, at the Sixth Party Congress, there was an important easing of communist agrarian and commercial policies.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

A new state constitution was approved in April 1992, reaffirming the central role of the Communist Party in politics and society, and outlining government reorganization and increased economic freedom. Though Vietnam remains a one-party state, adherence to ideological orthodoxy has become less important than economic development as a national priority.

The most important powers within the Vietnamese Government -- in addition to the Communist Party -- are the executive agencies created by the 1992 constitution: the offices of the president and the prime minister. The Vietnamese President, presently Tran Duc Luong, functions as head of state but also serves as the nominal commander of the armed forces and chairman of the Council on National Defense and Security. The Prime Minister of Vietnam, presently Phan Van Khai, heads a cabinet currently composed of four deputy prime ministers and the heads of 31 ministries and commissions, all confirmed by the National Assembly.

Notwithstanding the 1992 Constitution's reaffirmation of the central role of the Communist Party, the National Assembly, according to the Constitution, is the highest representative body of the people and the only organization with legislative powers. It has a broad mandate to oversee all government functions. Once seen as little more than a rubber stamp, the National Assembly has become more vocal and assertive in exercising its authority

over lawmaking, particularly in the recent years. However, the National Assembly is still subject to party direction. About 80% of the deputies in the National Assembly are party members. The assembly meets twice yearly for 7-10 weeks each time; elections for members are held every 5 years.

There is a separate judicial branch, but it is relatively weak. Overall, there are few lawyers and trial procedures are rudimentary.

The present 18-member Politburo, elected in 1997 and headed by Communist Party General Secretary Le Kha Phieu, determines government policy, and its five-person Standing Committee oversees day-to-day policy implementation. Although there has been some effort to discourage membership in overlapping party and state positions, this practice continues. Seven of the Politburo members concurrently hold high positions in the government. In addition, the Party's Central Military Commission, which is composed of select Politburo members and additional military leaders, determines military policy.

A Party Congress (comprised of 1,198 delegates at the Eighth Party Congress in 1996), meets every 5 years to set the direction of the Party and the government. The 170-member Central Committee, which was elected by the Party Congress, usually meets at least twice a year. The Ninth Party Congress is scheduled to convene in early 2001.

Principal Government Officials

President--Tran Duc Luong
Prime Minister--Phan Van Khai
National Assembly Chairman--Nong Duc Manh
Minister of Foreign Affairs--Nguyen Dy Nien
Ambassador to the United States--Le Van Bang
Ambassador to the United Nations--Nguyen Thanh Chau

Politburo (Eighth Party Congress Politburo, named Dec. 29, 1997; listed in order of rank as of August 1, 1999)

Le Kha Phieu--General Secretary
Tran Duc Luong--President
Phan Van Khai--Prime Minister
Nong Duc Manh--National Assembly Chairman
Pham The Duyet--Standing Politburo Member; President of Vietnam Fatherland Front
Nguyen Manh Cam--Deputy Prime Minister
Nguyen Duc Binh--Director, Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy
Nguyen Van An--Chairman, Party's Commission for Personnel Affairs
Pham Van Tra--Minister of National Defense
Nguyen Thi Xuan My--Chairwoman, Party's Commission for Investigation
Truong Tan Sang--Chairman, Party's Commission for Economic Affairs
Le Xuan Tung--Member in charge of ideological, cultural,

scientific, and educational affairs
Le Minh Huong--Minister of Interior
Nguyen Tan Dung--Permanent Deputy Prime Minister
Pham Thanh Ngan--Director, PAVN General Political
Department
Nguyen Minh Triet--Chairman, Party's Committee of Ho Chi
Minh City
Phan Dien--Chairman, Party's Committee of Da Nang City
Nguyen Phu Trong--Chairman, Party's Committee of Hanoi

Vietnam maintains an embassy in the U.S. at 1233-20th Street,
NW, #400 (tel. 202-861-0737; fax 202-861-0917).

ECONOMY

Economic stagnation marked the period after reunification from 1975 to 1985. In 1986, the Sixth Party Congress approved a broad economic reform package called "Doi Moi," or renovation that dramatically improved Vietnam's business climate. Vietnam became one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, averaging around 8% annual GDP growth from 1990 to 1997. Vietnam's inflation rate, which stood at an annual rate of over 300% in 1987, fell below 4% in 1997. Simultaneously, investment grew three-fold and domestic savings quintupled. Agricultural production doubled, transforming Vietnam from a net food importer to the world's second-largest exporter of rice. Foreign trade and foreign direct investment improved significantly. The shift away from a centrally planned economy to a more market-oriented economic model improved the quality of life for many Vietnamese. Per capita income, \$220 in 1994, rose to \$372 by 1999 with a related reduction in the share of the population living in acute poverty.

The striking economic progress that marked the 1990s slowed in the last years of the decade. Despite an impressive 23% rise in 1999's export performance to \$11.5 billion, a sharp drop in new foreign investment commitments foreshadows slower economic growth than Vietnam experienced in the early '90s. Government control of the economy and a non-convertible currency have protected Vietnam from what could have been a more severe impact resultant from the East Asian financial crisis. Nonetheless, the crisis, coupled with the loss of momentum as the first round of economic reforms ran its course, has exposed serious structural inefficiencies in Vietnam's economy.

Vietnam's economic stance following the East Asian recession has been a cautious one, emphasizing macroeconomic stability rather than growth. While the country has shifted toward a more market-oriented economy, the Vietnamese Government still continues to hold a tight rein over major sectors of the economy such as the banking system, state-owned enterprises, and areas of foreign trade. Substantial reforms to create a sound banking system and privatize state-owned enterprises need to be speeded up. Without these reforms, Vietnam might not cope with a rising unemployment problem. Urban unemployment has been rising steadily in recent years, and rural unemployment, estimated to be up to 35% during non-harvest periods, is already at critical levels.

Layoffs in the state sector and foreign-invested enterprises combined with the lasting effects of an earlier military demobilization further exacerbate the unemployment situation.

The international community has told Vietnamese leaders that the situation calls for a bold new round of structural economic reforms. The country's leadership, however, has chosen to follow a less ambitious, slow-paced reform program. Overall systemic economic reform has been limited by both Vietnam's communist ideology and a bureaucracy which views reform as a threat to the status quo. The country's slow-paced reform has hindered Vietnam from progressing in tandem with regional competitors.

The July 13, 2000 signing of the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) between the U.S. and Vietnam is a significant milestone for Vietnam's economy. Pending U.S. congressional approval, the BTA will provide for Normal Trade Relations (NTR) status of Vietnamese goods in the U.S. market. Access to the U.S. market will allow Vietnam to hasten its transformation into a manufacturing-based, export-oriented economy. It would also concomitantly attract foreign investor interest back to Vietnam, not only from the U.S., but also from Europe, Asia, and other regions.

Agriculture and Industry

Land reform, decollectivization, and the opening of the agricultural sector to market forces converted Vietnam from a country facing chronic food shortages in the early 1980s to the second-largest rice exporter in the world. Besides rice, key exports are coffee, tea, rubber, and fisheries products. Despite this unquestioned success story, agriculture's share of economic output has declined, falling as a share of GDP from 42% in 1989 to 26% in 1999, as production in other sectors of the economy has risen.

Paralleling its efforts to increase agricultural output, Vietnam has sought with some success to invigorate industrial production. Industry contributed 32.5% of GDP in 1999. However, most branches of heavy industry -- cement, phosphate, steel, etc. -- have stagnated or declined. State-owned enterprises are marked by low productivity and inefficiency, the result of a command-style economic system applied in an underdeveloped country. Foreign direct investment (FDI) -- much of it gravitating to the new industrial zones in the south -- is a new and dynamic feature of Vietnam's industrializing economy. Billions of FDI dollars from countries around the globe are helping to transform the industrial landscape of Vietnam. Foreign invested enterprises are also responsible for helping the country achieve large export gains recently. Another inflow of FDI is expected once the BTA is ratified by legislatures of both countries.

Of late, Vietnam has achieved some success in increasing exports of some labor-intensive manufactures. Subsidies have been cut to some inefficient state enterprises. The government has also repeatedly stated its intent to "equitize" a significant number of state enterprises. However, only a relatively small percentage of

remaining state enterprises have been equitized in recent years.

Trade and Balance of Payments

From the late 1970s until the 1990s, Vietnam was heavily dependent on the Soviet Union and its allies for trade and economic assistance. To compensate for drastic cuts in Soviet-block support after 1989, Vietnam liberalized trade, devalued its exchange rate to increase exports, and embarked on a policy of regional and international economic re-integration. As Vietnam's integration into the global community progressed, bilateral and multilateral aid to the country resumed.

As a result of these reforms, exports expanded significantly, growing by as much as 20%-30% in some years. In 1999, exports accounted for 40% of GDP, an impressive performance in a recovering Asia. Efforts to control Vietnam's import growth have been fairly successful. In the last 4 years, import levels have remained fairly stable. For the second consecutive year, Vietnam had a balance of payments surplus in 1999. The country's balance of payments surplus has been due to not only to robust trade performance but also to official development assistance and remittances from overseas Vietnamese. Vietnam's total external debt, accounting for 37.1% of GDP in 1999, is \$10.6 billion.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

During the second Indochina war (1954-1975), North Vietnam balanced relations with its two major allies, the Soviet Union and China. By 1975, tension began to grow as Beijing increasingly viewed Vietnam as a potential Soviet instrument to encircle China. Meanwhile, Beijing's increasing support for Cambodia's Khmer Rouge sparked Vietnamese suspicions of China's motives.

Vietnamese-Chinese relations deteriorated significantly after Hanoi instituted a ban in March 1978 on private trade, mostly affecting Sino-Vietnamese. Following Vietnam's December 1978 invasion of Cambodia, China launched a retaliatory incursion over Vietnam's northern border. Faced with severance of Chinese aid and strained international relations, Vietnam established even closer ties with the Soviet Union and its allies in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). Through the 1980s, Vietnam received nearly \$3 billion a year in economic and military aid from the Soviet Union and conducted most of its trade with the U.S.S.R. and other Council for Mutual Economic Assistance countries. However, Soviet and East Bloc economic aid ceased after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Vietnam did not begin to emerge from international isolation until it withdrew its troops from Cambodia in 1989. Within months of the 1991 Paris Agreements, Vietnam established diplomatic and economic relations with ASEAN as well as most of the countries of Western Europe and Northeast Asia. China reestablished full diplomatic ties with Vietnam in 1991, and the two countries concluded a land border demarcation agreement in 1999.

In the past decade, Vietnam has recognized the increasing

importance of growing global economic interdependence and has made concerted efforts to adjust its foreign relations to reflect the evolving international economic and political situation in Southeast Asia. The country has begun to integrate itself into the regional and global economy by joining international organizations. Vietnam has stepped up its efforts to attract foreign capital from the west and regularize relations with the world financial system. In the 1990s, following the lifting of the American veto on multilateral loans to the country, Vietnam became a member of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank. The country has expanded trade with its East Asian neighbors as well as with countries in Western Europe and North America. Of particular significance was Vietnam's acceptance into the Association of South-East Nations (ASEAN) in July 1995. Vietnam joined the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) in November 1998 and also hosted the ASEAN summit the following month. Vietnam currently holds observer status in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and is applying for full membership.

While Vietnam has remained relatively conflict-free since its Cambodia days, tensions have arisen in the past between Vietnam and its neighbors (especially China). Vietnam and China each assert claims to the Spratly Islands, an archipelago in a potentially oil-rich area of the South China Sea. Conflicting claims have produced over the years small-scale armed altercations in the area; in 1988 more than 70 people were killed during a confrontation between China and Vietnam. China's assertion of control over the Spratly Islands and the entire South China Sea has elicited concern from Vietnam and its Southeast Asia neighbors. The territory border between the two countries is being definitively mapped, and the dispute has yet to be taken to any official forum for resolution.

U.S.-VIETNAM RELATIONS

After a 20-year hiatus of severed ties, President Clinton announced the formal normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam on July 11, 1995. Subsequent to President Clinton's normalization announcement, in August 1995, both nations upgraded their Liaison Offices opened during January 1995 to Embassy status. As diplomatic ties between the nations grew, the United States opened a Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City and Vietnam opened a Consulate in San Francisco.

U.S. relations with Vietnam have become deeper and more diverse in the years since political normalization. The two countries have broadened their political exchanges through annual dialogues on human rights and regional security. They signed a Bilateral Trade Agreement in July 2000, and are actively pursuing agreements in other areas. A cornerstone of relationship remains; cooperation on the issue of Americans missing from the war in Vietnam. As of September 2000, 2,005 Americans who were killed in action with bodies not recovered (KIA/BNR) remain unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, 1,506 in Vietnam. The U.S. Government is actively pursuing 1,363 missing Americans in Southeast Asia, including 913 in Vietnam. Since 1973, 578

Americans have been accounted for, including 412 in Vietnam. Since January 1993, the remains of 258 individuals have been repatriated and identified and returned to their families, 140 in Vietnam. Additionally, the Department of Defense has confirmed the fate of all but 41 of 196 individuals who fall under the "Last Known Alive" (LKA) priority discrepancy cases in Vietnam. The United States considers achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing and unaccounted for in Indochina to be its highest priority with Vietnam.

Reflecting the growing diplomatic relations between the two nations, economic relations between the United States and Vietnam have changed dramatically over the past decade. In July 1993, subsequent to the opening of the U.S. repatriation office in Ho Chi Minh City, the U.S. dropped its objections to bilateral and multilateral lending to Vietnam. In February 1994, following substantial Vietnamese cooperation on POW/MIA issues, President Clinton removed the long-standing trade embargo on Vietnam. In March 1998, President Clinton granted a Jackson-Vanik waiver to Vietnam, which he has renewed in 1999 and 2000 for one-year periods. (a Jackson-Vanik waiver is required along with U.S. Congressional approval of a bilateral trade agreement in order to grant Vietnam normal trading rights. This waiver must be renewed annually and is based on Vietnam's cooperation on emigration issues.) On July 13, 2000, the United States and Vietnam signed a Bilateral Trade Agreement which, following U.S. Congressional approval, will fundamentally change Vietnam's trade regime and help liberalize its economy.

Increased trade between the U.S. and Vietnam, combined with large-scale U.S. investment in Vietnam, evidence the maturing U.S.-Vietnam economic relationship. In 1999, Vietnam exported \$655 million of goods to the U.S. and imported \$291 million of U.S. goods. Similarly, U.S. interests continue to invest directly in the Vietnamese economy. During 1999, the U.S. private sector committed over \$120 million to Vietnam, becoming the seventh-largest foreign investor in the country.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Ambassador--Douglas B. (Pete) Peterson
Deputy Chief of Mission--Dennis G. Harter

The U.S. embassy in Vietnam is located at 7 Lang Ha, Ba Dinh District, Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam (tel. 84-4-843-1500; fax 84-4-843-1510).

Principal U.S. Consulate General Official

Consul General--Charles Ray

The U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City is located at 51 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, Socialist Republic of Vietnam (tel. 84-8-822-9433; fax 84-8-822-9434).

TRAVEL AND BUSINESS INFORMATION

VIETNAM BACKGROUND PAPER:
ECONOMIC REFORM AND THE BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Objective: Obtain high-level Vietnamese commitment to begin early implementation and ratification of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA), to lay a solid foundation for Congressional approval in 2001.

Points to Make

- Signing the BTA was a major step forward in U.S.-Vietnam relations. Implementing the BTA will offer both challenges and opportunities to deepen relations. Close bilateral consultation and cooperation during this process will ensure full mutual benefit.
- Trade and investment reforms Vietnam agreed to make under the BTA will help Vietnam compete in the global economy.
- Early legislative approval by Vietnam would send the right message to investors and also would facilitate approval of the BTA by Congress next year.

Background

Though well-endowed with natural and human resources, Vietnam needs to undertake extensive economic reform in order both to meet its commitments under the BTA and to achieve the gains it expects from improved access to the U.S. market and eventual accession to the WTO. The legal and regulatory infrastructure needed to foster a competitive private sector is weak or absent. Priority lending from a state-dominated financial sector to bloated public enterprises crowds out private investment and fails to create enough jobs for the rapidly growing workforce (1.3 million annual new job entrants). Official bureaucracy is reluctant to cede control to market forces.

Top Vietnamese trade officials want to proceed with developing BTA implementation machinery. Our experience of negotiating the BTA underscores that implementation will require steady bilateral engagement on our part and sustained commitment from top Vietnamese officials. U.S. technical assistance, projected at \$6 million over the next three years, should smooth implementation, but US aid cannot be explicitly linked to implementation performance.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
U.S. INVESTMENT IN VIETNAM

Objectives:

You should acknowledge Vietnam's positive commitments on investment in the Bilateral Trade Agreement. You should also encourage further liberalization of Vietnam's investment regime.

Key Points to Make:

- The investment commitments you made in the Bilateral Trade Agreement are an important step toward a more open and transparent investment climate.
- In today's competitive market for foreign investment, countries that facilitate new investment will have an important edge.
- I encourage you to continue your efforts to remove barriers to investment and to develop a more efficient and transparent investment regime.

Background:

U.S. foreign direct investment into Vietnam last year is estimated at \$120.2 million, while the total stock of licensed U.S. capital is \$1.3 Billion. Major U.S. investors include Cargill, Caterpillar, Coca-Cola, Citibank, Chase Manhattan, Ford, AIG, Nike, General Electric, and Pepsi-Cola. U.S. and other foreign direct investment has slowed significantly in the past three years reflecting fundamental weaknesses in Vietnam's investment climate.

One of the greatest challenges for Vietnam is to make its economic system more competitive by cutting red tape, streamlining regulations, and generally making the entire economic system more efficient, transparent and less corrupt. Some of the most vociferous and frequent complaints from foreign investors concern the length of the contract negotiating process and the delays in obtaining project approvals from the government. Amendments to Vietnam's Investment Law passed by the National Assembly in May are a positive step in the right direction. In the Bilateral Trade Agreement signed July 13, 2000, Vietnam agreed to protect U.S. investments from expropriation, eliminate local content and export performance requirements and phase out its investment licensing regime for many sectors. These commitments are important incremental improvements to the investment climate in Vietnam; however, much work remains.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
POW/MIA COOPERATION

Objective:

Vietnam should be commended for its extensive cooperation in our effort to account for Americans who remain missing in action from the war in Southeast Asia.

Key Points to Make:

- Obtaining the fullest possible accounting of our missing from the Vietnam War remains our highest priority in Vietnam.
- The U.S. appreciates Vietnam's cooperation in assisting the U.S. on this issue; it remains an issue of high interest to the American people and Congress.

Background:

Beginning in December 1996, Vietnam has received annual Presidential Determinations that Vietnam is "fully cooperating in good faith with the U.S." in our efforts to obtain a full accounting of our missing service personnel from the Vietnam War.

This annual determination is based on four criteria for Vietnamese cooperation: recovery and repatriation of American remains through joint field activities; resolution of "last known alive" priority discrepancy cases; Vietnamese assistance in implementing trilateral investigations with Laos; and access to Vietnamese POW/MIA related documents, archives and oral history interviews.

Since 1973, we have accounted for 424 Americans in Vietnam. Of the 1,993 Americans still unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, 1,499 are Vietnam MIAs.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
DEMINE AGREEMENT

Objectives: To show U.S. support for Vietnam's humanitarian demining program, which seeks to save innocent lives, restore land and infrastructure to productive use.

Key Points:

Note that the U.S. has contributed more than \$400 million for humanitarian mine action around the world since 1993 and will add nearly \$100 million more in fiscal year 2001.

Praise Vietnam's commitment to humanitarian demining, as evidenced by its efforts, with no outside assistance, to clear landmines and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO).

Express hope that the demining equipment the U.S. has already provided will help foster an improved relationship between our two countries and will support Vietnam's efforts to minimize the threat of landmines to its people and to its economic well-being.

Background

Vietnam is one of the most severely landmine/UXO-affected countries in the world. In spite of Vietnamese clearance efforts, there are over 2,000 casualties per year. Vietnamese experts estimate that it will cost billions of dollars and take 15-20 years to remove landmines and UXO leftover from the various conflicts.

In June 2000, the Government of Vietnam formally requested U.S. humanitarian demining assistance. Since then, the State Department (DoS) has provided over \$3 million of humanitarian demining equipment, including vehicles, personal safety equipment and landmine/UXO detectors. DoS will also provide funding for a comprehensive "level one" survey. The Department of Defense provided funding for the development of a database to track bombing and artillery missions, and for computerized demining training equipment. In 1998, DoS funded a children's mine awareness program in Dong Ha, in the Quang Tri Province. Since 1991, USAID's Leahy War Victims Fund has provided over \$15 million to provide rehabilitation services for adults and children and advance the standard of prosthetics technology. Recently, a delegation of Vietnamese demining experts completed an extensive visit the U.S. to learn about the latest demining management and technologies.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
REPATRIATION

Objectives: To encourage Vietnam to accept repatriation of their nationals with final orders of deportation.

Key Points to Make:

- At a meeting in Hanoi in April, 2000, Vietnamese officials agreed to review a draft repatriation agreement submitted by the U.S. delegation and respond with a draft of their own by the end of the year. We are still waiting for the Vietnamese draft response.
- We hope to establish quickly a procedure for cooperation in accepting back nationals who have received final removal orders. This is standard procedure among the vast majority of countries around the world. Such an agreement would be a positive step in our overall bilateral relations.
- We look forward to the planned visit of a delegation from Vietnam to the United States in the near future to continue these very important discussions and observe U.S. immigration and legal procedures.

Background

The U.S. government has sought unsuccessfully to persuade the government of Vietnam to accept the return of its nationals with final orders of deportation issued by the immigration courts. Currently, over a thousand Vietnamese nationals with final orders of deportation remain under detention in the United States awaiting travel documents from the government of Vietnam. Most of them have served their criminal sentences, but remain under immigration detention. Repeated requests for issuance of travel documents from the government of Vietnam continue to go unanswered.

In response to a request by Vietnamese Ambassador Le Bang in April 1998, the Department of State and Immigration and Naturalization Service jointly prepared a draft repatriation agreement, which was presented to him in September 1999. In April 2000, a U.S. delegation traveled to Hanoi and met with representatives of the government of Vietnam, with the goal of establishing a procedure for reviewing requests for travel documents. The Vietnamese emphasized the need to identify the nationality of each individual and to consider humanitarian concerns. The Vietnamese agreed to review the draft agreement and provide a response by the end of the year.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
AGENT ORANGE

Objective: Promote Joint Scientific Research on the health and environmental effects of dioxin exposure in Vietnam and note DOD's willingness to provide information and advice related to alleged Agent Orange contamination in Vietnam.

Key Points to Make:

- Encouraged that Vietnamese and American scientists and officials will meet at the end of November to discuss a joint research effort on health and environmental effects of dioxin exposure in Vietnam.
- Hope this scientific program, possibly the first begun under our new science and technology cooperation agreement, will expand human knowledge and advance Vietnam's scientific and health infrastructure.
- Department of Defense is prepared to share information on sites of potential dioxin contamination and provide advice on ways to protect citizens from further exposure.

Background:

Agent Orange has always been a major issue in U.S.-Vietnam relations, but the USG has consistently held that Agent Orange should be addressed strictly on a scientific basis. Since 1997, the GVN has, nonetheless, publicly claimed Agent Orange is the cause of major health problems, including cancer and birth defects. Vietnamese officials often raise USG financial compensation for the alleged effects of Agent Orange with U.S. officials, veterans groups, and media. In the U.S., interest in Agent Orange continues to simmer among members of Congress, veterans, research scientists, and the media.

Vietnam accepted in June 2000 the USG proposal for joint research on the health and ecological effects of dioxin exposure in Vietnam, and agreed to a meeting at the end of November between Vietnamese and American scientists and officials to develop a joint research program. Meanwhile, Secretary Cohen, in March 2000, committed the Defense Department to share information and advice related to Agent Orange distribution and exposure in Vietnam.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
HUMAN RIGHTS

Objective:

Vietnam needs to understand that progress on human rights is a prerequisite for full development of the political relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam.

Key Points to Make:

- Full normalization of the political relationship between Vietnam and the U.S. can not take place without Vietnamese progress in meeting international norms for protection of human rights.
- As our economic relations become closer and more routine, human rights concerns will have an increasingly higher profile in our bilateral agenda.

Background:

Vietnam is a notably less repressive society than five or ten years ago, but the Vietnamese Government continues to significantly restrict freedom of speech, the press, assembly, religion, workers rights, and association. In many cases, dissidents no longer face arrest for their activities but are subject to harassment through frequent interrogations and a form of house arrest. This underscores the need for both judicial system and prison system reform.

Vietnam restricts freedom of religion but, in recent years, there has been significant easing of restrictions on the activities of adherents of officially-recognized religious organizations. Those who belong to groups not recognized by the Government face harassment and some prominent religious dissidents are under a form of house arrest; those facing harassment include many Protestant adherents from minority groups.

Although labor unions are controlled by the party and have only nominal independence, union leaders influence some key decisions such as on health and safety issues and on minimum wage standards. The Government generally tolerates strikes. No genuine collective bargaining is permitted in as much as all collective bargaining requires the approval of the party-controlled Central Labor Confederation.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Objective: To encourage Vietnam's support for regional efforts to eliminate trafficking in human beings.

Key Points to Make:

- We appreciated Vietnam's participation in and support for the ARIAT Regional Anti-Trafficking meeting.
- Vietnam's continued cooperation in promoting effective regional cooperation and information sharing, as set forth in the ARIAT Regional Action Plan, is critical to regional success.

Background:

About 45,000 to 50,000 women and children are trafficked annually into the United States, mainly from Southeast Asia. A transnational crime and a socioeconomic issue, trafficking must be addressed on the regional level to be fully effective. Vietnam's active participation will be essential to the success of the process.

The USG is committed to eliminating trafficking through a comprehensive, three-part global strategy of prevention, protection and prosecution. The recent passage of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act will further strengthen USG policy in this area. At the July 1998 ASEAN meeting, Secretary Albright raised the issue of trafficking and invited countries in the region to work with the United States to eliminate trafficking.

In March 2000, the USG co-hosted a meeting of the Asian Regional Initiative Against Trafficking in Women and Children (ARIAT) in Manila. Delegates from 19 Asian countries/economies participated, developing a Regional Action Plan consistent with the USG three-part policy framework. It is hoped that Vietnam will commit to fulfilling the principles of the action plan by instituting concrete activities in cooperation with its Asian neighbors. The USG has sponsored regional programs such as training law enforcement and immigration officials, reintegration for trafficking victims in the Mekong Region, and a shelter for trafficked children.

BACKGROUND PAPER:

HIV/AIDS

Objectives: The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a foreign policy issue with humanitarian, security, and development implications beyond traditional health issues. Vietnam should intensify its resource commitment to combating HIV/AIDS.

Key Points to Make

- The United States and Vietnam have a mutual interest in containing the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Infection rates in Asia are exploding among high-risk groups and more slowly among the general population. If HIV transmission is not aggressively addressed now, the African experience could be repeated in Asia.
- The USG is increasing the resources it is providing to the global fight against HIV/AIDS and is encouraging other states to devote both resources and leadership.

Background:

Rapid economic development and growing mobility have opened Vietnam to the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. Although precise data on new infections is limited, the HIV epidemic has increased rapidly in Vietnam during the 1990s, especially among prostitutes, injecting drug users and persons with sexually transmitted diseases. UNAIDS estimates that 100,000 Vietnamese were living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 1999, and the majority were young adults.

Unlike some other Asian countries, Vietnam has the capacity to prevent a disaster. Its HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan is implemented by an active National AIDS Committee comprised of 16 ministries and five national organizations, and a nation-wide sentinel surveillance system is also in place. Many international donors provide assistance including USAID. A CDC expert in Vietnam works on HIV surveillance programs. Surgeon General Satcher recently traveled to Hanoi to identify and discuss areas of collaboration with Vietnam on health-related issues, including HIV/AIDS.

The U.S. and Vietnam also cooperate on public health education and injury control and reduction. In addition, the recent flooding along the Mekong displaced 250,000 people raising fears of an imminent outbreak of infectious diseases like cholera and dengue fever.

HIV/AIDS/EID
TALKING POINTS

- The fight against HIV/AIDS is both an urgent national and international priority.
- We must enlist both human and financial resources from the public and private sectors to address the impacts and implications of HIV/AIDS, which extend beyond the means and competence of any one entity.
- Resources alone will not ultimately defeat HIV/AIDS. The other half of the equation is strong leadership and public political commitment.
- The impact of HIV/AIDS extends beyond the health sector, eroding economic development, social cohesion, and political stability.
- The worldwide HIV/AIDS pandemic threatens to rob multiple generations of the promises and hope of a new century.
- Regional efforts to stop the spread of AIDS must begin now, lest Asia repeat the African experience. We are ready to support Vietnam's efforts.
- My administration is requesting of Congress an additional \$100 million to combat HIV/AIDS internationally, for a total of \$342 million in FY 2001.
- We value our cooperation on other public health issues as well.
- We are also very concerned about the potential health impacts of the recent flooding. We are ready to help.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
FOURTH FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (BEIJING + 5)

Objective: To encourage the government and civil society of Vietnam to make every effort to implement the goals of the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women.

Key Points to Make:

- Urge Vietnam to:
 - Fight all forms of violence against women and trafficking in women
 - Support women's education and women in business
 - Combat HIV/AIDS
 - Support women's increased participation in government

Background:

The Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women was the strongest policy statement on women's empowerment ever made by the international community. Beijing + 5, held in New York in June 2000, took stock of the actions taken by governments to improve the lives of women and adopted further initiatives to implement the Beijing commitments. Beijing + 5 also set new goals to help women in the areas of health care, domestic violence, trafficking, education, access to credit, and participation in politics.

The Beijing + 5 Conference and its Outcome Document demonstrated the now-internationally acknowledged truth that "women's rights are human rights". The Document contains strong language criminalizing all forms of violence against women, including honor crimes. The UN General Assembly just passed its first-ever resolution condemning honor crimes and another resolution calling for the elimination of all forms of violence against women, including crimes specified in the Outcome Document.

Regarding trafficking, we must forge partnerships on every continent to share information, coordinate legal actions, and find and close criminal networks. In the area of education, we strongly support accelerated action to close the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005.

The Outcome Document also highlights HIV/AIDS, an issue that was not specifically addressed in 1995. It calls upon men to assume their responsibility in family planning and practicing safer sex to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS and states that women and girls should have access to sexual education and all types of health care, education and disease prevention throughout their lives.

Beijing + 5 also emphasized the need to increase women's participation in the labor market, and to achieve a balanced representation of women and men in all occupations by, among other actions, encouraging the creation or expansion of institutional networks to support the career development and promotion of women. The United States strongly supports improving women's access to financing, business skills training, electronic commerce and transborder trade. We must continue to work towards equal pay for equal work or work of equal value.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Objective: Emphasize that women's political participation and diversity in general strengthen the political process and society.

Key Points to Make:

- Growing number of women active in politics and government strengthen Vietnamese society and improve the lives of Vietnamese women and families.
- Role of Women's Union and the National Committee for the Advancement of Women very positive; development and legalization of independent NGO's would complement and accelerate pace of change.

Background:

Vietnam has made important strides in incorporating women into leadership in government and society. More than 26% of National Assembly deputies are women, and the Labor Minister, among others, is a member of the cabinet. However, an informal "glass ceiling" exists, and for those who have risen to higher ranks, power is limited. The country's female vice president, who is a war heroine, and the one woman of the 18 members of the all-powerful Communist Party Politburo has little decision-making power. While there is no legal discrimination, women face deeply ingrained societal discrimination. Current challenges are to enhance women's voices in decision-making and to change social norms and customs relegating them to homemaking.

Equal opportunity for women is an underlying tenet of the Vietnamese Government and ruling Communist Party. Women's rights of participation in the labor force and in positions of leadership are spelled out in resolutions and policies, and increasingly women are promoted into more senior influential positions. Two specialized institutions work to increase women's political participation: the Vietnam Women's Union and the National Committee for the Advancement of Women. The Women's Union has a broad agenda to promote women's rights, including political, economic, and legal equality, and protection from spousal abuse. The Women's Union operates micro-credit consumer finance programs and other programs to promote the advancement of women.

Although results in the last decade have been positive, there is still a long way to go. While the number of women in the National Assembly is respectable (26%), the number of women leaders in the administration of government remains low, at only 11% of ministers and 12% of department heads. Women leaders tend to remain segregated to the "soft" social sectors. Both men and women continue to be influenced by traditional gender-biased attitudes on women's roles and responsibilities.

Very poor women, especially in rural areas but also in cities, have little political power or voice. They perform menial jobs in construction, waste removal, and other jobs for extremely low wages. Despite the large body of legislation devoted to the protection of women's rights in marriage as well as in the workplace, and Labor Law provisions that call for preferential treatment of women, they do not always receive equal treatment.

VIETNAMESE WOMEN'S UNION
And
NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The number of women in the Government and party is relatively high, for example, women make up one-fourth of the National Assembly, however, at the provincial and communal levels of administration where traditional gender biased attitudes are prevalent, the number of women in leadership roles and administration is particularly low. Women Ministers and Vice Ministers make up 11 and 7 percent of senior administrators, and at the Department level about one-eighth of the Department Heads and Deputy-Heads are women. In general, these leadership roles are in the social fields, such as positions in the National Committee for Population and Family Planning, the Committee for Protection and Care of Children and the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs. There are two large government sanctioned women's organizations.

The Vietnam Women's Union is an officially sponsored, ministry-level organization registered as an NGO under the Fatherland Front (the national umbrella for mass organizations). It has 11 million active members, and is organized at the national, provincial, district, and commune level. Besides women's issues, as such, the Women's Union is also concerned with broader social problems such as curbing drug abuse, trafficking in women and children, etc.

Founded in 1930, the union supported women's participation in national defense, construction and development. The Vietnamese Women's Congress is held every 5 years since 1950 and maps out the objectives and plans for the Union. Its objectives for the 1917-2002 period include:

- Encourage women to use their abilities, creativity and talents to accelerate national industrialization and modernization.
- Support women in improving their standard of living, raising families that are prosperous, progressive, and happy. Provide children with good nutrition and an education.
- Strengthen the Union's institutional structure to provide services for the benefit of women.

The second organization is the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW) which was established in 1993. It is a governmental committee originally established in 1985 as the National Committee for the Women's Decade. After the National Committee was established, Committees of the Advancement of Women were established in ministries, agencies, ministry departments, provinces, towns, districts and communes. The function of the NCFAW is to recommend to the Government, measures, laws and policies to implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The organization in addition to its advisory, research, and monitoring functions, provides various training and workshops, including a workshop on leadership skills for the female candidates for the National Assembly.

Prominent women from both the Vietnamese Women's Union and the National Committee for the Advancement of Women have been invited to participate in the Women Forum event.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
WOMEN AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN VIETNAM

Objectives: Raise awareness of the positive contributions non-governmental organizations can make to Vietnam's development.

Key Points to Make:

- Efforts of Women's Union have improved women's political participation, employment prospects, and status in society.
- Evolution of a broad range of new "grassroots" organizations in Vietnam is tapping new sources of inspiration, expanding opportunities and improving peoples' lives.
- Encourage Vietnam to pass its draft "Law on NGOs" soon.

Background:

An independent "civil society" does not exist in Vietnam. According to Vietnamese law and Communist Party (CPV) dogma, a Party-controlled umbrella organization, the Vietnam Fatherland Front, serves as the mechanism to supervise and channel the activities of "grassroots" groups in society. Officially sponsored mass organizations - such as the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, the Vietnam Women's Union, indigenous Vietnamese NGOs, and officially-sanctioned religious organizations - must be approved by the Fatherland Front to insure that their activities remain consistent with the policies of the Party. In theory, these sectoral groups serve as two-way conduits between the Party and each organization's constituency: they mobilize the masses to carry out official policies and articulate the interests of their members to the CPV.

Since the beginning of "*doi moi*" (renovation) economic reforms in 1986, the Party has reformed the mass organizations to make them more responsive to their constituents' interests. Some mass organizations - the Women's Union in particular - have become important advocates for the interests of their members. The Party leadership has worked to make mass organizations' procedures more open, and their operations more flexible, self-financing, and representative. Over the past several years, mass organizations have played an

increasing role in both the policy-making process of the government and the law-making process of the National Assembly. In some cases, such as during the drafting of labor legislation, they have advocated strongly for the interests of their members.

These reforms have also strengthened the representative role of quasi-official business associations, such as the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It also has spurred the growth of grassroots voluntary organizations in urban and rural areas. As the Party and state have gradually reduced their roles as providers of education, health and other social services since 1986, other groups have helped filling the gaps. In the cities, there increasingly are charity and research organizations, such as municipal bar associations, children's welfare foundations, women's empowerment groups, and environmental research centers. In the countryside, mutual assistance organizations such as credit groups, shrimp-grower associations, and beekeeper associations have formed. Some foreign scholars believe these groups represent emerging elements of a "civil society" in Vietnam. Official regulation has lagged behind the development of these voluntary groups. The government began drafting a law on Associations in the early 1990s (now called the draft Law on NGOs), but tellingly, this law has yet to be brought forward for passage by the National Assembly. Vietnam's leaders tread carefully when considering giving broader responsibility and credibility to non-government-controlled groups.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

Objective: Promote employment equality for Vietnamese women as a key element for economic development.

Key Points to Make:

- Vietnam's women are making important positive contributions to economic development, but could do much more.
- Vietnam's laws lay a good foundation for the equality of women in the formal workplace; encourage Vietnam to improve overall implementation of its laws and to extend coverage to protect workers in the informal sector.
- Inclusion of wives as co-owners of land use rights is a positive development; broadening women's access to credit and job training programs could increase contributions from a dynamic element of Vietnam's society.

Background:

Women are active in the labor market, comprising 70% to 80% of the informal sector work force, although only a smaller proportion work in the formal sector. Women represent 54% of the total agricultural work force, although they occupy 92% of new agricultural jobs each year.

Vietnam's progressive labor legislation grants women equal employment opportunities and equal rights regarding property rights, but both implementation of the law and traditional values favor employment of men for many jobs. Some labor-intensive export sectors (shoes, food processing, garments), many of them with foreign investment, have created employment for young women. However, "protective" labor laws on maternity leave, an earlier retirement age, and exclusion of women from dangerous professions restrict women's employment options. Women also lack voice and fair-share in decision-making and representation.

Opportunities for jobs in labor-intensive export sectors have encouraged education for girls. Literacy in Vietnam exceeds 90%. However, young women at present do not have

access to equal opportunities for training. To realize their equal rights and opportunities under the law, women need improved implementation of the law and better training and professional skills.

Until recently, Vietnam's law did not recognize women as co-owners (not of the land, which is publicly owned, but of the land use rights) of land use rights, but the 2000 Law on Marriage and Family requires both spouses be listed on land certificates. In contrast, women do not have equal access to credit. Less than 10% of 4 million annual loans from the Viet Nam Bank for Agriculture are to women. Women are disadvantaged in the formal sector by their lack of collateral, and are forced to use the informal sector, where interest rates are higher and funds are limited. The Vietnam Women's Union has an extensive credit program for women, which requires savings rather than collateral, offering small loans (under \$60) with easy terms and simple application procedures. As is common in micro-credit lending to women, the repayment rate is over 90%.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
VIETNAMESE WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Objective: Highlight the positive contributions women make to Vietnam's economy and note that harnessing female ingenuity, innovation, and energy will increase Vietnam's economic growth.

Key Points to Make:

- Women like Nguyen Thi Mai Thanh of Refrigeration Electrical Engineering Corporation and Nguyen Cao Thang of OPV International are leading large Vietnamese businesses into world markets.
- Thousands of others own and operate small businesses that are the backbone of the private sector, Vietnam's hope for future economic growth.
- Vietnam's women can do more for their country and Vietnam's government should take the steps necessary to take advantage of the contributions of over half of Vietnam's population.

Background:

A trip to any local market will reveal that most of the stall merchants are women; street hawkers selling vegetables are predominantly women; and many small storefront shop owners are women. However, women are still significantly underrepresented at senior levels of big business and the management of State-owned enterprises.

Small businesses, run by both men and women, have in the recent past had difficulty because of the domination of State-owned enterprises and their desire to maintain their market dominance. Small entrepreneurs have had difficulty in borrowing capital, obtaining import and export licenses, and in registering businesses. The last 2 years have seen an improvement in the small business climate, with the passage of legislation making it easier to license businesses.

Although Vietnam's laws mandate workplace equality, women face deeply ingrained societal discrimination. Few women compete effectively for higher status positions, nor does the Government effectively enforce equal pay for equal

BACKGROUND PAPER:
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN VIETNAM

Objective: To raise public awareness that violence against women damages socio-economic development.

Key Points to Make:

- Impressed that Vietnam has recognized that violence against women, especially in the form of domestic violence and sexual abuse, is a problem.
- Encouraged that the Government of Vietnam wants to begin in-depth research exploring the degree and extent of violence against women.
- Urge Vietnam to allow formation of NGOs to provide support for victims of violence.

BACKGROUND

Vietnam is awakening to the costs of violence against women, individuals, and society as a whole, despite the fact that this is a highly sensitive topic that Vietnamese find difficult to discuss. Women victims of domestic violence rarely report to the authorities because of cultural values - they do not want to "let people know about their family affairs."

The 1946 constitution of Vietnam stipulates equity between the sexes in all aspects of political, economic, cultural, social and family life. The 1960 Marriage and Family Law further established the principles of monogamy and equality between husband and wife. This law forbids physical violence against women and children. The Penal Codes of 1989 and 1991 stipulate that all violations of the Marriage Law shall be punished. Although these laws exist, many women are either unaware of their rights or are, for social reasons mentioned above, unwilling to prosecute.

Stories:

(Taken from Population Council Domestic Violence Focus Group

)

"When my boy knows we are quarreling, he says, 'Mum, don't speak any more, dad is angry, he'll beat you and me! I'm so scared. Because of my love for my child, I have to endure my husband's abuse. I feel so sad but tell nobody about this.'" (female client, age 42)

"I think when a husband beats his wife, they are both to blame. A positive family atmosphere depends on the wife. When she knows her husband is in a bad mood, she should adjust herself to avoid conflict (female counselor, 26).

BACKGROUND PAPER:
POPULATION AND FAMILY PLANNING IN VIETNAM

Objective: Applaud the Government's efforts to improve maternal and infant health, and girls education. Encourage the adoption of voluntary, client-oriented comprehensive approaches toward reproductive health and family planning.

Key Points to Make:

- Compliment the Government on its efforts on female literacy, contraceptive prevalence and infant mortality.
- Stress the importance of voluntary, non-coercive family planning policies and programs.
- Note concern over Vietnam's high abortion rate and lack of universal access to reproductive health services and information, particularly for young and rural persons.

Background:

The population of Vietnam is now estimated at approximately 78 million. Vietnam appears to have been influenced positively by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). New national population and reproductive health strategies, incorporating many elements of the ICPD are expected to be adopted by the Government this year. National action plans have also been developed for the empowerment of women, improvement of girls' school enrollment, and prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS. Vietnam's total fertility rate has declined from 3.1 children per woman in 1994 to 2.5 in 1998, and a very high percentage (75%) of married women use contraception.

However, despite government efforts to improve access to primary health care and implement a national breast-feeding program, maternal and infant mortality rates remain high. This is in part due to the fact that reproductive health information is limited in remote areas of the country, as well as among adolescents and unmarried adults. Additionally, the prevalence of abortion is very high, with over 50 percent of women, increasingly adolescent women, terminating unwanted pregnancies. HIV/AIDS is emerging as a major health concern, with about 150,000 people infected.

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) continues its long presence in Vietnam, with the latest five-year program just approved through 2005. The program will strengthen the quality of reproductive health care and information, including through gender-sensitive and client-oriented approaches. UNFPA is

also working to integrate population, gender and reproductive health concerns into national development programs and policies.

USAID continues to work on HIV/AIDS in two provinces, but is not providing population assistance in Vietnam.

Several international NGOs work in Vietnam, often in partnership with local NGOs. Planned Parenthood of Los Angeles (PPLA), for example, is partnering with the Provincial Committees on Population and Family Planning in both Haiphong and Danang to help strengthen their peer education and youth involvement programs.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
CHILDREN IN VIETNAM

Objective: To deliver the message that children, because of their special vulnerability, are entitled to particular protection measures by all sectors of society.

Key Points to Make:

- Education is the bedrock of a modern society and a modern economy; Vietnam has worked miracles with limited resources to achieve an 85% literacy rate; the demands of the information age will require an even greater investment in education.
- Vietnam's health system has made accidents the leading cause of death and disability for children; Vietnam's new helmet law is a positive change to reduce the risks to children from motorcycle accidents; collaborative research between American and Vietnamese scientists on various infectious diseases may reduce their incidence among children and lower the infant and child mortality rates.

Background:

Vietnam is a country in economic transition with an economic growth rate approaching 6%. However, 22% of the population lives below the poverty line and disparities between regions, classes and ethnic minorities are steadily rising. The introduction of fees for medical care and schools has reduced the availability of health care and education for some children.

Vietnam's literacy rate, which once exceeded 90%, has fallen to 85% while the educational system has to accommodate an additional 1.5 million children every year. Only 57% of Vietnamese children are completing primary school, and more than 1 million children aged 6-14 have never enrolled in school or have dropped out soon after starting first grade. Low enrollment of ethnic minority children is leaving them with a literacy rate of only 40%. Declining literacy and school attendance figures are directly related to a lack of adequate schools and a shortage of 50,000 primary teachers.

Although accidents have overtaken disease as the leading cause of death for children in Vietnam, thousands of children are still dying or suffering from easily preventable diseases. Acute respiratory illnesses, especially pneumonia, account for 33% of all infant deaths and diarrhea for another 25%. Other leading causes of infant and child mortality are malaria, neonatal tetanus, and measles.

A Story: Xuan is a 22-year old mother of a healthy five-month old son. She and her husband are farmers. Xuan's health and the health of their son have improved because of Save the Children's work with the Women's Union on maternal and child health care. "After receiving encouragement from a Women's Union member, I had a prenatal checkup every other month when I was pregnant." Xuan's hope for her son: that he stays healthy, grows strong, and finishes his education (A dream denied Xuan, who left school at 14). She wants him to become a teacher, a respected profession in Vietnam, which will also let him support her and her husband in old age.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
CHILDREN IN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Objective: To draw attention to the needs of Vietnamese children living in especially difficult circumstances.

Key Points to Make:

- Vietnam's children are its future; thousands of whom appear to be at risk from exploitation.
- NGOs can make a difference when government resources are insufficient to meet all requirements; urge Vietnam to allow NGOs to help children avoid exploitation.
- Urge Vietnam to ratify ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

Background:

An estimated 3 million children live in disadvantaged circumstances in Vietnam. They include ethnic minority children, street children and working children. Between 400,000 and 1.2 million Vietnamese children suffer from various disabilities. Thousands of children are victims of sexual exploitation, among which are 20,000 children who are victims of prostitution. Additionally, 8,600 children have run afoul of the law, 50,000 are street children, and 4,300 are child drug addicts (UNICEF estimates - no comprehensive study has yet been conducted). Almost unknown until 1990, cases of child prostitution, child drug abuse, HIV/AIDS or children afoul of the law are now regularly reported and growing. For example, the percentage of child prostitutes has increased from 10% of the prostitute population in 1990 to 15% in 1997.

Stories: A 9 year old boy: "I wish one day I would meet a fairy who would grant me three wishes. Then I would wish to be able to study well so I would have a future; I wish to be able to do anything, except robbery; and I wish I could see my mother again. I'd like to be a bricklayer when I grow up. I don't want to be on the streets any more." (Voice of Disadvantaged Children in Vietnam - Save the Children)

A 12 year old girl paralyzed in both legs by polio: "I want to go to school like other children. But the school

won't take me. They say they don't have special facilities for me like ramps and tables ... The teacher said that if they took me they might lose the chance of getting promoted if I were in the class as I might pull the class average score down."

OPENNET/O/BCLTV/CHILDREN IN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT
CIRCUMSTANCES
11/13/00 x74023

Approved: EAP:RBoyce

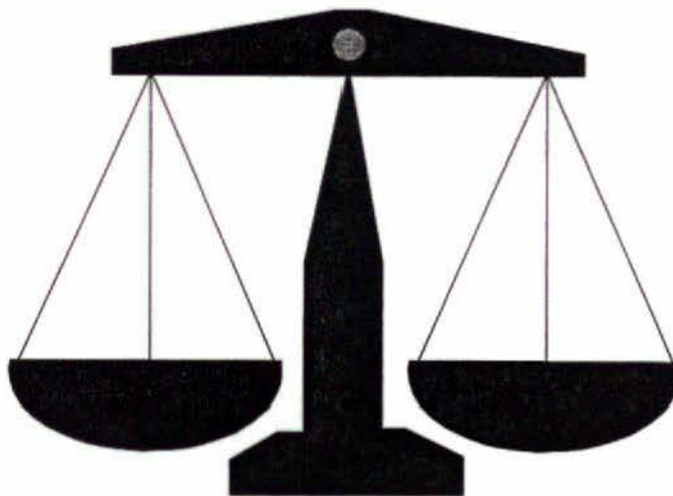
Drafted: EAP/BCLTV:GHicks/Embassy Hanoi Staff

Cleared:	EAP/BCLTV:NSilver	ok
	EAP/BCLTV:DRasmussen	OK
	EAP/RSP:NForino	OK
	G:DGraham	OK
	S/PICW:Abotti	info

Situation Analysis and Policy Recommendations

to promote the

Advancement of Women and Gender Equality in Viet Nam



Prepared by the **National Committee for the Advancement of Women**

in collaboration with four national research teams

Centre for Gender, Environment and Sustainable Development Studies (GENDCEN)

Centre for Family and Women's Studies (CFWS)

Institute of Sociology (IOS)

Centre for Education, Promotion and Empowerment for Women (CEPEW)

and the **Government Donor Gender Strategy Working Group**

as part of the **NCAFAW Project VIE-96-01 with support from UNDP, Royal Netherlands Embassy, CIDA, World Bank, ADB, Ford Foundation**

(Draft copy for comments - to be finalised in 11/00)

Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPEW	Centre for Education, Promotion and Empowerment for Women
CFAW	Committee for the Advancement of Women
CFWS	Centre for Family and Women's Studies
CG	Consultative Group
GDGS	Government Donor Gender Strategy
Gendcen	Centre for Gender, Environment and Sustainable Development Studies
GoV	Government of Viet Nam
GRDD	Grassroots Democracy Decree
HEPR	Hunger Eradication Poverty Reduction Programme
IEC	Information, Education, Communication
IOS	Institute of Sociology
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NA	National Assembly
NCFAW	National Committee for the Advancement of Women
NIPA	National Institute for Public Administration
NSEDS	National Socio-Economic Development Strategy
PC	People's Council
PCT	People's Committee
POA1	Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000
POA2	Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the year 2005
VWU	Viet Nam Women's Union

Acknowledgements

The wide range of institutions and individuals that have generously contributed their support, time and ideas to the development of this report is a testimony to the broad based partnership which this initiative represents.

Government

- **NCFAW:** Mme. Ha Thi Khiem, Ms. Tran Mai Huong
- **VWU:** Ms. Pham Thanh Tram
- **MPI:** Ms. Vu Xuan Ty
- **MOH:** Ms. Pham Thi Sen
- **NIPA:** Mr. Nguyen Van Trung
- **MOJ:** Ms. Duong Thi Thanh Mai
- **MOLISA:** Ms. Pham Thi Thanh
- **MARD:** Ms. Bui Thi Lan
- **MOET:** Ms. Khuc Thi Chuyen

Donors

- **UNDP:** Ms. Dagmar Schumacher, Ms. Khuat Thu Hong, Mr. Nguyen Tien Dung, Ms. Chantal Oltramare, Ms. Suzette Michell
- **Royal Netherlands Embassy:** Ms. Els Klinkert, Ms. Nguyen Nu Hoai Van
- **World Bank:** Ms. Tosca Bruno Van Vijfeijken, Ms. Nisha Agrawal, Ms. Carrie Turk, Mr. Bui Ngoc Quang, Ms. Nguyen Thu Lan
- **CIDA:** Ms. Vu Thi Yen
- **Ford Foundation:** Dr. Lisa Messersmith, Dr. Oscar Saleminck

Research teams

- **Gendcen:** Dr. Tran Thi Que, Ms. Vu Ngoc Uyen, Ms. Nguyen Thi Dan, Ms. Nguyen Thi Hong Phan, Mr. Tran Dang Tuan, Mr. Tran Dang Thang
- **CFWS:** Dr. Tran Thi Van Anh, Ms. Ngo Tuan Dung, Ms. Nguyen Phuong Thao
- **IOS:** Dr. Nguyen Huu Minh, Dr. Vu Manh Loi, Ms. Phung To Hanh
- **CEPEW:** Dr. Vuong Thi Hanh, Ms. Le Thi Ngot, Ms. Tran Thi Bach Mai, Ms. Nguyen Thi Phuc, Ms. Do Thi Thach

Research analysis and policy training

Dr. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Dr. Lorraine Corner, Dr. Jaiki Desai, Ms. Nora Fyles, Ms. Bridget Crumpton, Ms. Mia Hyun

Commentors for research reports

Ms. Tran Mai Huong, Mr. Nguyen Van Trung, Dr. Khuat Thu Hong, Ms. Nguyen Nhat Tuyen, Ms. Nguyen Thi Lan, Ms. Ngo Thi Ngoc Lien, Ms. Pham Kieu Oanh, Ms. Vu Kim Dung, Ms. Tosca Bruno Van Vijfeijken, Mr. Bui Ngoc Quang, Ms. Carrie Turk, Dr. Lorraine Corner, Mr. Nguyen Tien Dung, Ms. Dagmar Schumacher, Dr. Melanie Beresford, Dr. Lisa Messersmith, Ms. Nora Fyles, Ms. Chantal Oltramare, Ms. Pascale Brudon, Dr. Jamie Urig, Ms. Mia Hyun

Report: editing and synthesis

Ms. Nora Fyles, with input from Ms. Tosca Bruno Van Vijfeijken, Ms. Nisha Agrawal, Ms. Carrie Turk, Ms. Tran Mai Huong and Ms. Mia Hyun

VIE-96-011 Project Office

Ms. Bui Thi Hong, Ms. Pham Kieu Oanh, Ms. Vu Kim Dung, Ms. Mia Hyun

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	page	1
Acknowledgements		2
Part I	Introduction	3
1.1	Structure of the report	3
1.2	Background	5
1.3	Main steps in the consultation process	7
1.4	Methodology	8
1.5	Common themes in policy recommendations	9
Part II	Synthesis	13
2.1	Gender issues in employment & economic status	13
2.1.1	Agriculture and rural development	15
2.1.2	Formal sector labour market	17
2.1.3	Access to land use rights	20
2.1.4	Access to capital and financial services	23
2.2	Gender issues in education & human resource dev.	27
2.2.1	School attendance in poor and ethnic minority areas	28
2.2.2	Gender stereotypes in school textbooks	31
2.2.3	Sex segregation in education	33
2.2.4	Access to agricultural extension training	35
2.3	Gender issues in health and safety	40
2.3.1	The impacts of health sector reform	42
2.3.2	Access to reproductive health care	44
2.3.3	Impact of HIV/AIDS	47
2.3.4	Domestic Violence	50
2.4	Gender issues in leadership and political participation	53
2.4.1	Participation in Party Committees and GoV Administration	54
2.4.2	Participation in elected positions: People's Councils	57
2.4.3	The public expenditure decision making process	59
2.4.4	The Grassroots Democracy Decree	61
Bibliography for the four research reports		65
1	Employment and economic status	65
2	Education and human resource development	70
3	Health and safety	74
4	Leadership and political participation	79
Part III	Draft summary policy recommendations	
1	Employment and economic status	
2	Education and human resource development	
3	Health and safety	
4	Leadership and political participation	
5	National machinery for the advancement of women	

Part I - Introduction

This report is a synthesis of findings and policy recommendations resulting from an extensive - but by no means exhaustive - research and consultation process focusing on critical gender issues in Viet Nam. The purpose of this report is to provide research-based analysis and advice to the Government of Viet Nam (GoV) to support the formulation of the next *National 10 Year Strategy and 5 Year Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Viet Nam (POA2)*. The National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCAFW) has already agreed on an overall structure for these two policy documents which includes 6 sections:

1. Employment and economic status
2. Education, training and human resource development
3. Health and living standards
4. Leadership and decision making
5. Women's rights and benefits
6. National machinery for women.

This report is envisaged as a contribution to the on-going national consultation and dialogue conducted in the context of developing sectoral strategies and plans, and in particular the POA2 and the 10 Year Strategy for the Advancement of Women. The voices of women and the analysis of independent researchers reflected in this report will ensure that these important national policy decisions will be grounded in the reality of women's experience, and will promote positive and meaningful change for Vietnamese women.

1.1 Structure of the report

This report is structured as follows:

Part I	Introduction and background to the consultation process
Part II	Situation analysis of women and gender relations in Viet Nam
Part III	Policy recommendations for promoting the advancement of women and gender equality in Viet Nam.

The situation analysis in Part II is designed to give policy makers a better understanding of the structural causes as well as the implications of gender inequality within each main sector. Part III provides a list of suggested policy recommendations to be used as the basis for further discussion among sectoral experts. It is envisaged that the recommendations on this list will be revised, elaborated and strengthened before being submitted to the government for consideration.

Part II and Part III are syntheses of 4 research reports commissioned by NCAFW for this purpose and comments from a range of experts, and are presented in 4 sections, as follows:

Section 1: Employment and economic status (based on research carried out by Gendcen)

The rapidly changing economic structure and the impact of globalisation bring both opportunities and risks for men and women. The challenge for gender sensitive public policy lies in creating an enabling environment to help women negotiate these. However, labour market interventions (for example, equal opportunities and equal wage policies) constitute only one policy instrument. They must be considered in conjunction with other social and fiscal policies, which address discrimination prior to entry into the labour market. This section therefore looks at gender issues in relation to labour force participation with a special focus on agriculture and waged employment. It also considers access to factors of production through property ownership (with a focus on land), and access to a range of financial services including credit, savings and financial management skills.

Section 2: Education and human resource development (based on research carried out by CFWS)

The inter-generational benefits of female education are well documented worldwide. In Viet Nam there are additional benefits to female education due to the high participation of women in the labour force. Women's education contributes therefore directly to labour productivity. In an increasingly competitive international labour market, comparative advantage relies more on the level of skill and education of the country's human capital than on the availability of cheap labour. Developing human capital in Viet Nam should build on universal basic education, and ensure that the current and future generations of workers are equipped with the necessary technical skills. The current challenge for the education and training system is to prepare women and girls to meet these future labour force requirements. Gender equality in education means that 100% of the potential labour force will be able to contribute to national economic development. Thus this section looks at all levels and aspects of the education training system: primary and secondary education focusing on poor and ethnic minority areas, gender stereotypes in education curriculum and text books, matching vocational training and higher education to the demands of the changing labour market and gender bias in agricultural extension services.

Section 3: Health and Safety (based on research carried out by IOS)

This section seeks to add new gender perspectives to issues on the current health policy agenda, including the impact of health sector reform on women, increasing men's responsibility for and access to reproductive health care, impact of HIV-AIDS on women, and domestic violence. Viet Nam has a very high rate of abortion, indicating a need for increased access to information and contraception for both men and women. Although there is no nationally representative quantitative data on the prevalence of domestic violence in Viet Nam, it is estimated that globally 1 in every 3 women has experienced violence in an intimate relationship. The recommendations in this report seek to broaden the traditional response to domestic violence from one of reconciliation to one which addresses both consequences (through reactive legal and service strategies which punish the perpetrators and protect the victims) and causes (through preventative strategies which include public education campaigns addressing values, attitudes and actions related to gender-based violence.)

Section 4: Leadership and political participation (based on research carried out by CEPEW)

Recognising Viet Nam's relatively high rates of women in leadership, this section addresses the complex and multi-faceted nature of political participation, and highlights the need to look at both quantitative as well as qualitative indicators when assessing gender in governance. Increasing women's representation in leadership must go hand in hand with strengthening both male and female decision makers' capacity to develop gender sensitive policies and programmes. Gender analysis and planning must also be institutionalised within decision-making processes in order to be self sustaining. This section looks at promoting women in both appointed and elected positions, and examines two examples of decision making processes: public expenditure¹ at central level and Grassroots Democracy Decree at local level (GRDD). The GRDD, as a process of mobilising local level political participation, is seen as a strategic opportunity for strengthening women's access to decision making fora starting at the community level.

1.2 Background

This initiative is based on the recommendation of the Prime Minister at the mid-term Consultative Group (CG) meeting in 1998 for the Government and Donor partners to come to shared sectoral and intersectoral strategies, in order to increase Government-Donor coordination and partnership, and prevent fragmentation. The Gender Strategy Working Group was subsequently set up as one of the intersectoral working groups.

A *Joint Government Donor Gender Strategy* (GDGS) will be developed based on the POA2 and will present the priority areas of concern for both Government and Donors to achieve the goal of gender equality in Viet Nam over the next 5 to 10 year period.

The long term vision for the GDGS is the social, economic and political advancement of women and gender equality in Viet Nam. This will require creating an overall enabling policy environment, combined with a gender aware society, and gender sensitive institutional structures, policy making processes and practices. These will go beyond targeted women and family programmes and aim to analyse and influence macro and sectoral policies and programmes. The ultimate objective is to create a 'level playing field' whereby women and men will be in an equal position to access and utilise basic social services and factors of production, and to make the necessary social, economic and political choices and decisions on issues, policies and programmes impacting on their livelihoods and well-being.

This partnership is being coordinated by NCAFW and the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU), in collaboration with CFAWs in key government agencies including:

¹ *Public Expenditure was selected as a case study for gender in decision making for two reasons: it has a wide impact, and the recent Public Expenditure Review exercise carried out by the Government, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, and the World Bank included a gender component which provided some qualitative data in an otherwise unresearched area.*

- Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)
- Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)
- Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA),
- Ministry of Finance (MOF)

with the support and participation of a number of donors including:

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- the Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE)
- the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
- the World Bank
- the Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Ford Foundation
- Oxfam Great Britain (OGB)
- UNICEF

For the purposes of strengthening capacity in gender sensitive planning, the project followed a participatory process grounded in extensive consultation, research and analysis, which includes the following steps

- database on gender and development in Viet Nam including bibliography of all relevant documents and materials as well as inventory of all projects relating to women and gender since 1993.
- situation analysis report on women and gender in Viet Nam, based on a synthesis of 4 sectoral reports, and comments from experts².
- capacity building in the area of gender sensitive analysis, planning and policy formulation for national research institutions, CFAWs from key ministries, and donor organisations.
- broad-based consultation with relevant stakeholders at the central level, as well as through a series of participatory consultation workshops at the grassroots level.
- formulation of gender specific strategic planning documents
 - the 2nd National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to 2005 (POA2)
 - the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2010
 - the Joint Government Donor Gender Strategy (GDGS) representing the combined commitments and priorities of Government, NGOs, grassroots women, and donors.
- On-going linkages and substantive input into other strategic planning initiatives such as the
 - National Socio-Economic Development Strategy to 2010 (NSEDs), and other sectoral plans and strategies
 - Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction Programme (HEPR), and the 10 Year Poverty Reduction Strategy
 - Viet Nam Development Report 2001 to be presented at the next CG Meeting in December 2000, where the Poverty Reduction Strategy will be discussed.

² *Given the wealth of material collected as part of the bibliography on gender, and due to time constraints, the research in these reports was based on the analysis of secondary data sources, no primary data was collected. However, where there was insufficient data, some research teams undertook case studies to illustrate their arguments.*

A crucial step to mainstreaming gender will be to ensure that the gender specific policy recommendations are also cross-referenced with and ideally integrated into the relevant 'mainstream' policy documents. These include the NSEDs, the HEPR, as well as sector-specific strategies such as those dealing with Economic Management, Rural Development, Human Development (Education and Health), and Governance and Public Administration Reform, and in the future others such as the HIV/AIDS prevention strategy.

1.3 Main Steps in the Consultation Process

It is anticipated that this report and particularly the recommendations put forward, will be used as the basis for further discussion in preparation for the next 10 year strategy and POA2. The project has organised a series of fora to facilitate this debate amongst a wide range of stakeholders, to ensure that the process of developing these policy documents is as participatory, consultative and inclusive as possible. As part of this process of broad based consultation, a number of events have taken place and several others are currently being planned:

Local level consultation with grassroots women

A series of 5 one-day workshops were held (July - August 2000) to consult with women at the grassroots level about their views and perspectives on the current situation of women in Viet Nam, starting from their own experience. Workshops were held in Hanoi, HCMC, Lai Chau, Quang Binh and Tra Vinh, and included women of all ages and from all walks of life: farmers, traders, local authorities (government and mass organisations), from both rural and urban settings, in the North, South and Central regions. A total of 250 women participated in these workshops, approximately half were from outside of the government and mass organisations, and 14% were from ethnic minority groups. The main points raised in these workshops are also reflected in this report.

Inter-disciplinary analysis and policy workshop

A two week workshop was organised (June 2000) to facilitate a dialogue between the 4 research teams responsible for much of the analysis in this report, and government officials responsible for policy advice, most of whom were representatives from CFAWs within key line ministries, as well as concerned Donors. A team of international gender and macro-economic policy experts provided technical input and guidelines for gender analysis and planning (see following section on methodology).

High level consultation with Government and Donors

A two day workshop will be organised (26, 27 October 2000) to launch the findings in this report as well as two other gender related reports (*Engendering Development*, World Bank 2000, and *Gender Assessment of the Legal Framework*, Dr. Ngo Ba Thanh, 2000) and to discuss the recommendations presented here. It is anticipated that 4 sectoral working groups will refine the recommendations which will then be used as a basis for a subsequent national workshop to develop the next 10 Year Strategy and POA2.

National level consultation with Central and Local Government

A three day national conference will be organised (8, 9, 10 November 2000) to report back on the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (POA1), to consult with provincial and central level government authorities on finalising POA2, and to revise and strengthen the role and functions of NCFAW and the VWU. This conference will be attended by CFAW representatives from 50 ministries and 61 provinces.

1.4 Methodology

The above process is based on the premise that sound policy should be grounded in sound research. It therefore follows that gender sensitive policy and planning must be start with gender sensitive research. The methodology used to compile this report emphasises two distinct but mutually reinforcing approaches: the advancement of women and gender equality, using gender analysis and planning as a guiding tool.

It is important to distinguish between policies for the advancement of women and policies promoting gender equality. Policies which focus only on women do not necessarily address the complexities of the causes of women's disadvantaged status in relation to men. Thus there is a need to broaden the focus to include an analysis of gender relations: the relationship between women and men, as individuals and as groups, as well as the differential relationship between women, men and institutions, and how these relationships affect the work that they do, the productive resources they have access to and the benefits they receive, and their level of input into decision making processes in all spheres. The analysis of these gendered relationships reveals the causes of social, economic and political inequalities between men and women, and how they are embedded in individual behaviour patterns, institutional decision making processes, and in some cases the legal framework. These causes are related and mutually reinforcing, thus any strategy to address gender inequality must address issues at all levels: socio-cultural, institutional, and political.

Gender is a complex analytical construct which helps us to understand the causes of inequality between men and women, and thus formulate more gender sensitive policies. In order to analyse the critical gender issues and more importantly develop policy recommendations to address them, an analytical framework (described below) was designed to ensure a systematic and methodical approach to the research and analysis, and as a result to the policy recommendations. The researchers and analysts who contributed to this report have all applied this framework to 4 critical gender issues in their respective sectors. The causes and consequences of each issue are systematically highlighted, allowing policy recommendations to be developed for each of the causes and consequences.

Analytical framework for gender sensitive research and policy advice

Gender inequality both influences and is influenced by a range of factors which can be loosely clustered under the following headings:

- **Legal and policy framework:** enshrined in national laws and policies and international conventions.

- **Stakeholders:** national, international, government, non government institutions, community interest groups, who have an interest in or are affected by specific gender issues.
- **Poverty:** interpreted here as a condition characterised by systemic economic, social and political disadvantage (both relative and absolute). Causality may work in both directions: gender inequality can increase poverty and poverty can also intensify gender inequality.
- **Social norms and customs:** manifested in daily actions and decisions taken at the household level which have a gendered impact, as well as the gender stereotypes which inform those actions and decisions. It should be noted that the impact of these gender stereotypes is actually much wider than this and influences institutional practice as well as informs policy development and implementation. Likewise, policies influence the socio-economic environment in which intra-household decisions are being made every day. Policy makers must understand the intra-household dynamics and decision making patterns in order to formulate more gender sensitive policies³.

1.5 Common themes in policy recommendations

In order to assist policy makers to address critical gender issues in policy development and implementation, policy recommendations have been designed for each cause and consequence identified⁴. There are some common themes and concepts in the policy recommendations, which are summarised here.

Mainstreaming

The gender in public policy discourse refers to the concept of mainstreaming in relation to gender, and yet there is still some confusion as to what this means and how to approach this. It is useful to make the distinction between two different aspects of mainstreaming

- 1) *Mainstreaming women* means ensuring that women are adequately represented in all activities, especially in management and decision making.
- 2) *Mainstreaming gender* means ensuring that the policy agenda incorporates a gender perspective and that gender analysis becomes an integral part of policy analysis. Together these result in policies which reflect the priorities and needs of both men and women.

For example, having an institutional quota for women is a necessary but not sufficient condition to achieve the goal of gender equality. It is also necessary to strengthen the

³ For example, most family planning campaigns target married women, and yet it is often men, both married and single, who make decisions regarding contraception use.

⁴ Policy recommendations were developed using a standard format: Policy Objective, Policy Instruments (activities necessary to reach that objective), Measurable Indicators (quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure progress in achieving the objective).

institutional capacity for gender analysis to ensure that the policies and programmes reflect a gender perspective.

Legal and Policy Framework

It is increasingly recognised that all laws and policies have a gendered impact and therefore it is necessary to closely examine the gender implications of the broader legal and policy framework, and not just policies which explicitly state their relationship to women (which tends to be protective, and not always in the best interest of gender equality). Likewise it is important to look at not just national laws but also international or regional agreements (eg: UN Conventions and international trade agreements). Such an analysis will suggest possible amendments to ensure that all laws and policies are gender sensitive. In the spirit of the rights based approach adopted by the UN (UNDP Human Development Report 2000) it is also important to position policy recommendations in the broader context of the relevant UN Conventions (such as the Beijing Platform and Beijing Plus Five, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on Elimination of Violence against Women, ILO labour codes, Rights of Child.)

There are a number of challenges with respect to the legal and policy framework:

- Understanding the constraints to implementation of national policy and International Conventions. Strategies to overcome these constraints will have to be factored into plans and programmes.
- Drafting the appropriate policy for gender issues not currently covered by the legal and policy framework (such as gender gaps in education and sexual harassment).
- Some laws and policies are not implemented in a gender sensitive way because implementors do not explicitly recognise gender-specific constraints to implementation (for example the Land Law) and thus it may be necessary to raise awareness to ensure gender equitable outcomes.
- Some protective policies which are intended to safeguard 'women's rights', for example their 'right to take care of their families' or to retire earlier than men, actually have a potentially negative effect on women, and in addition reinforce traditional gender roles (for example maternity leave and benefits, requirement that employers with many women employees have creches). Policies which facilitate the involvement of both parents in childcare result in equalising the cost of social reproduction as well as promoting equal sharing of responsibility for family matters.

There is a need to strengthen gender sensitive policies to generate long term change, rather than just temporary measures, including:

- distributive policies focusing on de facto property rights and income,
- changes in the division of labour in paid and unpaid production through increased participation of women in the waged labour force and increased participation of men in unpaid household work,
- educational and training programmes to prepare women for the requirements of technological change and productivity increases in different sectors of the economy,

- addressing negative gender stereotypes which reinforce the unequal power relations between men and women,
- integrating gender targets and recommendations into mainstream policies and plans.

Institutional strengthening and capacity building

Policy change brings with it the opportunity to reassess the roles, functions, accountability, responsibility and capacity of key stakeholders. Section 6 of Part III on recommendations for POA2 includes an additional section on strengthening the role and function of the national machinery, understood as NCAFW and the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU), as well as the network of Committees for the Advancement of Women (CAFWs) in each line ministry and province. Emphasis is placed not only on the national machinery's role in terms of policy advice and monitoring, but also on placing responsibility and accountability for implementation of gender sensitive policies on the appropriate line ministries and other government bodies. Emphasis is also placed on the role of the line ministries and provinces, through the CAFWs, to take responsibility for implementing relevant policies in the POA2.

As stated by the Prime Minister in Announcement 207/TB/VPCP, dated 7 December 1999, *'Ministries, branches and people's committees in provinces and cities directly under the central authorities need to integrate gender issues in the national economic development plan and overall socio-economic development plan for the period from 2001 to 2010.'*

The NCAFW - CAFW network will require strengthening in terms of its capacity to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of POA2. This would require a revision of the NCAFW - CAFW's mandate to strengthen their political decision making position to include consultation and input into macro and sectoral policies. It will also require capacity building in both quantitative and qualitative gender analysis at macro (policy), meso (institutional) and micro (grassroots) levels: such as collection and interpretation of sex-disaggregated statistics, gender analysis of policy planning processes as well as outcomes and gender budgeting.

There should also be stronger linkages between VWU and NCAFW in order to capitalise on the grassroots experience of the VWU and the policy advice role of NCAFW. Both institutions would also benefit from stronger linkages to CAFWs in the key line ministries and government offices, and advocacy skills to ensure that their voices are heard at the highest level. As part of this process, technical capacity within CAFWs in each key line ministry and local government bodies should be strengthened to achieve gender equity in their policies and programmes⁵. Strengthening networks with other relevant national as well as regional or international gender research and advocacy groups would also be useful.

It will also be necessary to reassess the respective roles and functions of NCAFW and the VWU. The VWU is currently expected to take responsibility for addressing women's needs in a range of sectors: for example, maternal and child health and family planning, literacy, credit and micro-enterprise development, agricultural extension, domestic violence, and

⁵ The Technical Working Group in MARD provides an example of how this can be operationalised at ministerial level.

others. All of these activities in principle should fall under the remit of key line ministries such as MOH, MOET, MOLISA, MARD, MOF. To promote mainstreaming responsibility and accountability for gender, these activities should be recognised as the responsibility of key line ministries, leaving the VWU free to undertake more strategic activities such as awareness raising, research, analysis and advocacy, and the monitoring and evaluation of gender impact of policies and programmes.

Implementation

In the spirit of mainstreaming it is crucial for all key line ministries, government offices and mass organisations to take responsibility for implementing and financing activities to reach the targets set out in POA2. Gender should be an integrated part of all government strategy and policy development, implementation and monitoring activities. However, in extreme cases where there are major gaps, there is justification for stand-alone gender policies and programmes, in this case MOF and MPI should consider establishing a separate budget for implementing particular aspects of POA2.

Donors must also take responsibility for the above approach in their work and include gender as part of all projects in their on-going portfolio of development assistance, in addition to the necessary gender-specific projects. Donors also consider mainstreaming gender as the way forward: in an increasingly competitive development aid environment characterised by shrinking resources, donors are moving towards holistic sectoral approaches and partnerships, which must include a gender perspective.

Follow up

Throughout the course of this research and consultation process, it became increasingly clear that there is a need to deepen our understanding of gender in a number of areas in Viet Nam, such as the differential gender impact of poverty, and the impact of poverty on gender relations. Likewise, more work needs to be done on developing gender sensitive indicators, particularly for measuring more qualitative influences on gender equality such as awareness of rights, decision making power, self-confidence, and gender stereotypes. A number of recent international publications on development and gender look at many of these issues. These include *Attacking Poverty and Engendering Development*, World Bank 2000; *UNDP Human Development Report, Human Rights and Human Development*, 2000; *Progress of the World's Women*, UNIFEM 2000. These documents could be used as the basis for modeling future gender analysis and planning work in Viet Nam.

PART II - Synthesis

2.1 - Gender issues in Employment and Economic Status

Introduction

Socialist economies with centrally planned politically and socially oriented models of development, like Viet Nam before *Doi Moi*, have tended to be more responsive to women's interests than market economies. Political and social policies in Viet Nam from the late 1950s to the late 1970s, and mobilization for national defense increased women's socio-economic, administrative and political participation, particularly in the North. An emphasis on social and political goals largely through the public provision of social services considerably enhanced social development and women's and children's welfare above the levels that would have been predicted by economic indicators.

By the mid 1980s, however, seven out of every ten people in Viet Nam were living in poverty (Viet Nam Development Report 2000), and the country was suffering severe economic and social problems.

During the second half of the 1980s, Viet Nam like most other economies in the Asia-Pacific region adopted a market-oriented approach to economic development in order to increase the pace of economic growth and reduce poverty. Returning responsibility for agricultural production to the individual farming household and economic liberalisation together form the core of the new thrust of Viet Nam's *Doi Moi* or economic renovation. This has resulted in rapid economic growth, striking reductions in the incidence of poverty and improvement in the general wellbeing of the population. (Viet Nam Development Report 2000). New opportunities for investment, employment and entrepreneurial innovation have benefited women as well as men. However, the new emphasis on market forces and competition has also had critical consequences for women's position in the labour market, as well as their access to income and productive resources, and to health, education and welfare. The country's political commitment to equality is also being tempered by conflicting social values, which tend to be less progressive in terms of gender relations.

Economic renovation introduced a significant reduction in state subsidies to public services, the deregulation of the market and increased competition. The resulting redundancies in the state and co-operative sectors during 1990-92 affected women disproportionately. About 550,000 women lost their jobs during the downsizing of the state owned enterprises, compared to roughly 300,000 men. This loss was larger in relative terms, as employment in SOEs represented a larger share of wage employment among women. These changes to the employment sector resulted in large numbers of women leaving more secure wage and salary employment in these sectors and moving partially into less secure household

and informal sector work, where they now constitute about 70 to 80 percent of the workforce. Between 1991 and 1996, the number of private enterprises including micro and small enterprises increased four times. In many countries this is a dynamic sector that contributes to economic growth and poverty reduction. Those women who moved into profitable formal private business sectors received higher, though less secure, returns on their labor; the exact extent to which this happened is uncertain.

Reproductive work carried out in the pre-reform era by local crèches is often taken over by grandmothers or older girls, keeping girls out of school. This is not reflected in female enrolment rates, which have shown an upward trend. It does, however, perhaps influence female educational attainment if less time is spent on homework and additional classes. Thus the redistribution of reproductive labor in a way that concentrates it within the household has implications for the ability of women to engage in economically productive activities, for the quality of childcare and the prospects for long term improvement in the status of girl children.

The revival of the family farm and the development of household enterprises are central to the recent reforms. Under new Civil and Land Laws, individuals were granted rights to use, improve and trade land on a long-term lease basis, thus gaining personal benefit from any investment of labour or capital. Emphasis on the independent family units however, also tended to strengthen hierarchical relationships within the household, with women having less power and more work than men. The pressure on women to contribute labour to the family production unit has increased. This means that women's access to and control over household resources is largely dependent on family relations. Family labour, especially women's labour, has been substituted for the animal and mechanical power formerly provided by the communes. As managers of family farms or household enterprises, women have poorer access to bank credit, because certificates of land ownership and other valuable property are held in the names of male heads of household. They also have less information about borrowing opportunities and procedures and poorer access to the official approvals required to obtain loans, as well as to information on new technologies.

Women's access to child care has been reduced and the quality of public education and health care has declined. The cost of accessing these services has increased due to the withdrawal of state subsidies. In general, the average number of hours of housework required for the maintenance of the household has reduced over the decade due to economic growth and an increase in social goods and services. However, women continue to work considerably longer hours than men on housework and especially childcare (VLSS 1993; VLSS 1998) which limits women's ability to take advantage of opportunities for employment or education, or to rest.

Four key issues have been identified in regard to gender and women in the economic sector. These address:

1. Agriculture and rural development
2. Formal sector employment
3. Access to land use rights
4. Access to financial services

2.1.1 Agriculture and Rural Development

Background

The process of economic reform has resulted in fundamental changes to the legal status of farms, the organization, management and production of agriculture, and to rural social institutions and family relations. The status of women farmers and gender relations within the agricultural community have also been affected by changes in the larger economy.

In broad terms, reforms in agriculture between 1986 and 1997 introduced a shift from state managed collective system to a market-oriented household economy. This involved granting long term land use rights to households and enabling households to retain profits from subsidiary activities. The trade in agricultural inputs and outputs has been deregulated.

The family farm has thus become the basic unit of production, and individual farmers are now free to invest in and develop their land, and also pursue other forms of paid employment. Since the early 1990s the living standards of rural households has improved dramatically, due to rising agricultural incomes, and a diversification of both on-farm and off-farm activities. Agricultural incomes have risen dramatically by 61 percent (VLSS 1998).

With the dismantling of the cooperative system, services like child care, free education and health care, and collective use of machinery have been eliminated or replaced with fee-charging services. This has increased family reliance on women for productive as well as reproductive tasks.

The agricultural sector is likely to remain the most significant source of employment for women in the near future. With economic renovation, the rate of women engaged in agricultural activities has grown, and currently 68 percent of the female labour force is engaged in the agricultural sector, including farming, forestry and animal husbandry. Women represent 54 percent of the agricultural workforce. Of the new agricultural jobs created each year, women take up 92 percent. Over the last five years, men have tended to move from agriculture to non-farm employment, both self-employed and for wage earnings (Bales 2000).

Women are involved in all aspects of farming, and play a dominant role in rice production and animal husbandry as well as irrigation, food processing and marketing. Research indicates that women are also taking on farming tasks that have been traditionally done by men, and tasks formerly provided by the communes and carried out by either animals or machinery (UNIFEM 2000). In spite of women's significant contribution to agricultural production, they earn less than men, often for the same type of work (NCAFW 2000; VLSS 1998).

Economic renovation has given women the opportunity to engage in higher productivity activities and raise their incomes. However, a general lack of skills, low level of technology, reduced access to credit, limited access to training, competing responsibilities for domestic maintenance and reproduction tasks and limited say in fundamental decisions made in the household severely restrict women's ability to become successful farm entrepreneurs.

At the same time, in the coming years, the agricultural sector will increasingly be unable to absorb the annual expected 1.2 to 1.4 million new entrants to the labor market. Also, the potential for further agricultural productivity growth (as manifested in the past 10 years) in the current structure of small-sized farms is limited. This will mean that new entrants will either seek work in the off-farm rural enterprise sector if this takes off properly, or move increasingly to cities. The gender impacts of these expected shifts need to be understood better. It is important that women will not remain 'stuck' in sectors with low return on their labor.

Influencing Factors

While the overall rate of trained workers in Viet Nam is low, at less than 10 percent, the rate of women with technical training is even lower. Girls' access to primary education is virtually equal to boys, but the participation of girls declines in poor and ethnic minority areas, among the poor in other areas, and at the lower and upper secondary levels (VLSS 1998). Very few women pursue agricultural studies at vocational schools or colleges or at university. Furthermore, in spite of a dominant role in agriculture, women tend to receive less agricultural extension services than men.

Women represent only 25 percent of the participants in training programs for animal husbandry and 10 percent of the participants in programs on cultivation (MARD 1998:21; MARD 1999:34). Agricultural extension does not tend to address the needs of women as it generally focuses on areas of the sector and types of activities in which women are less likely to be involved. Livestock extension for example, receives less attention than cultivation extension. There are inadequate numbers of agricultural extension workers and almost no women working in the field.

In the agricultural sector, the emphasis on family-based production and economic development has led to a strengthening of the male dominated family, which has a negative effect on women's well being and productivity (UNIFEM 2000). Most agricultural decisions involving significant purchases or sales tend to be made by men. Discussions regarding agricultural activities at the village or commune level are traditionally carried out by men, even when they concern tasks generally done by women such as irrigation (Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1996). Traditional perceptions of the role of women in agriculture as inferior to the role played by men, are reinforced by men's control over some of the major factors of production, including land, access to credit, and access to technical skills.

Current economic trends may have serious implications for women in agriculture. With the movement towards globalisation and the resulting increase in international trade, industry and advanced technology, the nature of the agriculture sector as well as women's role in the sector is likely to change. An accelerated shift from subsistence agricultural production to the growing of cash and export crops introduces new opportunities as well as risks for women. On the one hand, the introduction of new technology could allow farmers to diversify and intensify their agricultural production, raising productivity and incomes and reducing their vulnerability to crop failure. However, research shows that capital intensive mechanisation of agriculture in other countries has resulted in the displacement of female labour, as men are preferred for operating heavy agricultural machinery (NCFAW 2000). The increase of new production methods through foreign investment is likely to displace traditional methods of production and land use, as well as small scale producers and

traders, the majority of which are women. Foreign investment in agriculture is still limited, however, and the sector is likely to be dominated by farming households for some time to come. The implications of current economic trends on women in agriculture should be explored and policy developed to address future needs of a large portion of the labour force.

Recommendations

1. Promote the involvement of women farmers in extension training, especially for animal husbandry, establishing a quota for women's participation within the regular training programme and developing additional training especially for women farmers. Provide child care for participants to reduce barriers to women's participation.
2. Promote the participation of girls and women in agricultural vocational training.
3. Foster women's access to off-farm employment opportunities through targeting them for information dissemination on the new Enterprise Law, vocational and business development skills training, access to larger size formal loans.
4. Promote the diversification of women's agricultural and off-farm activities to include higher value commodities such as fruit trees, mushrooms, fish, livestock and processed goods. Provide necessary support in terms of credit, market analysis and training for such activities.
5. Increase women's access to agricultural technology appropriate for the household level, including post harvest and food processing technology.
6. Expand rural women's access to credit and savings institutions that account for gender-specific constraints such as traditional forms of collateral, limited experience and training, limited ability to travel.
7. Enhance public opinion of women's role in agriculture through the schools, local government and mass organisations.
8. Research impact of economic change in Vietnam on women in agriculture, including the mechanisation and commercialisation of agriculture, and increased trade liberalisation.
9. Research impact on women and gender relations of expected shift of agricultural workers to off-farm rural enterprises.

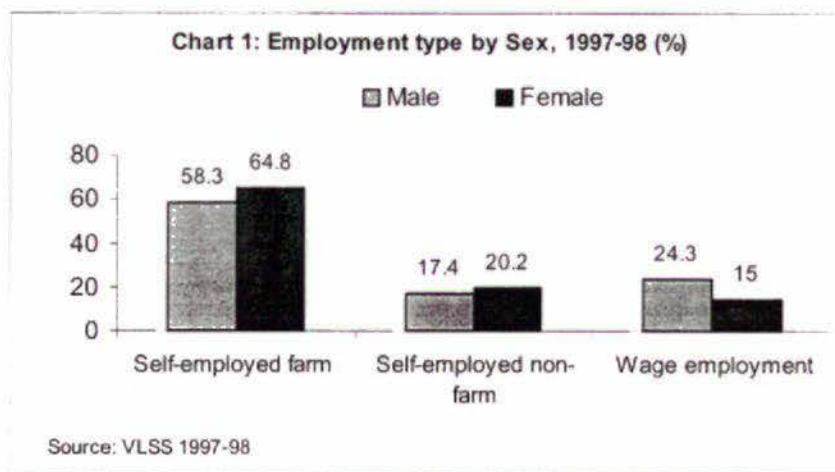
2.1.2 Formal Sector Labour Market

Background

Most workers in Viet Nam continue to be self-employed farmers. As the following chart indicates, 58 percent of men and 65 percent of women are self-employed farmers. Another 17 percent of men and 20 percent of women work as self-employed workers, but in the non-farm sector — in small-scale trading, household enterprises, etc. And only 24 percent of men and only 15 percent of women work for wages. Of these, the share working in the formal sector—which we define simply as wage jobs in the non-agricultural sector—are even smaller; only 20 percent of male workers and only 10 percent of female workers work in the formal sector. The informal sector, which comprises the self-employed non-farm plus the wage workers in agriculture, thus accounts for 22 percent of male workers and 26 percent of female workers. Thus, for both males and females, the predominant

employment type by far is self-employment in the agricultural sector, followed by employment in the informal sector, and lastly employment in the formal labor market.

In the future, as Viet Nam will industrialise and modernise, the share of wage employment will increase and that of the other two forms of employment will go down. In recent years, annual growth of wage employment has been at the rate of 3.5 percent per annum, with all of the growth coming in the formal sector: wage employment in industry has increased by 4.5 percent per annum, and that in services has grown by 7 percent per annum. Of all wage jobs, roughly 41 percent are in the state-owned sector, and 50 percent are in the private sector. Formal sector jobs usually offer the best level of earnings and benefits within the economy. In some areas of the sector, such as non-state-owned manufacturing, women play a dominant role. In fact, some of the foreign invested labour-intensive export-



oriented sectors (garments, shoes, food processing) which have grown significantly under *Doi Moi* have primarily created employment for young women. This experience is very similar to that of other East Asian countries in past 20 years. The positive impact of this development on the economic status of these women, their status in the family, their technical qualifications, should not be under-emphasized. This development is also creating extra incentives for parents to educate their girl children.

There are on the other hand, however, restrictions to women's participation in formal employment, and factors which limit women's ability to gain equal benefit from such employment. Viet Nam has a large set of 'protective' labour policies towards women employees relative to its development level, such as on retirement benefits, maternity benefits, exclusion of women from certain sectors deemed to be unhealthy or dangerous. While labour policies to protect pregnant women, for instance, are certainly warranted and in the interest of women as well as society, the costs of comprehensive protective policies should not be so high as to form a disincentive for employers to hire, train or promote women. Women are also restricted by Labor Law from working in fields that are considered dangerous to women's health. Laws should not restrict the choices of occupations that are available for women.

One major issue for workers in the formal sector is their retirement benefits. Women in Viet Nam are required to retire five years earlier than men—at the age of 55 years as compared with 60 years for men. Earlier retirement restricts women from earning full retirement benefits. And because women live longer than men, if pensions are not properly indexed to inflation, female living standards fall proportionately as they age (Engendering Development, World Bank 2000). In addition, because women will retire at 55 years, this prevents them from being promoted to the top leadership and senior positions since they will be forced to retire before they are able to reach those positions. The view in Viet Nam is that women should be “rewarded” by early retirement for their contribution to society. If that is the case, early retirement could be offered as an option and it could be left to individual workers to decide if they wanted to take up this option.

In Viet Nam, as in many other countries, women earn less than men for the same work. While some of these differences can be explained by the differences in the qualifications and years of experience of men and women, some part of the difference remains unexplained. In 1998, women earn an average of 87 percent of men's wage in all sectors of the economy. In the service sector, in which women dominate, women earn significantly less than men. This is partly because they are concentrated in the lower paying service jobs, such as teaching and health workers, while men are concentrated in the higher paying service jobs. For example, 28 percent of female wage earners are working in the government and social services sector, and only 19 percent of men work in this sector. In contrast, 9 percent of men and only 2 percent of women work in the transport and communications sector.

Influencing factors

The most important issue for the formal labor market is the kind of labor legislation that exists and how well it is implemented. Viet Nam has progressive labour legislation, which protects the rights of women to equal employment opportunities and conditions. The Labor Law states, for example, *“Employers are forbidden to exert discriminating actions against female employees...Employers must apply to men and women equal rules in employing, using, increasing salaries and paying employees. Employers must give women priority by employing a woman if she meets all requirements for the work which is suitable for both men and women and is needed by the enterprise”* (Chapter 10 article 111).

Labour Law requires firms employing large numbers of women to either provide childcare services or pay some of the private childcare costs paid by women. Furthermore, the government provides certain financial incentives in order to cover the costs for services for women.

In practice, however, the regulations and laws tend to leave room for interpretations, and include few specific guidelines for implementation. Methods for adequately monitoring or enforcing the implementation of labour policies do not exist, and the repercussions (accountability) for failing to implement the labour policies are unclear. The incentives to support enterprises are also not readily applicable. Protective labour legislation is therefore rarely implemented in either public or private enterprises.

In Viet Nam, as in many developing countries, the Government does not have enough resources to adequately monitor the implementation and enforcement of the labor

regulations. Strong labor unions that represent the rights of workers—rather than those of management—are needed for enforcing labor standards. As the country industrialises and as the private sector grows, issues of working conditions in factories, many of which will have a predominantly female labor force, will become more prominent. It is important that capacity is built in the Viet Nam Labor Union to monitor the implementation of labor legislation and to help workers protect their rights. The role of the labor unions will need to be different in a market-based, multi-sectoral economy, compared to their role in the existing economy which is dominated by state-owned firms.

Recommendations

1. Review the labor legislation to ensure that it does not make it too costly to hire female workers so that employers will discriminate against them.
2. Equalise the retirement age for both men and women.
3. Provide training and capacity building of the Viet Nam Labor Union so that it can begin to ensure that labor laws are being applied and workers' rights are being protected.
4. Develop affirmative action policies to promote more women in non-traditional areas and break through the 'glass ceiling' to move to higher levels.

2.1.3 Access to Land Use Rights

Background

Land is a critical resource for rural women. First, land access is important for household food security and for market-oriented agricultural activities. Second, to a large extent land ownership determines access to credit. Land, as the key household asset for most rural people, is a crucial factor determining economic and social status (Action Aid 1999).

Women and men are granted equal rights regarding property and assets through the Constitution and relevant laws governing ownership of property such as the Civil Code (1995), the Law on Marriage and Family (1986) and the Land Law (1993), and relevant regulations guiding implementation of these laws. However, certain aspects of the laws tend to counter the prior commitment to equality. Moreover, the implementation of laws and regulations regarding land, and the traditional values concerning the rights and roles of women, mitigate against women enjoying equal access to land use.

In general, women are in a poor legal and social position to influence decisions regarding land use. As heads of the household, men have the power to make decisions in most important matters such as land use and transfer, accessing credit, purchasing production tools, the division of labour within the family and the use of family income (Le Thi). In most households, men make the majority of the agricultural decisions (Desai 1995). The head of the household, usually male, has the dominant role in land use decision-making, and given that land is the household's most valuable asset, this results in men having more economic and legal power than other household members do.

According to the law, family members must be consulted before the householder can make decisions about the transfer, sale, rent, inheritance, mortgage and contribution of

land as equity for business. Agreement by family members should be authorised in writing or finger mark. Other adult members of the household may also legally represent the household if they have written authorisation from the householder. In practice however, there is little scope for women to challenge decisions regarding land (Oxfam Hong Kong 1999) and women are rarely able to carry out transactions using householder authorisation (Do Thi Binh 1996).

Women's access to information, training and other development programmes is also limited by their inferior legal status regarding land. The head of the household is considered to be the principal user of land and the target beneficiary in most agricultural development activities such as agricultural and forestry extension, credit schemes, meetings concerning access to common goods and services such as water and the dissemination of information. Although women play a dominant role in many aspects of agricultural production, as they are not registered heads of household, women tend not to be included in these activities (Esser 1996).

Influencing Factors

The Civil Code and the Land Law determine that in Viet Nam, all land is owned by the public and the Government exercises unified management over land. The Government allocates rights to land use to individuals and households for a long term period, from 20-50 years, and individuals and households are entitled to transfer, exchange, rent, inherit, and mortgage land use rights allocated to them.

Legally, land is considered the common property of all adult members of a household. The certification of the household's rights to land use however, is registered in the name of a single person, the householder. There is no mention of co-ownership in the Land Law.

Under the Civil Code, the householder is the legal representative of the household in civil transactions regarding allotted land, and it is understood that the householder carries out transactions for the common benefit of the household. When 80 percent of households are currently headed by men, and 20 percent headed by women, legal registration of land rights in the Land Use Certificate and other land management documents is mainly held by men (VLSS 1998).

The laws concerning land use rights do not specify individual rights, so that through marriage, divorce, and the death of a husband, women often lose access to the land held in the name of their father or husband. In principal, in the case of marriage, separation or divorce, women are allowed to rent or sell their land use rights, but in practice this is improbable, as the disposal of land is a family rather than an individual decision. As women are not co-owners of land they are not eligible to inherit from their husbands unlike adult children.

While the 1986 Marriage and Family Law grants husband and wife equal obligations and rights regarding commonly held property, under the Land Law, women are not co-owners, so they do not enjoy the legal rights common tenure. The 2000 Law on Marriage and Family stipulates that land certificates for household common land must list the names of both spouses, indicating shared possession. Implementation of the law in 2001 will require the re-printing and issuance of land certificates, with the provision of two title holders, and this will become the basis for women's equal rights to land use.

The implementation of land management and administration tends to be carried out by men and to focus on men. The General Department for Land Administration has a largely male staff and leadership, and little experience or training regarding gender issues. The People's Committees at the district and commune level are responsible for administering the transfer and exchange of land use rights at district and commune levels, and for managing and monitoring these changes. Furthermore, women are not generally invited to land related meetings and thus do not attend, and do not receive information about the allocation process and their land tenure rights (Oxfam GB 1997; MARD 1998; Oxfam Hong Kong 1999).

As the actual role of women in the agricultural sector increases, there is some change in traditional attitudes towards women's status in the community. In general, however, gender stereotypes and patriarchal thinking is dominant in the rural areas. Inheritance of land rights and assets as well as associated wealth and power passes through the oldest son, often bypassing daughter and widow. It is generally assumed that the head of household should be male, and female heads of household have little status in the community. At the commune and village level, decisions regarding land, infrastructure, economic development and other associated issues tend to be considered the responsibility of men. Within the family, men dominate in decision-making related to the buying and selling of major assets. There is some evidence however, that as women take on a larger share of the agricultural work they also make more decisions regarding production, and that some men recognise this trend (Rural Women in the Red River Delta 1996; Hoang Ngoc Phuong 2000). Local government and administration tend to perceive land, agriculture and business to be male issues and prefer to work with men within the household.

Finally, women themselves tend to be unsure about their legal rights on land use, and receive little counsel of such rights.

Recommendations

1. Amend the Civil Code to ensure that both spouses are listed as co-householders with equal rights and obligations to represent the household in civil transactions regarding land.
2. Amend the household registration regulations to indicate that the spouse currently named as household member is recognised by law as a co-householder with equal rights to represent the household in civil transactions.
3. Re-issue Land Use Certificates to include the name of both spouses as co-householders. Revise existing Land Registration Ledgers to include both spouses as co-householders.
4. Provide training on gender implications of land issues for government officers responsible for the allocation and management of land, and judges responsible for settlement of land disputes.
5. Provide information for women, especially poor and ethnic minority women, on land rights. Establish a system for the provision of advice and support for women on negotiating land transactions.

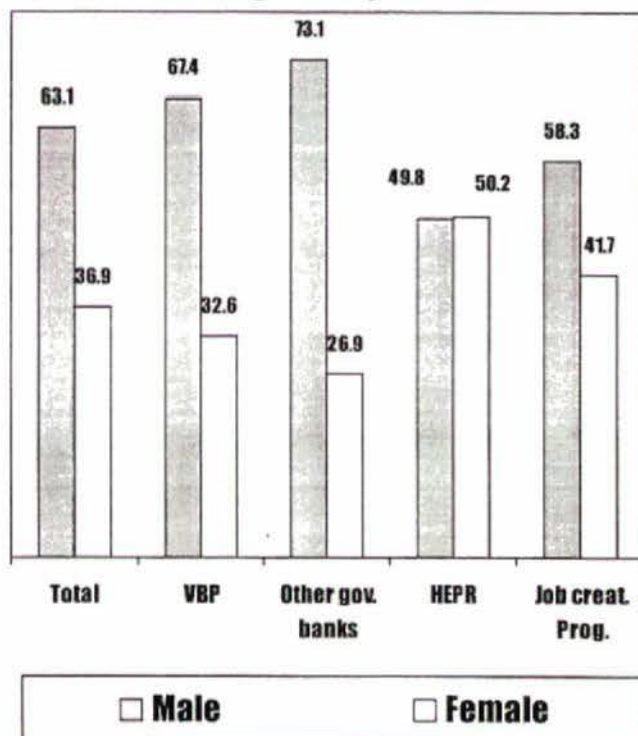
2.1.4 Access to Capital and Financial Services

Background

International research has shown that providing women with greater access to savings institutions and credit enhances their economic status and security, and helps improve household welfare (World Bank 2000). When women have access to credit, their social position within the family and the community tends to improve, and their role in decision-making tends to increase (BDFW 1998). In general, however, female-run enterprises in developing countries tend to be undercapitalised, which reduces the ability of women to take advantage of opportunities and increases their vulnerability in the face of family crises and economic dislocation (World Bank 2000).

In Viet Nam, the shift to a market economy has resulted in greater financing needs for both men and women. The significant demand for credit has resulted in a wide range of services, both formal and informal. The state commercial bank, the Viet Nam Bank for Agriculture (VBA), for example, reaches at least 4 million farmers every year, serving between 30 and 40 percent of the farming households through a network of branches at all levels (Dao Van Hung 1999). Other formal sources include the State Bank, the Viet Nam Bank for the Poor (VBP) and People's Credit Funds. International organisations, NGOs and mass

Outstanding loans by sex 1997-98



Source: VLSS 1997-98; gender analysis by GENCEN

organisations provide semi-formal sources of credit, and the informal sector, including, moneylenders, traders and relatives is very active. The use of official savings institutions is very limited, however several kinds of informal savings practices exist involving cash, gold and livestock (Le Roy and Robert 1999).

Women in Viet Nam tend to face more difficulties than men do in accessing formal sources of credit, and predominate as borrowers in the informal sector, where they face higher interest rates and limited funds. Less than 10 percent of loans from the Viet Nam Bank of Agriculture are to women and one district-level study revealed that only 2.5 percent of borrowers from the VBA were women (Esser 1997). Data from the 1998 VLSS show that women hold 41 percent of all loans, but only 29 percent of loans from official sources. Access to credit of any kind is the most problematic for the poor in general and poor women in particular.

Surveys report that in Viet Nam men generally dominate in decisions related to borrowing money and investing loan funds. Only when women are able to access credit through specialised programs do they control loan funds.

Influencing Factors

According to the Law on Credit Institutions, the Government monitors and manages all banking activities. By law, preferential credit services in terms of funding, interest rates, terms of payment and payment period should be provided to the poor and people in difficult situations and in people in rural, mountainous, island and remote areas. In practice, however, it is difficult for formal credit systems to provide suitable credit to these borrowers, and there are few incentives for credit officers to serve these customers.

Bank procedures are complicated and require many documents and certifications. This creates serious difficulties for those people, including many poor women, who have limited education, access to information and influence within government and Party administration. The process of application can become so time-consuming that the opportunity cost of the loans does not warrant the effort (Dao Van Hung 1999).

There are higher transaction costs to providing banking services in remote areas, for farmers and to poor people, including women. Isolation makes service delivery more expensive. Loans for agriculture involve higher risks than non-agricultural loans. To ensure high repayment rates, more monitoring activities are required and technical assistance may be necessary. Commercial banking is less likely to be successful for these clients than other not-for-profit institutions.

Women in particular are disadvantaged from accessing loans by the lack of collateral. Currently, women are not legally registered as householders on Land Use Certificates, which are generally used as collateral. Government policy indicates that the VBA can provide loans of up to 5 million VND without collateral, but in practice VBA staff require a property list and collateral trust of the Chairman of the Commune People's Committee. The amount of loan does not exceed 80 percent of property value. In the case of failure to pay, bank staff will deduct funds to the value of the unpaid loan from the commune budget. Many commune chairmen therefore, refuse to provide a collateral trust (NEU and Viet Nam Farmers Association 1998). Women's lower status and power in the community makes it more difficult for them to receive the support of the Commune People's Committee, which is often a key factor in obtaining approval for credit.

Traditional social values assign financial decisions regarding larger sums of money to men rather than women, believing that men are more forward looking. External relations, including negotiations with government or bank officials is also considered to be more appropriate for men than for women. Thus men and women alike have lower expectations for women's participation in the financial sector, and women may be discriminated against when they seek financial services.

Currently, the Women's Union has the most extensive credit program for women, with a revolving fund totally 4 000 billion VND, which reaches women in all regions and all levels of the country. VWU micro-credit schemes do not require collateral, but set strict savings requirements, and ensure good monitoring by members of savings-credit groups. Loans are generally small (300 to 800 000 VND), have easy terms, follow simple application procedures and are administered at the hamlet, village or commune level. They integrate their savings and credit services, with other development activities such as family planning, literacy training, nutrition, information exchange, and agricultural extension. The rate of repayment is usually above 90 percent. VWU has often implemented credit and savings schemes for international donors and now receives foreign funds to support its own financial services for women.

However, women seeking larger sums of money cannot access them through the VWU. The VWU is not a professional credit institution and most of the agents are not trained bankers. Without improved legal status, and improved professional skills the VWU may not be able to expand or sustain its financial services over the long term. The VWU may therefore do better to concentrate on its traditional role as 'credit broker' for its members, eliminating structural discrimination in formal financial institutions and providing banks with community development services.

International NGOs and international organisations also provide micro-credit schemes, which tend to be similar to those provided by the VWU. At least 70 percent of all beneficiaries of internationally sponsored micro-credit programs are women. As with the VWU, credit and savings projects provided by international donors have no legal status within the system of banking activities. This may affect the sustainability of these credit schemes.

Recommendations

1. Establish legal status for non-formal micro-credit schemes.
2. Review and simplify VBA and VBP lending procedures for the purpose of targeting prioritised customers, including women. Review and enforce the implementation of VBA non-mortgage lending policy.
3. Establish credit guarantee funds as a substitute for collateral.
4. Diversify financial services to increase access to women, such as installment lending and incentives schemes for bank accounts opened and managed by women.
5. Strengthen community-based savings schemes through mass organisations such as the VWU.
6. Provide training for women regarding their rights, opportunities and options with regard to the formal banking structure.
7. Develop the role of the VWU as a broker between VWU members and the formal credit institutions.
8. Explore options for the future involvement of the VWU in micro-credit and savings for women through strategic planning activities. Enhance the financial management skills of VWU staff and officers.

Conclusion

Creating opportunities for women to have employment and income which are equal to that of men not only enhances women's economic status but also mobilises the entire labour force to effectively participate in economic activities, thus reinforcing economic growth and social development. Micro-economic research in countries with low-income levels have shown that gender inequity exerts a considerably negative impact on productivity, thereby reducing national economic growth. In addition, strengthening women's economic status also increases their level of respect and decision making power within the household and the wider community (Engendering Development, World Bank. 2000: 38-39).

2.2 - Gender issues in Education & Human Resource Development

Introduction

Over history, education has been highly valued among Vietnamese people, and the country's leaders have long recognized the importance of education for national as well as personal development. Since the introduction of socialist rule, the government has undertaken significant efforts to provide basic literacy education for adults and primary education for children, as well as develop a complete education and training system from pre-school to post-graduate university. Equal access to education and training for women and men was enshrined in the Constitution in the early years of the socialist government, and girls and women participate at all levels of education as learners, teachers and trainers.

The results of this effort have been impressive. The national literacy rate stands at nearly 90 percent. Primary school enrolment is almost universal, gender differences in primary school are comparatively small and the quality of basic education has been gradually improving through the introduction of a reformed curriculum. During the last ten years, higher education has increased 100 percent. Vocational training centres have expanded in major cities and towns, and access to vocational and professional training has increased rapidly. In rural areas, agricultural extension services have been established in all provinces to provide training for farmers.

However, major challenges in education and human resource development still exist. Children's participation and achievement rates are significantly lower in the mountainous areas and in the Mekong Delta, than they are in other parts of the country. Performance rates of children, especially at the lower and upper secondary level are low, reflecting a need to address not only school enrolment but also education quality, grade repetition and drop out rates (Desai 2000). Professional and technical qualifications of the labour force remain low, especially in the rural areas.

Over the last 25 years Vietnam has made remarkable progress towards the objective of gender equality in education. At the primary level for example, there is very little difference in the rate of enrolment of boys and girls (VLSS 1998). In spite of a commitment to equality of opportunity for girls and women and great achievements in practice, there are still a number of gender issues in the area of education and training. The rate of girls attending primary and secondary education in poor and ethnic minority areas remains low. Although women play a dominant role in the farming sector of the country, women farmers have inadequate access to agricultural extension services. School textbooks reflect and reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, which may result in girl students adopting domestic and subservient roles within the society, limiting their choices and opportunities. Although access to higher education and vocational training has expanded, and the number of female students has increased significantly in both universities and secondary technical schools, the number of women with technical qualifications is still low. Fewer women than men have training of any kind. In 1999, for example, just over 3 percent of the total rural women aged 13 and over have technical qualifications. The percent of women over the age of 13 with technical qualifications was approximately 6% in 1999, while for men it was 9%.

Furthermore, women are over represented in areas of training and education such as pedagogy and social sciences, while male students dominate in technical disciplines. This segregation is likely to limit women's ability to participate in the changing labour market, as well as the country's ability to develop a trained and flexible human resource with which to build a modern economy.

Improving the situation of women in the education sector will be a complex and long-term process, involving the development and implementation of a range of policies and programmes. Four critical issues have been identified as being most timely and most readily addressed by policy, affecting most women, and having both immediate and strategic significance. These are:

1. The rate of girls attending primary and lower secondary education is low in poor and ethnic minority areas.
2. School textbooks reflect and reinforce gender stereotypes.
3. Women are segregated in certain fields of study and inadequately prepared to participate in the changing labour market.
4. Women in rural areas have inadequate access to agricultural extension services.

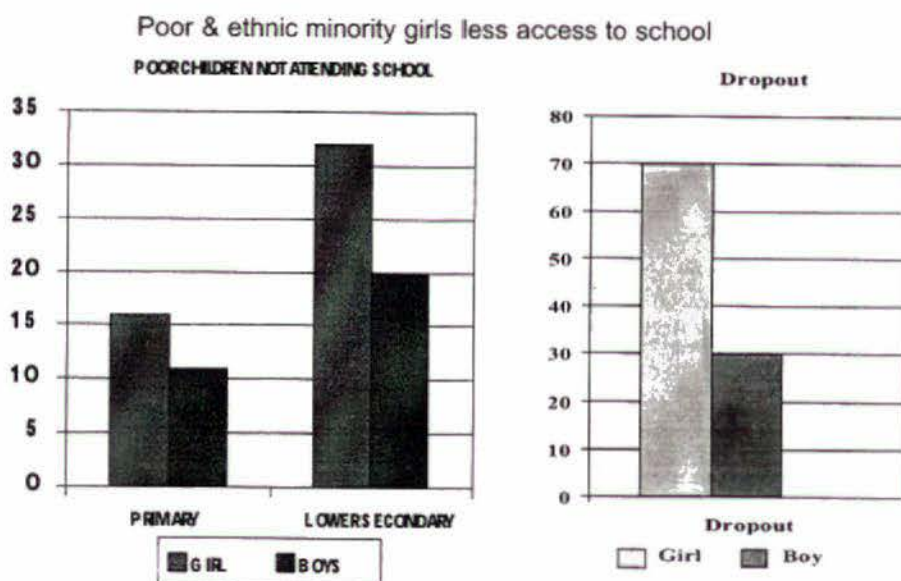
2.2.1 School attendance in poor and ethnic minority areas

Background

Over the last decade, Vietnam has made great achievements in the primary and lower secondary school levels, with high overall enrollment rates and relatively small differences between males and females (Desai 2000). These gains, however have not been consistent in all regions and between all socio-economic and cultural groups. Children from the more remote, and poor and ethnic minority areas have lower rates of participation and achievement, this is especially true for girls.

In 1999, 1.1 million out of a total of 16.5 million children aged 6 to 14 have never attended school (Census 1999). Of the children currently not in school, 87 percent were from rural areas and 50 percent were from ethnic minority areas. These children are more likely to be from the poorest segment of society (Desai 2000). Amongst the poor, girls have fewer opportunities for education than boys do. In 1998, in the poorest quintile, the rate of girls who had not attended primary and lower secondary school was 16 and 32 percent, respectively, while for boys the rate was 11 and 20, respectively (Desai 2000).

At the lower secondary school level, children's participation in school decreases, as their ability to contribute to the household maintenance and income-earning activities increases. While in urban areas, the gender gap between girls' and boys' school enrolment at this level is insignificant, in the poorest segment of the population and amongst ethnic minorities, girls' enrolment is 11 percent lower than boys, and this rate has remained stable over the last five years (Desai 2000). Across all segments of the population, girls represent 70 percent of all dropouts (MOET 1999; UNDP 1999).



As in the future, schoolgirls become mothers, it has been widely demonstrated that girls' education can affect all aspects of development (World Bank 1996). In Viet Nam, women who have completed lower secondary school have a fertility rate 53 percent lower than those without schooling (VLSS 1998). Child mortality is 75 percent lower for children whose mothers completed lower secondary school, than for children whose mothers had no schooling (Oxfam 2000). Children of more highly educated mothers have more opportunities to go to school and tend to stay in school longer. Furthermore, the less educated households have the highest incidence of poverty. Research demonstrates that investment in girls' education can increase labour productivity and income (Bales 2000). Therefore, increasing the school enrolment of girls from families in poor, remote and ethnic minority areas is an effective method of improving the standard of living of the girls, as well as their families and communities.

Influencing Factors

Lower enrolment rates for girls from poor, remote and ethnic minority areas are a result of a failure to target the participation of these students, and a series of mitigating factors which encourage parents to keep girls at home rather than sending them to school. Laws and policies do not address the specific needs of girl children, but subsumes these needs within the broader concern for basic education (Desai 2000). Laws which are intended to safeguard girls' participation in school, namely the Marriage and Family Law and the Labour Law, are not adequately enforced. Educational research which influences policy development has not considered gender issues in its analysis of schools and education in Viet Nam, and standard statistical information on education tends not to be disaggregated by sex.

A number of financial issues restrict the participation of girls from poor, remote and ethnic minority areas. Sixty five percent of public spending in education goes to the higher levels of education, which favors students from the middle and higher income families, as only

30 percent of the poor advance beyond primary school (Oxfam 2000). While tuition is free at the primary level, additional fees for school construction and maintenance, school materials, uniforms, textbooks and other costs must be paid by individual families, and are a heavy burden on the household budget of the poor. Poor families face not only direct costs for education but also opportunity costs associated with sending a child to school, which represent the loss of the child's labour on household maintenance tasks and income-generating activities. In low income families, especially where the household enterprise is the main source of income, the opportunity cost of sending girl children to school beyond primary level is high (Desai 2000). A system of fee exemption operated by the Provincial People's Council exists, but poor families do not tend to receive such exemptions, and the difficulties of girl children are not taken into consideration in the assessment of need (PER 2000). Poverty alleviation programmes also do not address the educational costs of poor children (MOLISA 1998).

Factors affecting the quality of schooling and practical issues such as a lack of school buildings and poor school facilities also discourage the participation of students. In remote and ethnic minority areas, there are too few teachers and these are generally poorly qualified, often recently graduated teachers from lowland areas on two-year terms. Significantly fewer teachers are ethnic minorities, with similar language and cultural knowledge as the students. Of those who are ethnic minority, fewer still are women. School facilities are also poor, lacking water and sanitation, school materials, or other amenities. Under these circumstances, the quality of education tends to be low, reducing the success rate of students and the relevance of sending children to school. As there are also insufficient schools, children must travel for long distances in order to attend. Nine percent of the northern mountainous communes, for example, have no local primary school (GSO, 1998). Families are discouraged from allowing young children to begin school and older children to attend regularly. For girls, the safety issue is an additional limiting factor.

Community involvement in the schools is limited, neither supporting the teachers and the school program, nor families who are struggling to keep their children in school. The number of pre-primary schools is limited especially in poor, remote and ethnic minority areas, reflecting the lower interest in education and the lack of funds required to establish and maintain the programmes. With insufficient pre-primary schools, girl children must often care for younger siblings rather than attend school or do homework, negatively influencing their educational opportunities and study results.

Finally, throughout society, and particularly among poor and ethnic minority families, gender biases influence parents' decisions regarding school attendance in favour of boys. It is understood that girls' place is in the home and on the farm, in both the present and the future, thus reducing the relevance of education. Boys' role, in contrast, is to provide for the future of the family, justifying present sacrifices for boys' education.

Recommendations

1. Develop ways of promoting understanding and concern among policy makers and educators regarding the specific needs and interests of girl children. Disaggregate education statistics by sex. Encourage gender analysis of the education sector in Viet Nam. Research girls' attendance patterns and identify appropriate means of intervention to reduce girls' drop out at the lower secondary level.

2. Increase budget allocation for primary and lower secondary education to poor and ethnic minority areas in order to improve education quality. Develop mechanisms to ensure tuition exemptions target the poor. Provide funds for the poorest communes to cover parents' contribution for girls, possibly through existing poverty alleviation programmes. Ensure that at least 50 percent of all scholarships are awarded to girls.
3. Set quotas for the participation of ethnic minority girls and women at boarding schools and teacher training colleges.
4. Establish mobile teacher training units to provide short term teacher training in remote areas.
5. Support the further development of the pre-school system in remote areas, through government-community joint ventures, sponsorships and other funding arrangements.
6. Increase the role of local government, mass organisations and parent associations in mobilising and supporting parents to keep girls in school through the lower secondary level. Increase public awareness of the benefits of girls' education.

2.2.2 Gender stereotypes in school textbooks

Background

Within the Vietnamese education system, official school textbooks are the principal tools for teaching all subjects and all levels. They are the official source of learning material for children, and provide both information and guidelines for teachers to use in the preparation and presentation of lessons. Textbooks guide the intellectual, emotional and social development of both teachers and students, and thus are highly influential documents.

In most formal education systems worldwide, textbooks reflect accepted social values, and reinforce conventional attitudes and behaviors. For that reason, textbooks often include common stereotypes or generalisations about groups of people, which do not portray the full range of human diversity or potential (Government of Australia, Department of Education 1991). Gender stereotypes are ideas or beliefs about girls and women, their physical characteristics, personality traits, abilities and role in society. Textbooks often portray males and females in traditional roles and occupations, which are even more sex-segregated than those they actually fulfil in society.

Gender stereotypes in school textbooks provide students with an insufficient or biased understanding about the world, which influences their attitudes toward themselves and others. When gender stereotypes are presented in school textbooks, they tend to limit expectations of students' ability and consequently limit access, participation, performance and outcomes. Gender stereotyping also adversely affects children's occupational aspirations (Leo-Rhynie 1999) by limiting what they consider to be acceptable choices.

An analysis of a selection of school textbooks for three subject areas, Viet Language, Ethics and Citizenship, demonstrated the prevalence of gender stereotyping in Vietnamese school textbooks. The images and ideas presented in the school textbooks showed girls and women in traditional roles and occupations in the home, on the farm or as doctors and nurses, working, taking care of others and doing manual work. Girls and women were presented as timid, emotional, hard working, dependent on the help of others, and

inferior to men. Boys and men were shown in less traditional and restricted roles and occupations, working and playing, in the community and the broader society, as leaders, scholars, explorers, and technically trained workers. Boys and men were presented as strong, rational, confident, technically competent, independent and well respected by others (Viet Language, Grades 1-5, MOET 2000; Ethnic, Grade 7, MOET 2000; Citizenship, Grade 9, MOET 2000).

Gender stereotypes in school textbooks influence teachers as well as students, particularly teachers' expectations regarding students' behaviour, school performance, training and higher education choices and future occupations. Combined with teachers' own gender bias, stereotypes in school textbooks contribute to gender segregation in the labour market.



Girls are timid, helping in housework.



Men are decisive, dealing with important issues

Influencing factors

Gender is not a common construct in research and policy development concerning education in Viet Nam. Educators and writers of educational material are not sensitive to the role of gender stereotypes in textbooks, and the approval of official textbooks, which is controlled by a specialised Textbook Appraisal Committee, considers only pedagogical and not gender issues. There is no other forum for the review of educational materials by independent research, and little prior interest in the area.

Recommendations

1. Provide gender awareness training for the members of the Textbook Appraisal Committee, the writers of curriculum and school textbooks. Include gender sensitive images as one of the criteria for assessing acceptability of textbooks.
2. Revise school textbooks and curriculum to reflect positive images of gender equality in both the text and the illustrations.
3. Improve the gender sensitivity of teachers through formal teacher training system and in-service training opportunities.
4. Introduce gender awareness units in school curriculum at the lower secondary level.

2.2.3 Sex segregation in education

Background

Over the period of economic restructuring, the economy of Viet Nam has grown and changed considerably. Currently, the areas of greatest growth, in terms of contribution to the GDP and the rate of absorption of employment, are industry and services (GSO 1999; Bales 2000). The proportion of trained persons in the labour force, however, is relatively low, and available skills are not suitable for the expanding economic sectors, which are based on new skills and technologies. Fewer women than men have specialised training. Around six percent of working-age women have technical training and about two percent have higher education, while the rates for men are around ten and three percent, respectively (Bales 2000:72).

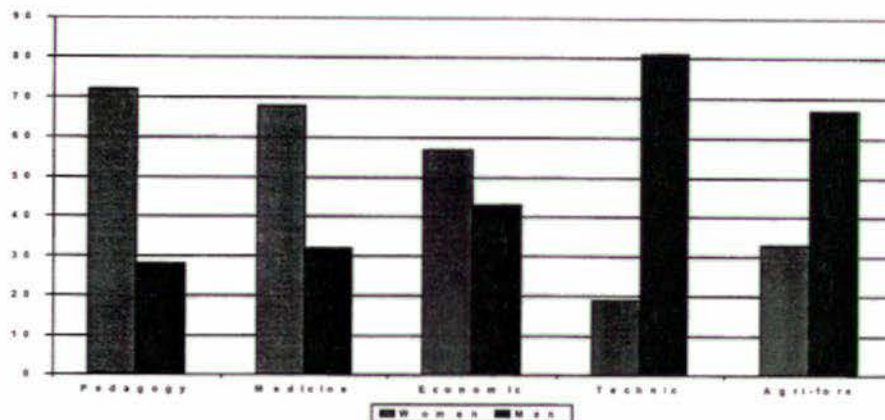
The areas of training and education pursued by women tend to be in traditionally female dominated fields such as pedagogy and social sciences, which limits their choice of occupation to corresponding sectors within the labour market. Men have a higher rate of participation in more technical fields, such as technology, agricultural science and natural science (MOET 2000). Over the last ten years, sex segregation by field of study has increased at certain levels of the education system, with women's rate of participation in technical fields decreasing while men's rate of participation has increased (MOET 2000). Women also have lower rates of participation in higher levels of education.

Women's work is also sex segregated, with women dominating in education, health care, sales and services, agriculture, food processing and textiles. Men dominate in heavy industry, electronics, utilities, construction, transport and communications and professional or managerial occupations (Bales 2000).

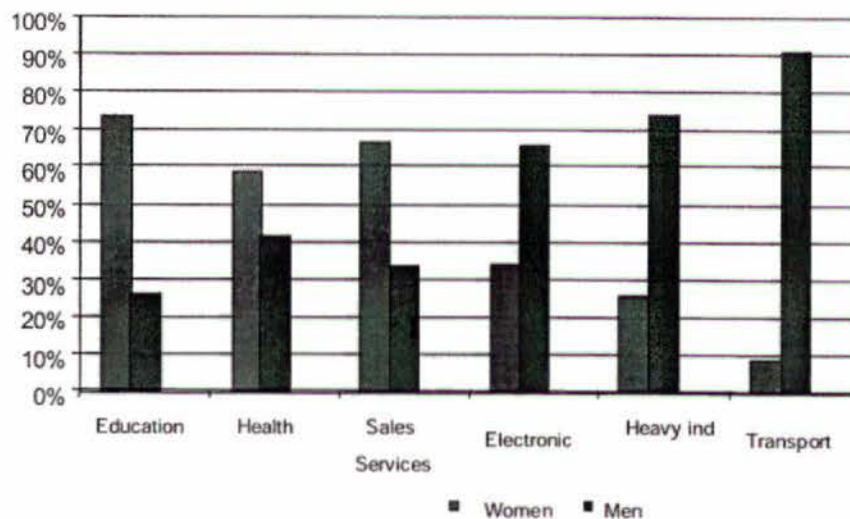
Sex segregation within the labour market tends to restrict women's access to higher income and higher prestige positions and sectors. Traditionally female dominated sectors tend to be lower paying and have lower social status. In all sectors, men hold more prestigious and higher-paid positions, while less prestigious and less well paid positions are held by women. In the teaching profession, for example, which is a female dominated profession, the majority of the primary school teachers are women, while the majority of secondary school, college and university teachers are men. Far fewer women than men are employed as headmasters at all levels of the system. Higher levels of training are required in order to work at the higher levels of teaching and management, which often restricts women to the lower levels of the system, and the lower-paid and lower-prestige positions.

Women's lower participation in training and education in the technical fields tends to exclude them from jobs and professional careers in the promising field of high technology, or restrict them to assembly work or other untrained positions. As Viet Nam moves towards the modernisation, and a greater role for technology, the country will face a growing need for a flexible labour force with technical, managerial and high-level skills, which women are unlikely to be able to provide.

Sex segregation by field of study in University



Sex segregation by occupation: Women are concentrated in education, health, services; men are concentrated in electronic, transport



Influencing factors

Prevailing social values assert that women are less adept at technical tasks and less career oriented than men, and that men rather than women should take positions of leadership and responsibility within the workplace. Thus the segregation of women in 'female areas of study', 'female sectors' of the economy and inferior positions within the workforce is expected and accepted. Policy makers or educators at various levels have not considered the segregation of women in 'traditionally female' areas of study an issue, and little has been done to facilitate women's admission to more technical disciplines. None of the programmes designed to encourage participation in technical and technological

fields are targeted at women. In some areas and disciplines, universities have in fact restricted enrollment to men (MOET 2000).

Insufficient labour market information and poor linkages with vocational and professional training and higher education limit employment, human resource development and education forecasting. Furthermore, job recruitment and promotion practices discriminate against women in the labour market and limit women's access to technical and non-traditional occupations and higher positions. Such barriers to entry and promotion restrict women's real choice regarding area of study to those in which they expect to be restricted in terms of finding employment.

Recommendations

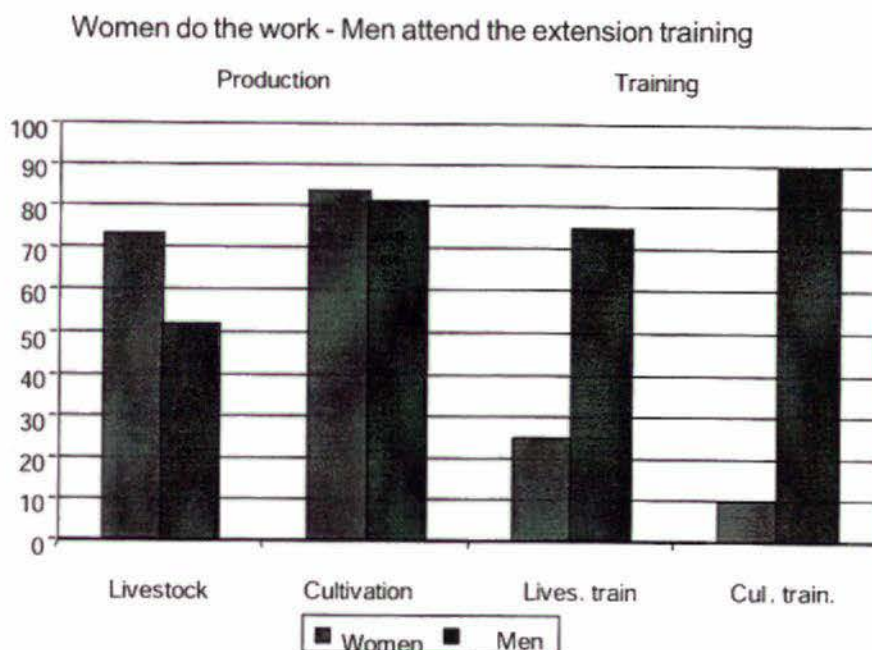
1. Raise gender awareness among education planners. Integrate gender analysis in the setting of targets for enrollment levels in vocational and higher education. Increase the influence of future labour market needs on gender equitable educational and human resource development planning.
2. Conduct research on sex segregation in both education and employment and the influence of sex segregation on the labour market. Explore ways of increasing women's involvement in non-traditional areas of study and work.
3. Increase women's participation in technical fields of study. Eliminate restrictions on women's participation in all areas and levels of education and training. Establish quotas for women's enrollment in technical disciplines at vocational schools and universities. Provide scholarships and internships for women to study in technical fields and especially high technology. Develop methods to attract female teachers in non-traditional areas at all levels of the education and training system.
4. Conduct research into discrimination against women in the labour market. Develop legislation to restrict sex discrimination in the workplace, especially in recruitment promotion practices, and methods to enforce labour legislation.

2.2.4 Access to agricultural extension

Background

In Viet Nam, women play a dominant and expanding role in agriculture. Between 1993 and 1998, the number of female farmers increased by almost 1 percent every year, while the number of men involved in agriculture decreased. At present, more women than men are involved in the cultivation, animal husbandry, agricultural processing and the selling of agricultural products (Desai 2000). In the production of livestock such as pigs, chickens and ducks, women are responsible for almost all aspects of the process (MARD 1998). Women also play an active role in the cultivation of rice and other short-term crops.

In agricultural extension training, however, women participate far less often than men. Women represent only 25 percent of the participants in training programmes for animal husbandry and 10 percent of the participants in programmes on cultivation (MARD 1998:21; MARD 1999:34).



As agriculture has become feminised over the 1990s, increasing the income of female farmers is an important factor for the reduction of poverty in rural areas (World Bank 1999:49). Improving the skills and knowledge of women farmers in animal husbandry and the cultivation of short-term crops is one of the key factors in increasing productivity and income. Training in animal husbandry in particular can play an important role in the increase of income, as the production of livestock grants a higher return than the cultivation of rice. The provision of training in this area also has been shown to reduce the risk of livestock loss which can cause serious financial difficulties especially for poorer households (World Bank 1999).

Current agricultural extension services do not meet the needs of many farmers in Viet Nam. The training needs of women receive even less attention, as agricultural extension tends to focus on areas of the sector and types of activities in which women are less likely to be involved. Livestock extension, for example, receives less attention than cultivation extension.

The type of extension services also tends to neglect the low input and small-scale approach to agriculture, which is more common to women and poor farmers. One of the most common agricultural extension activities, for example, is the introduction of new seed and breed varieties. This presumes the availability of inputs to maintain such varieties, which poorer farmers and many women do not have.

Another common technique, the demonstration plot, is carried out in conjunction with a successful farmer, who has ample land, capital and skill (MARD 1998). These farmers are seldom women and almost never poor, as women farmers lack the land and funds needed to take part in and learn from the demonstration fields (Christoplos 1998). Similarly, livestock extension services for farm animals generally concentrate on regular vaccinations, the control and treatment of animal diseases and advice regarding the use of cross-breed

animals, rather than the selection of local breeds, feeding using local products, and the prevention of diseases (MARD 1998:16; The Vietnam-Sweden Mountainous Development Program 1999:75). Furthermore, agricultural extension services mostly do not include instructions on the processing and marketing of agricultural products, which are carried out mainly by women (GSO 1999).

Influencing Factors

Policy on agricultural extension does not stipulate the specific needs of women farmers, and gender concerns have not been integrated into the research, planning, or implementation of any official programmes or activities initiated by the Department of Agricultural Extension. There are inadequate numbers of agricultural workers and almost no women working in the field. Training for extension workers tends to be traditional with a technical orientation, and little attention to participatory methods or communication skills. Gender issues are not part of the training curriculum for extension workers. Agricultural extension training is usually not targeted at women farmers, especially poor women, and the VWU is often given the responsibility of providing agricultural extension to women, which further marginalises women from mainstream agricultural extension activities. Finally, women's access to agricultural training is limited by personal roles and responsibilities. They often have prior commitments to the daily household maintenance and income-generating tasks, which interfere with attending courses. Their participation in courses is also limited by the need to obtain approval from their husbands in order to attend, and the general understanding within the community as in society at large, that women farmers do not need or can not use new skills and knowledge in order to do their work.

It can be concluded that the current agricultural extension services do not address the needs of female farmers. In order to improve the skill level of women farmers and especially poor women, existing policy and programmes as well as the training of extension workers will need to be revised.

Recommendations

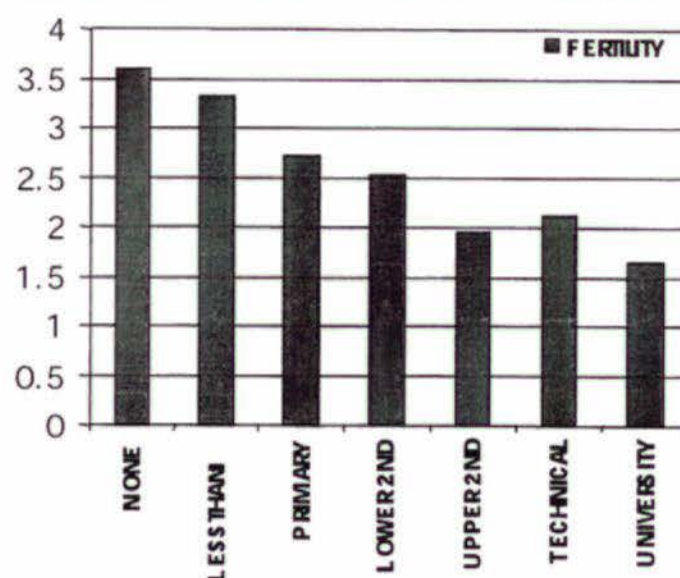
1. Provide gender awareness training for policy makers and managers within the Department of Agricultural Extension, and among extension workers at all levels. Expand the role of the CFAW at MARD to review policy and programmes and to provide gender awareness training. Expand opportunities for cooperation between Farmer's Union, VWU and MARD for the development of agricultural extension policy and the implementation of community level activities. Consolidate extension activities within MARD.
2. Expand the curriculum at agricultural colleges to include gender awareness and participatory training methods, targeting both students and staff. Increase the number of women students at agricultural colleges, establishing a target for participation and providing financial incentives such as scholarships and internships.
3. Promote women as agricultural extension workers in the field. Provide additional training for existing women agricultural officers in the area of animal husbandry and subsistence farming. Develop regulations and monitoring systems to ensure the participation of women in extension work at the district and commune levels.
4. Promote the involvement of women farmers in extension training, especially for animal husbandry, establishing a quota for women's participation within the regular training program and developing additional training especially for women farmers.

5. Ensure that women farmers benefit equally from new technology transfer.
6. Enhance public opinion of women's role in agriculture through the schools, local government and mass organisations.

Conclusions

Access to education is a basic human right, and the fair provision of education to girls and women as well as boys and men is a major political responsibility. Although no other justification is necessary, society also benefits in many ways from higher levels of women's education, from improved nutrition for children and lower birth rates, to the provision of skills necessary for labour and government (World Bank 2000).

Women with more education have lower fertility levels



"Education is one of the best long-term investments in national development"
(Women and Development 1998).

Ensuring the participation of girls and women is therefore fundamentally rewarding, in terms of equity and also efficiency. Since independence, Viet Nam has pledged commitment to education for all, and this has resulted in the development of a nation-wide education system for all levels of study and relatively progressive levels of participation by women and girls.

The challenge to Viet Nam's education and training system as it develops and matures, is to address the issues of access and achievement. Access for girls and women will involve providing sufficient and appropriate education and training services, eliminating barriers to participation, and increasing demand for services. The specific needs of some, like ethnic minority girls and rural women farmers may require specialised services. Funds, research, and new teaching and training approaches will need to be made available for this. Eliminating barriers may require the introduction of new systems to ensure that

subsidies, scholarships and invitations to participate are granted to girls and women. Childcare will also need to be provided to allow girls and women freedom to attend. Increasing demand may require the development of new ways of demonstrating the benefits of female education and training so that communities and families are encouraged to change traditional attitudes regarding the value of education for women and girls.

Achievement is a product of the quality of teaching and of learning, and leads to the application of new skills and knowledge in daily life and work. To ensure achievement of women and girls, education and training must maintain standards of quality for all, so that all may have equal opportunities to pursue any field of study and area of work. This counters traditional social expectations regarding the participation of women and girls in society and traditional divisions of labour.

All these measures target girls and women rather than presume that the standard national programmes of education and training will meet their needs. Policy makers and educators then, must recognise and address the real constraints to female participation and achievement. As formal education is traditionally conservative, reproducing social values rather than shaping them, this call to gender sensitivity is a serious challenge.

Additional research in the area of gender and education will help develop an understanding of the influence of gender bias in the classroom and the larger education system, and will hopefully encourage debate of issues as well as the development of appropriate policy and programmes. Important areas for further work include: gender bias in teaching and training methodology, gender stereotyping in the curriculum and textbooks, community participation in education and training for children and adults, Vietnamese as a second language for ethnic minorities, gender awareness training for teachers, affirmative action programmes for women in higher education, and education and training for labour market.

2.3 - Gender Issues in Health and Safety

Introduction

Since *Doi Moi* and the implementation of a program of health reform in the early 1990s, Viet Nam has achieved great advances in the development of a national health system. In spite of budget constraints, the Government has invested significant resources in this sector. Many health facilities have been upgraded in terms of infrastructure and essential equipment. The health care network at the grassroots level has been strengthened and expanded to cover every region of the country. Almost all communes have a commune health center (CHC) with an average of four health workers. More than 30 percent of CHCs are staffed with a medical doctor and 82 percent with at least a midwife or an obstetric-pediatric assistant doctor; 52 percent of all villages have a community health worker (Ministry of Health 2000a). The quality of health services has also improved significantly. In addition to the public health system, increasing numbers of private health facilities including hospitals and clinics have been established in most provinces and major cities. Except for remote areas, health care services for women and children are generally available. Health workers have been trained in basic health care to serve women's health care needs and are able to provide essential obstetric care and safe motherhood services.

During the last decade, improvements to the health system in conjunction with economic growth, has resulted in significant advances in the health and wellbeing of the population. During the last decade, the under-five mortality rate has fallen from 55 to 48 per 1,000 live births. The infant mortality rate declined to 39 per 1,000 live births. Life expectancy at birth is now 11 years higher than that of other countries, which have similar GDP per capita levels (United Nations 2000). There are also considerable achievements in the areas of reproductive health (RH) and family planning (FP). Great efforts have been made in the provision of obstetric-pediatric care, especially pre and post-natal maternal care. The proportion of births delivered in health facilities and with assistance of trained health workers is increasing. During the last ten years, the number of delivery complications has declined by 52 percent; the maternal mortality rate has reduced from 2 to 1 per 1,000 live births (Ministry of Health 2000b). The number of couples using FP methods is also increasing. The fertility rate, therefore, has fallen sharply from 3.8 in 1989 to 2.3 in 1999 (UBQGDS-KHHGD 2000). In 1999, Viet Nam received the Population Award from the United Nations for its great achievements in family planning.

Following the 1994 Cairo Conference, the Government developed strong commitments to broaden the scope of its population policy by linking population with development. Currently, the Government is increasing efforts to provide high quality RH services for women, particularly those who live in rural, difficult and remote areas. Current objectives in the area of reproductive health include a reduction of maternal mortality, obstetrical complications and abortions, and an increase of reproductive tract infections (RTI) treatments, breast cancer diagnosis and treatments and access to basic RH/FP services.

Although the availability and quality of health care services has improved significantly, many challenges remain. Not all regions and social groups benefit at the same level from

health care reforms. Women, particularly poor women, ethnic groups, women living in remote and mountain areas face difficulties in accessing basic health care services. Fee for service charges, ineffective implementation of the fee exemption program and an inequitable budget allocation mechanism have resulted in great differences in access and quality of services between rich and poor areas, and between the rich and the poor. Health care services provided by Commune Health Centres tend to be low quality, reflecting restricted budget, a lack of qualified staff, and insufficient equipment and supplies. Furthermore, within poor families, the distribution of scarce resources for health care continues to favour men, while responsibility for the care of sick family members falls to women.

Women have few choices regarding health care in general, and reproductive health and family planning services in particular, and these services are not readily available in remote, mountain and island areas. An extensive family planning programme provides free contraceptive services and IEC throughout the country. Knowledge of modern contraceptive devices is widespread, and at present, half of married couples at reproductive age use modern contraception methods. The mix of contraceptives used however is not diverse, with heavy reliance on the IUD. The Total Abortion Rate in Viet Nam is high, at 2.5, indicating that on average every woman will have 2.5 abortions if the current patterns remain unchanged (UBQG DS-KHHGD 1999). Although there has been a slight increase in the use of condoms in urban areas (VLSS 1998), there is a high expectation for women to take responsibility for contraception and little attention to men's role in reproductive health. The quality of contraceptive services and counseling for both men and women, especially young, single, or never-married women and sex workers is inadequate.

Problems such as maternal mortality, obstetric complications, abortion, and maternal and child malnutrition are still at high levels, although the situation has been gradually improving. Reproductive tract infections are a common condition among women in Viet Nam, yet women have little knowledge of how to prevent or cure RTIs and they often do not receive appropriate treatment at commune health centres.

Problems associated with RH and FP are more severe among ethnic minority communities, where access to services is more limited, rates of maternal and infant mortality are higher and the use of modern contraception is lower than in other parts of Viet Nam.

HIV/AIDS is an increasingly significant problem for women, as are STDs. In 1997, 1246 women were infected with HIV/AIDS (Viet Nam 1999:83), and by June 2000, the number of women with HIV/AIDS infection had reached nearly three thousand representing about 14 percent of total HIV/AIDS cases. Women are in a very vulnerable position regarding HIV/AIDS due to men's reluctance to use condoms and women's lack of power to determine their own sexual relations and negotiate safe sex, and general lack of information about the disease.

Gender-based violence is another national problem causing damage to women's health and safety. Gender-based violence includes trafficking of women, exploitation of women by forcing them to serve as sex workers, rape, and domestic violence against women.

Although it is difficult to estimate the number of women and children involved in trafficking in Viet Nam, at least ten thousand have been sold since 1990 (Kelly and Le Bach Duong 1999). The main goal of trafficking is to provide women for the sex industry. According to

an estimation of MOLISA and UNICEF, currently about 200,000 women are involved in the sex industry, and at least ten percent of these are children (Bond and Hayter 1998; cited by Kelly and Le Bach Duong 1999:19).

The reported incidence of rape has increased significantly over the last decade. In the early 1990s, about 400 to 500 rape cases were reported each year (Hong Khiem 1994; cited by Le Thi Phuong Mai 1998:22), while data from the Supreme Court show that the number of reported rape cases increased by 40 percent from 1994 to 1996 (Le Thi Phuong Mai 1998). An alarming development is that the number of rape cases involving children under 16 is increasing. Before 1990, child rape cases accounted for 4 to 6 percent of the total number of rape cases and by 1995, 30 percent of rape cases involved children (Hoang Ba and Pham Kim Ngoc; cited by Le Thi Phuong Mai 1998). As with all types of gender-based violence, it is likely that the incidence of rape is under-reported.

Domestic violence against women by men is another form of gender-based violence that occurs in all regions of the country and in all social strata (Le Thi Phung Mai 1998; Vu Manh Loi et. al. 1999). Violent behaviors, such as battering, killing, verbal abuse and sexual abuse have damaging effects on women's health, safety and dignity. The incidence of domestic violence cases in the courts is increasing, currently accounting for at least 16 percent of all cases. The most common type of domestic violence is that perpetrated by the woman's husband, which accounts for 65 to 70 percent of all domestic violence cases (Tran Quoc Tu 1997). As domestic violence is generally understood to be a family problem, involving outsiders only as a last resort, little is being done to address the causes or the consequences of domestic violence, either through the health care system, the legal system, local government, the schools, mass organisations or the media.

Four key gender issues related to women's health and safety in Vietnam have been selected for further analysis. The four key issues are:

1. The impact of the health reform programme on the poor and poor women
2. Women and men's access to reproductive and family planning services
3. Women and HIV/AIDS infection
4. Domestic violence

2.3.1 The impacts of health sector reform

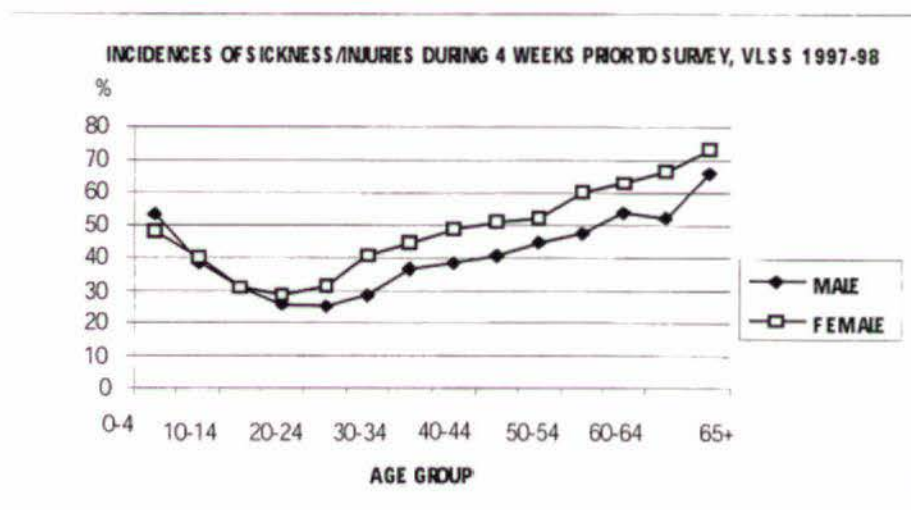
Background

In 1989, Viet Nam introduced a programme of health reform, which replaced universally free health care with a fee-for-service system. Although the health reform programme has mobilised funds for the improvement and diversification of health care services, this programme has also reduced the ability of the poor to access health services. In general, the health reform includes the introduction of user fees, the provision of health services by the private sector, the liberalisation of the sale of drugs and other medical supplies, and the introduction of health insurance.

The payment of health care fees is a serious challenge for the poor in general and poor women in particular. According to the VLSS 1998, the actual expenditure by the poor for

one visit to a public hospital consists of 45 percent of non-food expenditure per capita, while for the rich this cost represents only 4 percent of the non-food expenditure (World Bank 1999). Being unable to afford health care fees, the poor are less likely to seek health services, relying instead on drugs purchased without prescription from local outlets, and care provided in the home by women. Access to health services is particularly difficult in the poor, rural, mountainous, and remote areas.

Within the health care system, women tend to be more disadvantaged than men. First, women have more health care needs than men, largely to do with pregnancy and child birth, and also because they bear most of the responsibility for birth control and associated health risks and side effects. Second, women are the primary caregivers in the family and therefore provide additional care in the home to compensate for reduced access to services from the health care system. Two-thirds of those who stop work to care for sick family members are women (Houghton 1999). Third, social values prescribe that in a situation of scarcity, women should sacrifice their personal health care needs for the well being of other family members (Bo KHDT-Lien Hop Quoc 1999). Thus women, especially poor women, are less likely than men to pay for and receive health services, and when family members are sick, women are more likely than men to care for them.



Influencing Factors

A system of health insurance to ensure equal access to services is an integral part of the health reform program. In practice however, few of the poor benefit. Generally the poor are not eligible to participate in the state organised compulsory insurance system and do not benefit from the subsidy program which was designed to purchase health care insurance for the poor (Pham Manh Hung 2000). Furthermore, poor women are not considered a special target group within the subsidy insurance program, which would increase their chances of receiving insurance benefits.

The current system of budget allocation for health care results in fewer health services for the poor. Funding allocation tends to favour the more heavily populated areas and specialised health services, with fewer funds going to the rural and remote areas, and the

primary health services provided at commune health centres. In 1997 for example, commune health centres received only 7 percent of the total public health budget (Lien Hop Quoc Viet Nam 1999). Commune health centres are understaffed and ill equipped, generally providing low-quality care, especially in remote areas. A policy of fee exemptions for poor and disadvantaged persons should be implemented at the commune level, but the state does not offset the cost of this service, and many CHCs cannot afford to cover the costs. Low quality service discourages people from using paid services at community health centres, thereby further reducing the budget capacity of these centres to provide fee exemption to the poor (Ministry of Health 2000a; Wright et. al. 1992). Moreover, even when implemented, the fee exemption programme often fails to target the poor (Oxfam GB 2000).

Women's access to health services is limited also by gender inequality within the family. Men's use of family funds for recreation activities such as drinking and gambling tends to absorb a large percentage of the budget, especially in poor families (Viet Nam Development Report 2000), which limits funds available for women's health care needs. Social values assign responsibility for maintaining the health and well being of the family to women. Poor women therefore, must weigh the needs for health care for themselves against the need to pay for services for other family members. Under health reform conditions, women's health care tends to depend on the availability of disposable funds not already committed to other members of the family. Men's dominant role in finalising decisions involving money can also restrict women's ability to access health care services for themselves.

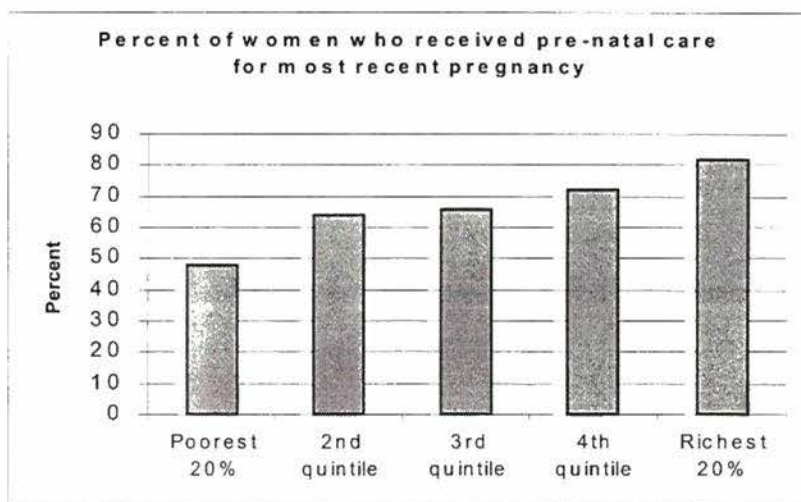
Recommendations

1. Revise health care policies to specify sex. Target poor women for special assistance.
2. Review the budget allocation mechanism for health care expenditures. Increase direct support for commune health centers, especially in poor areas. Review and revise the fee collection process ensuring that fee levels reflect the quality of services and the conditions in each level and geographical area.
3. Review and revise the mechanism for implementing the fee-exemption policy to target the poor and specifically poor women.
4. Improve the quality of health care services by upgrading facilities, providing basic equipment and supplies, training health staff and improving the distribution of qualified health personnel in each level.
5. Enhance IEC and counseling services on women's rights to health care, including information on the risks of self-treatment. Provide specialized communication and counseling services for poor women. Provide IEC to increase men's participation in family health care.

2.3.2 Access to reproductive health care

Background

Although great efforts have been made in the area of reproductive health and family planning during the last ten years, the issue of access to RH and FP services for both men and women, and the quality of these services remains critical.

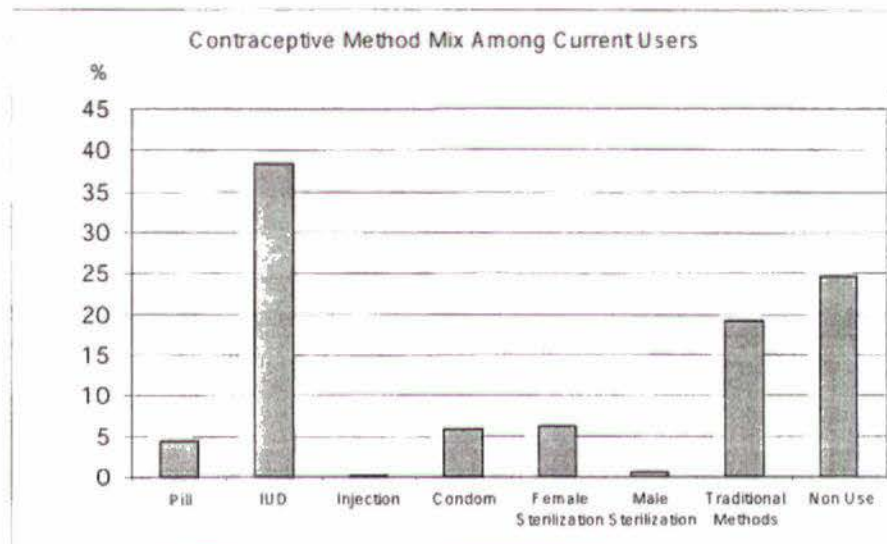


Many women do not receive adequate pre and postnatal care, resulting in maternal complications and death, much of which could be prevented if treated in time (UNICEF 2000). Only 28 percent of pregnant women have the standard 3 pregnancy check ups (VLSS 1998) and 23 percent have safe delivery (UNICEF 2000).

Reproductive tract infections are relatively common, especially in the rural areas. One survey reported RTIs in over 70 percent of the women in 10 communes in five provinces (Ministry of Health 1999). Women's knowledge of how to prevent and care for RTIs is low and the capacity of the health care system to diagnose and treat RTIs at the commune and even the district level is weak. The role of men in the spread of RTIs is not addressed, nor is the relationship between RTIs and STDs.

Women, men and couples, particularly in poor areas, do not have adequate access to reliable contraceptive services. At present 56 percent of couples use modern contraceptive methods, however the mix of methods is limited and users have little choice. The IUD is most common, with 73 percent of all rural women using modern devices choosing the IUD. In urban areas, the mix is somewhat more diverse and a slight increase is reported in the use of condoms to 22 percent of those using modern contraception (Desai 2000). Abortion continues to be a common form of birth control. It is estimated that over 40 percent of all pregnancies are terminated (Ministry of Health 1999). Half of the abortions and menstrual regulations terminate pregnancies which took place when women were using contraception, including modern methods. This suggests a need for improving FP counseling to ensure that better quality contraception is being used and used properly.

Contraceptive services and public education has traditionally concentrated on married couples, for the purposes of controlling fertility rates. Although recently this focus has shifted slightly, men and women who are not married continue to receive less attention than couples and married women. The relationship between contraceptive method and women's reproductive health, especially protection against HIV/AIDS, is still not addressed adequately in education, counseling or other services within the public health system.



Influencing Factors

Throughout the 1990s, the Party and Government developed laws, policies and recommendations in support of maternal health care, population and family planning. The implementation of these policies however, has been limited by financial, institutional and societal factors. The constraints limiting access to health services in general also create problems for women's access to RH and FP services.

Insufficient funds and the allocation of funds in favor of specialised services rather than commune health centres, has resulted in poor equipment, limited supplies, few qualified service providers, and poor benefits for existing health workers at the commune level. All of these factors have a negative influence on the provision of maternal and reproductive health care and FP services. Private health care services are playing an increasingly important role in the provision of reproductive health services and are attractive because of the quality of services, but for many, the private sector is inaccessible due to the high service fees. The budget of the National Committee for Population and Family Planning (NCPFP) has also been drastically reduced, thus restricting its activities and impact (UBQF DS-KHHGD).

The NCPFP communication and service program does not reach all sectors of the population with adequate information and a full range of services. Contraception requiring clinical services, especially the IUD and sterilization are encouraged through an incentive system, while the provision of condoms and the pill include no incentive for either users or providers. This may influence general preference for clinical interventions. Although studies show that poor women, ethnic minority women, unmarried women, sex workers and women in remote areas have more difficulties accessing contraceptive information and services, interventions designed to address their specific needs have not been introduced. Few qualified FP counselors are available through the public health system.

Local party and government have traditionally exerted pressure on women and possibly couples to comply with national family planning targets through a system of incentives

and disincentives such as fines or denial of access to credit (UNICEF 1994; UBQG DS-KHHGD 1999). For poor women and their families these actions have serious consequences. These campaigns would be far more effective if they were to target men, and also lobby authorities for improved information, counseling and services.

Men play a key role in decisions regarding the choice of contraceptive method and its use. Women generally have limited power to negotiate safe sex, yet suffer the consequences of pregnancy or the possible negative side effects associated with IUDs, abortions and other methods. To date, family planning strategies have not adequately addressed the area of male responsibility and the associated alternative methods of birth control and protection against STDs. Son preference, which is prevalent throughout society also has a potentially strong influence on women's use of contraception, and as seen in other countries with strong son preference there is danger that it can lead to sex-selective abortions.

Recommendations

1. Increase government budget for RH and FP activities. Priority should be given to CHCs.
2. Revise policies to encourage health personnel to work in rural and remote areas and develop appropriate benefit policies for population and family planning workers at the commune level.
3. Encourage the development of private facilities, which provide RH and FP services.
4. Improve capacity of health personnel and FP workers.
5. Diversify contraceptive methods and services; extend target groups to include men, adolescents, and unmarried women.
6. Improve the quality of RH and FP services by providing RH and FP counseling, especially counseling on pregnancy care and abortion; encourage the development of private counseling centers.
7. Enhance IEC to raise men and women's awareness and knowledge about RH and FP.
8. Review and revise incentive-disincentive policies concerning FP at the local level to avoid punishing poor women and improve programme effectiveness. Develop other programmes specifically designed for the poor and ethnic minority groups.

2.3.3 Impact of HIV/AIDS

Background

Since the first detection of HIV in Viet Nam in 1990, the number HIV/AIDS cases among both men and women has increased rapidly, as has the risk of HIV/AIDS infection for women. By June 2000 20, 215 HIV positive cases were detected, with women accounting for almost a fifth of those infected. Drug addicts make up 65 percent of the HIV/AIDS cases, sex workers 5 percent and STD patients more than 2 percent.

In Viet Nam HIV is perceived as a result of socially deviant behaviour, such as drug addiction and sexual promiscuity. As social acceptance of such behaviour is less lenient for women

than for men, gender norms shape the way men and women infected with HIV are perceived. For example, HIV-positive women face greater disgrace and rejection than men.

Long-term care and expensive drugs and therapy are required for the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Few patients or their families are able to afford to purchase necessary treatment and health services. Most provide care within the family. As women are considered the primary care givers, women play a leading role in caring for family members who are infected with HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, in the case of poor households, if the husband contracts AIDS, the woman adopts additional responsibilities regarding income generation as well as domestic responsibilities and providing health care for the patient.

Since 1995, the Government and Party have taken important measures to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, by creating a policy environment supportive to treatment and prevention efforts. Practical activities have been introduced, largely under the guidance of the National AIDS Committee. These include safe professional practices within the health care system, a prevention campaign, laws restricting high-risk behaviour such as prostitution and drug abuse, and treatment for HIV/AIDS patients. Information about HIV/AIDS has been integrated into Ministry of Culture and Information publications, the primary and secondary school curriculum, and national television and radio programming. Mass organisations such as the Fatherland Front and the Women's Union have also implemented communication and counseling programs. Despite these efforts, the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to spread in Viet Nam, and the increasing trend of women's infection is alarming.

Influencing Factors

Although in Viet Nam the number of women with HIV/AIDS is lower than the number of men, many factors limit women's ability to protect themselves from infection. Many women, especially rural women, lack adequate information about the transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS. Men generally do not recognise their responsibility in the protection of women's sexual health. One study reported that of 91 male AIDS patients, 39 percent did not inform their family about the disease, and only 37 percent used a condom when having sex with their wives after they knew they were infected (Le Dang Ha et. al. 2000). Women have limited power to negotiate safe sex with their male partners, to discuss sex or sexual responsibility or determine their own contraceptive or sexual behaviour (Esposito et al. 2000). Therefore, women's chances of infection through husbands who engage in high-risk behaviour such as unprotected sex with many partners including sex workers or intravenous drug use is very high.



IEC campaigns for prevention of HIV/AIDS do not reach all sectors of the population and have not met the needs of individual target groups, particularly women who do not practice high-risk behaviour, and poor women. Awareness campaigns often focus on individuals considered by society to be deviant and rarely address changing behaviour such as safe sexual behaviour and use of clean needles.

Government resources allocated for combating HIV/AIDS are very limited and knowledge about the prevention and treatment of the disease within the health system is inadequate, especially at the commune level. Not all health centres are able to provide a safe blood supply or sterilised equipment. Through RH and FP procedures women are more likely to be vulnerable to infection through unhygienic conditions than men.

Quality counseling services for both men and women is not readily available, particularly within reproductive health programmes. Health workers rarely address the risk to RTI patients of contracting and spreading HIV/AIDS, and rarely promote the use of condoms for birth control and protection against STDs. Men's responsibility for protecting themselves and their female partners from HIV/AIDS is not addressed through IEC or counseling.

Finally, protecting women from HIV/AIDS has not been considered by the national HIV/AIDS program to be an urgent task. Gender-sensitive policies, and especially policies addressing the critical role of men in preventing HIV/AIDS through practicing safe sex, have not been developed.

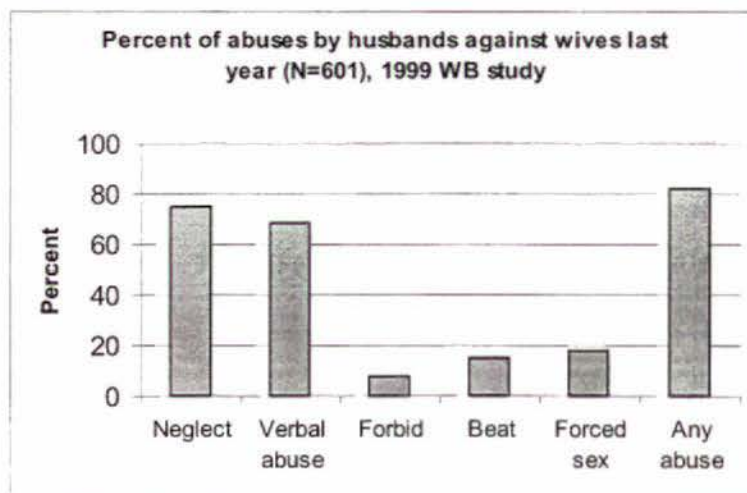
Recommendations

1. Raise men's awareness of their roles and responsibility in practicing safe sex to limit the risk of spreading HIV/AIDS to their sexual partners.
2. Increase awareness and knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention for women, especially rural women by improving IEC on HIV/AIDS.
3. Improve quality and efficiency of the IEC program on HIV/AIDS by revising message content and communication methods to make them more appropriate for individual target groups, especially unmarried, poor and ethnic minority women.
4. Provide good quality counseling services for both men and women on HIV/AIDS and related issues. Provide training for counselors and health workers on communication skills, gender awareness, social issues and HIV/AIDS.
5. Integrate HIV/AIDS communication and services into other national programmes such as RH/FP, HEPR, public education and other social and economic programmes.
6. Increase resources allocated for blood screening and for the enforcement of hygienic procedures, especially in obstetric and gynecological services. Increase resources for the provision of free condoms and for advocacy and communication campaigns on the use of condoms.
7. Review existing laws and policies relating to the ethical and professional orientation of health service providers, the prevention and suppression of commercial sex work, and the regulation of sex education in schools.

2.3.4 Domestic Violence

Background

Once a hidden issue, domestic violence against women is now recognised as a widespread problem in all regions, and in families from all social groups (Le Phi Phung Mai 1998; Vu Manh Loi et al. 1999). Violence against wives by their husband is the most common form of domestic violence and, as the nature of husband and wife relations are dictated by social values, it is the most difficult to address. Domestic violence against women seriously damages women's physical and mental health, and fear of violence limits women's ability to access resources for productive and other activities (UNDP 1995). Currently, a certain level of domestic violence is accepted as a normal aspect of married life, but when the level of violence is considered dangerous or when the woman lodges a complaint, efforts are made to reconcile the partners and reestablish harmony within the family.



Influencing Factors

Domestic violence is rooted in unequal gender relations, whereby men are more powerful than women, and women are expected to support men and respond to all their demands. Social values dictate that within the family men are permitted to enforce their will and maintain their position of dominance through acts of violence. A certain level of domestic violence is considered acceptable and the woman is often deemed responsible for the husband's abusive behaviour for failing to fulfill a wifely duty. Women therefore are reluctant to report acts of violence against themselves and blame themselves and other women for violence by men.

As domestic violence is believed to be normal and a matter internal to the family, there is little concern for early detection of violence against women through the health system or

other services. Communities, resident groups, neighbors and relatives intervene when wife abuse becomes dangerous or causes disorder in the resident area. Reconciliation groups, the commune legal committee and the Women's Union may become involved in family conflicts that lead to domestic violence. The goal of their intervention is generally to stop violence and facilitate reconciliation between husband and wife, so that the family may continue to exist as a unit (Vu Manh Loi et al. 1999). Domestic violence is rarely treated as a criminal case by the courts and only when the wife presses charges against her husband. The legal system addresses domestic violence as part of divorce proceedings and is generally concerned about the integrity of the family rather than the rights of the woman (Le Thi Phuong Mai 1998).

In recent years many counseling centres focusing on marriage and family issues have been established in major centres, and the demand for counseling is high (Population Council and the Centre for Counseling on Psychology, Education, Love, Marriage and the Family 2000). However, these services are inadequate, being unable to respond to the present need, especially in the rural areas, and poorly qualified to provide suitable counseling for women and victims of family violence (Le Thi Phuong Mai and Linda Willshire 2000).

Policy interventions to address domestic violence must respond to both the causes, through preventative strategies including public education campaigns addressing values, attitudes and actions related gender-based violence, and the consequences, through reactive legal and service strategies which punish the perpetrators and protect the victims. This will require a change of attitude from one that understands domestic violence as an internal matter of the family to one that recognises wife abuse as a violation of the basic rights of women to life and security.

Recommendations

1. Raise awareness of the prevalence, causes and consequences of domestic gender-based violence among leaders and local authorities, health workers, teachers, mass organizations, school children and students and the public at large.
2. Implement an advocacy programme for policy makers in order to include policy measures against domestic violence explicitly in legal and policy documents, creating favorable institutional environment for combating domestic violence.
3. Through mass communication channels, oppose societal perceptions that domestic violence is acceptable and private, and advocate for women's rights before the law and within the family.
4. Increase women's sense of empowerment, communication skills and understanding of their legal rights through education, and increased community and political involvement.
5. Provide legal and counseling skills to increase the community's ability to respond to situations of domestic violence. Target officers working in legal and justice sectors, police, reconciliation groups, mass organisations and health workers. Stress women's rights and the criminal nature of domestic violence.
6. Increase counseling options and the capacity of counseling centres deal with domestic violence and women's rights; establish new counseling centers in rural areas. Increase the scope of counseling services to include hotlines, counseling centres, and services through health centres and the Women's Union.
7. Provide assistance for the victims of gender-based domestic violence by legal counseling and counseling on family issues for women and their husbands; develop

comprehensive intervention measures to stop violence; establish temporary refuges for women victims and their families who have no options to escape from violent husbands.

8. Establish systems to monitor domestic violence through the courts and community systems such as health centres.

Conclusion

Gender relations are at the heart of most issues regarding women's health and safety in Viet Nam. Women's level of health is most likely to improve with a more equal sharing of resources and responsibilities within the family. Policy interventions to improve women's health in Viet Nam must not only ensure ready access to appropriate and high quality health services for women, but also target men's individual behaviour and its influence on women's lives. To that end, gender sensitive health policies must address the restructuring of social institutions and the education of men and women, as well as the provision of health services.

2.4 - Gender Issues in Leadership, Political Participation and Decision-Making

Introduction

Equal opportunity for men and women is one of the underlying tenets of the Party and Government of Viet Nam. Women's rights to participation in the labour force and in positions of leadership and decision-making are stipulated in resolutions and policies, and apply to all levels, sectors and geographic regions. Commitment to the enhancement of the position of women is also articulated in official documents. Politburo Resolution 04-ND/TW, July 1993, for example, declares that there should be an increase in the number of women in positions of authority in all sectors within Party Committees and in the Government. It also states that there should be a concerted effort to fight against disrespect and discrimination against women, specifically in the workplace. A strategy for implementing Viet Nam's commitment is presented in the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women. Two specialised institutions, the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) and the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCAFW) represent the rights and interests of women in the community, the Party and the government.

In the last decade, gender policies regarding leadership and decision-making have attained positive results. Women now occupy positions of leadership in all levels of the Party and the State, including, member of the Politburo, Vice-President of the State, and Vice-Chairperson of the National Assembly (NA).

The rate of female leaders in the Party and the Government has increased, especially in the elected bodies. In the 1997-2002 term of the National Assembly, 26 percent of the deputies are women, an increase of eight percent over the previous term. Although this rate of participation is low in comparison with Scandinavian countries, it is the highest in the Asia region. The rate of female deputies in the National Assembly in China, for example, is 20 percent, in the Philippines, 11 percent, in Laos, 9 percent, and in both Thailand and Cambodia, the rate of females deputies is 6 percent (VWU 1997).

However, the number of women leaders in the administration of the Government, the various branches and levels of the Party, and within legal, research and scientific bodies, remains low, falling short of the targets set by the POA1. At the lower levels of the Party and the government, the rate of women's participation in leadership and decision-making is particularly low, especially at the commune and village levels. Furthermore, at all levels, women leaders tend to be segregated in 'soft' social sectors and few, if any, are involved in 'hard' sectors such as the economy, science and technology.

In general, men continue to play the dominant role in the leadership and administration of the country: fewer women than men hold positions of power, and few influence decisions concerning key issues. Traditional gender biased attitudes regarding the role and capabilities of women continue to influence both men and women, often resulting in gender blind policies and limiting the effectiveness of policies and programmes designed to ensure gender equality.

A thorough analysis of gender in governance should examine a number of factors, which influence whether decisions and decision making processes are gender sensitive. First, the number of women in positions of leadership and decision-making should be examined. Second, the number of women involved in key decision making processes should be considered. Third, the ability of women leaders to contribute significantly to the decision making process should be assessed, both in terms of their individual capacity for policy analysis and advice as well as the extent to which their voice is being heard. Finally, the extent to which decisions made by both men and women leaders are gender sensitive should be explored. It is relatively easy to document, analyse and quantify the number of women in leadership and identify their specific roles. However, assessing and documenting the nature of women's contribution to decisions and evaluating whether the decision-making process results in gender sensitive decisions and outcomes is more difficult. Similarly, it is relatively simple to set targets for women's representation, but far more challenging to influence women's real authority to affect change, and shape leaders' decisions to reflect the needs of women.

Further research should document or assess the more intangible elements of women's participation and the representation of gender equality and women's interests in affairs of the State. Recommendations for change should focus on fostering the development of a gender sensitive leadership, which identifies and addresses the full needs of the Vietnamese population, both male and female.

With the above principles in mind, four key gender issues have been identified in regard to leadership, political participation and decision making. These address:

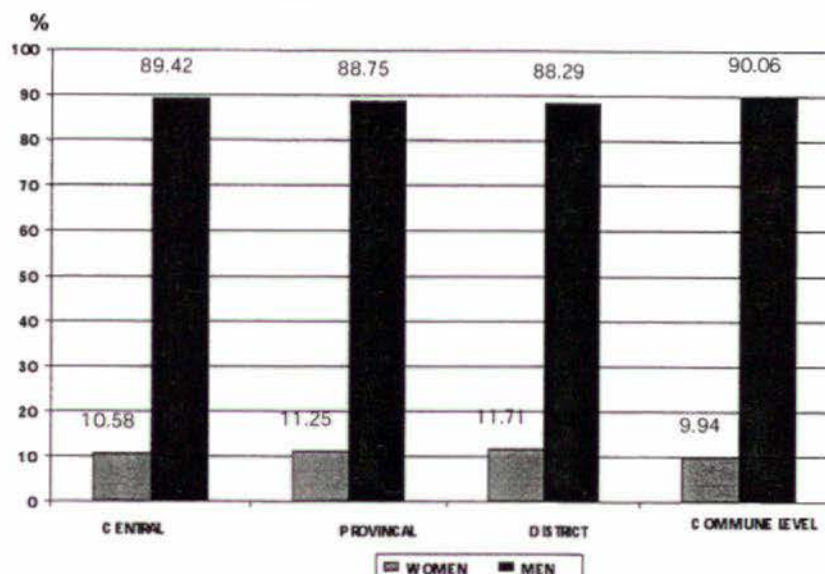
1. Women's participation in Party Committees and the Government administration
2. Women's participation in elected positions such as the People's Council (1999-2004)
3. Gender impact analysis and women's participation in public expenditure decisions
4. Gender impact analysis and women's participation in the implementation of the Grassroots Democracy Decree

2.4.1 Participation in Party Committees and the Government administration

Background

The Executive Committees of the Party develop resolutions and other official decrees, which, once adopted by the National Assembly, direct the work of the Government. The participation of women in Party Committees therefore is of key importance. Gender-sensitive resolutions developed at this level can influence a wide range of policies and programmes. At present, however, the number of women in Party Committees is low. Currently, the rate of women in Party Committees averages 10-11 percent at the central, provincial, district and commune levels of the Party (Central Party Commission for Organisation and Personnel 1997).

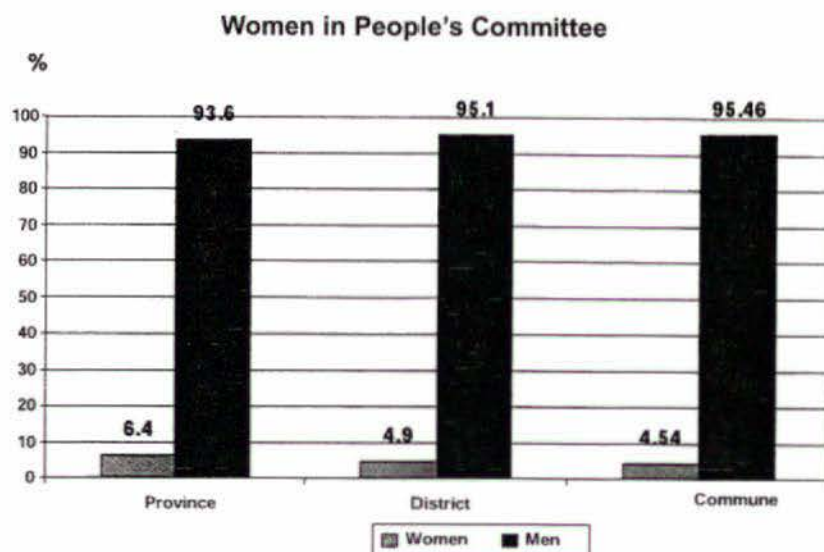
Women in Party Committees



Of those women who are members of Party Committees, few are in positions of authority. The rate of women in key positions such as Secretary or Vice-Secretary averages 3 to 8 percent at all levels (VIII National Women's Congress 1997). Furthermore, the majority of female members of the Party Committees are in charge of more administrative tasks associated with inspection and mobilisation of people rather than more strategic roles.

Within the administration of the Government, women in positions of power and decision-making may promote the formulation of policies to the benefit of women. Over the last decade, the number of women in key positions in the Central Government administration, has increased slowly but remains low. At the Ministerial level of the Central Government, the rate of female Ministers and Vice-Ministers is 11 and 7 percent, respectively; the rate of female Heads and Deputy-Heads of Department is 12 and 13 percent, respectively (VII National Women's Congress 1997). The rate of women in leadership positions in the People's Committees, which administer policy and programmes at lower levels, is also low. An average of 5-7 percent of the People's Committee members are women, and the rate of women Presidents of People's Committees averages 1 to 3 percent at the Provincial/City, District/Quarter and Commune/Ward levels (GCOP 1997).

As in other areas of leadership, in the administration of the Government, women's participation in leadership is usually limited to the social fields, with very few women holding leading positions in the fields of economic management, planning, and scientific research and management. The three female ministers, for example, are responsible for the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Committee for Protection and Care of Children, and the National Committee for Population and Family Planning. This segregation restricts women's influence on the more strategic sectors of the Government.



Influencing factors

A number of laws and policies detail the country's commitment to enhancing the role and position of women in leadership and decision-making. Strategies to implement these regulations, such as for example, a long term national plan for training and fostering women leaders through the Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy and other formal and informal processes are yet to be developed. Comprehensive systems for monitoring, assessing and promoting women in the Party and the Government are not yet in place, and there are few women leaders within the Party and government bodies which are responsible for organisation and personnel. A system for monitoring, assessing and improving efforts to implement policies regarding women in the Party and the Government has not been developed, and there are no regulations decentralising responsibility for the implementation of such policies to various levels and branches.

More generally, social values fail to recognise women's capabilities, and the importance of women's participation in leadership and decision-making. This leads to women's disadvantaged position in education and in the workplace, particularly in the assignment of strategic tasks and the promotion of women to positions of authority. As women have lower levels of education and professional training than men, they have fewer opportunities for career advancement. Furthermore, women traditionally are expected to bear the responsibility for maintaining the family, which limits women's freedom to devote themselves to their careers or to political commitments.

Recommendations

1. Initiate an integrated programme for the development of female leaders in the Party and the administration of the Government. Develop a long term national plan for training and fostering women leaders through the Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy and other formal and informal processes, as well as a system for on going training, promoting, monitoring and assessing women officials. Institutionalise responsibility for the promotion of women leaders and design a process for supervising the

implementation of the program at all levels. Establish a temporary policy for affirmative action - reservation of an equitable percentage of seats for women - until targets have been reached.

2. Improve the capability of VWU and NCFW and enhance their role as policy advisors to the Party and Government.
3. Influence social values through public communication on gender issues and the presentation of positive images of women in positions of authority.
4. Encourage the formation of a network of female leaders to support their personal and professional development and their ability to influence gender-based policies.

2.4.2 Participation in elected positions: People's Councils

Background

All Vietnamese citizens have the right to seek election for the National Assembly (NA) and the People's Council (PC), regardless of sex, religious affiliation, socio-economic status, or ethnic background. The PC are the elected decision-making bodies which develop strategies for addressing the various needs of each specific locality, and monitor the work of parallel state organisations including the People's Committees.

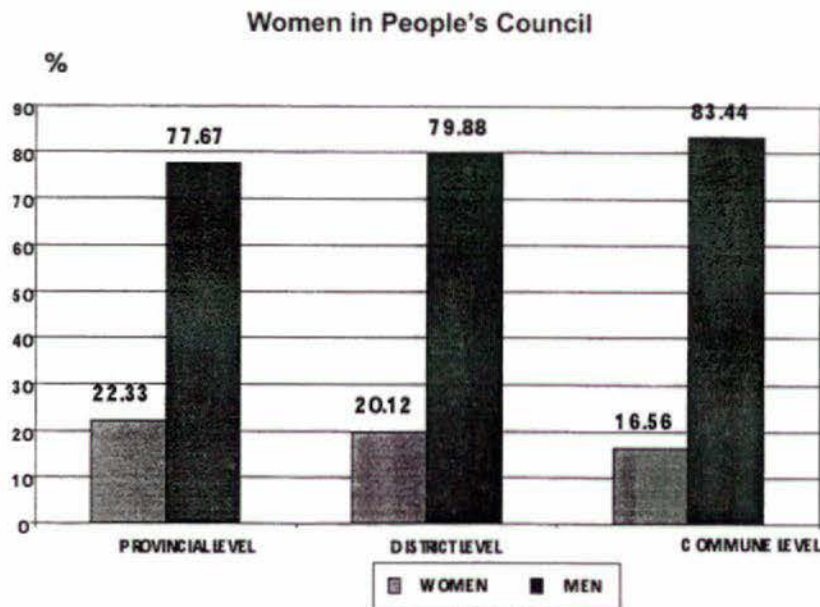
Women's right to participate in People's Councils is guaranteed by law, and an active and expanding role for women in this elected body is specified in the Constitution, as well as various decrees and regulations. Traditionally, however, men dominate People's Councils at all levels. In 1997, the Government reconfirmed its commitment to increase women's participation in the PCs. A target of 20-30 percent was specified in the first Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, and a concerted effort was mounted by VWU and NCFW to prepare women candidates for the 1999 election. Although the results were encouraging, the number of women elected fell short of the target, being 22 percent at the provincial level, 20 percent at the district/quarter level and 16 percent at the commune/ward level. Without more equitable representation of women in elected decision-making bodies, the concerns and needs of Vietnamese women have a less than equal chance of being reflected in official policy or being addressed by government programmes.

Influencing Factors

Fewer women than men are elected to People's Councils principally because of factors related to the election process, as well as factors influencing the candidates and the voters.

The election process is specified by law to ensure fairness and consistency in the election and also representative diversity within the elected council. In practice, however, certain aspects of the process tend to discriminate against women. For example, members of the Election Guiding Board, who oversee the procedure of identifying appropriate candidates, are generally men and tend to bring a male-bias to the selection process. The system of quotas, designed to ensure that a diverse range of citizens' groups are represented on

People's Councils, has at times also had negative effects on the women candidates. Some surveys have shown that one candidate, often a woman, is selected to fulfil a number of quotas reflecting age, ethnic background or other criteria in addition to sex, thus making it more difficult for her to be elected. Furthermore, in the process of selecting candidates through three consecutive stages of the pre-election Consultative Conferences, relatively large numbers of women candidates must stand for nomination at the first Consultative Conference if 20-30 percent are to be chosen by the third Consultative Conference.



There is a common perception that fewer women than men are qualified and willing to stand for election in People's Councils. Traditionally, women have not played a dominant role in political bodies. In general, social values assign women to the domestic sphere and men to public life, believing that this division of labour reflects women and men's respective capabilities. Consequently, women tend to have less experience than men do in the public sector and less knowledge of political processes, including skills such as election lobbying and discussions with constituents. Reflecting dominant social values, women tend to have less confidence in their own ability to participate effectively in politics, and they are less likely than men to present their opinions on matters such as economics or infrastructure, which are traditionally male-dominated areas of concern and responsibility. Women also tend to have less education, and they have less time to dedicate to other activities which do not relate to income generation or domestic maintenance, such as politics.

Voters also are less prepared to choose a women candidate over a male candidate. Accepting dominant social values, which undervalue women's leadership abilities and do not favor women's participation in social or political activities, most voters do not trust that women candidates will make good representatives. Lacking support from both male and female voters, women candidates tend to be less successful.

Recommendations

1. Introduce gender awareness training for leaders and officials involved in the development of regulations and procedures guiding election proceedings and those responsible for their implementation, to reduce barriers to women's participation as candidates and elected members.
2. Increase the quota for women candidates to People's Councils, to 40 percent at the provincial, district and commune levels.
3. Increase the role of the WU in identifying and supporting potential women candidates and monitoring the election process.
4. Increase training for women candidates; provide further training for successful women members of People's Councils to increase their capacity to advocate for gender issues within the PC and to higher levels of decision making.
5. Organise communication activities to raise gender awareness among voters and enhance acceptance of women's role in leadership and decision-making.

2.4.3 Public expenditure decision-making process

Background

Public expenditure refers to recurrent and capital investment spending by the state. In Viet Nam, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) develop plans for public expenditure (PE) in coordination with the State Bank. The National Assembly Committee for Economy and Budget and the Prime Minister then approve expenditure plans. Decisions concerning public expenditure determine resources available for all ministries, branches and localities within the country.

Between October 1999 and June 2000, the Government of Viet Nam, with the World Bank and small group of bilateral donors, undertook a review of the current public expenditure process, and included a gender component. The results of this study provide a preliminary understanding of the position of women advisors and the role of gender analysis in the PE process in Viet Nam (Akram-Lodhi 2000).

In Viet Nam, decisions regarding public expenditure have not explicitly involved a consideration of gender issues. It is generally perceived that policies concerning women are limited to marriage and family, population and employment, and women officials are in principle meant to be involved in their development. Public expenditure policy, however, is considered to be gender neutral, concerning and influencing all citizens equally. There has been therefore, no explicit concern for the inclusion of women officials in the process of public expenditure decision-making, and in an assessment of the costs and benefits of government budget decisions for women.

As men and women have different needs for government services, and are affected differently by these services, decisions regarding the allocation of government resources by sector, region and program have important gender implications. The cost recovery program for education which resulted in a reduction in the provision of government-funded pre-schools, for example, has had a more significant influence on women and girls than

on men, as social conventions assign the care of small children to women and girls. Similarly, investment in rural roads is likely to have a greater impact on women than men, as more women are involved in transporting and marketing agricultural goods and purchasing consumer goods for domestic use. Decisions regarding the allocation of public funds therefore must involve an analysis of the impact of public expenditure on men, women and gender relations, in order to ensure that public spending reflects the needs and interests of both men and women. Failure to recognise gender differences when designing policy can compromise the effectiveness of these policies, both from equity and efficiency perspectives (World Bank 2000).

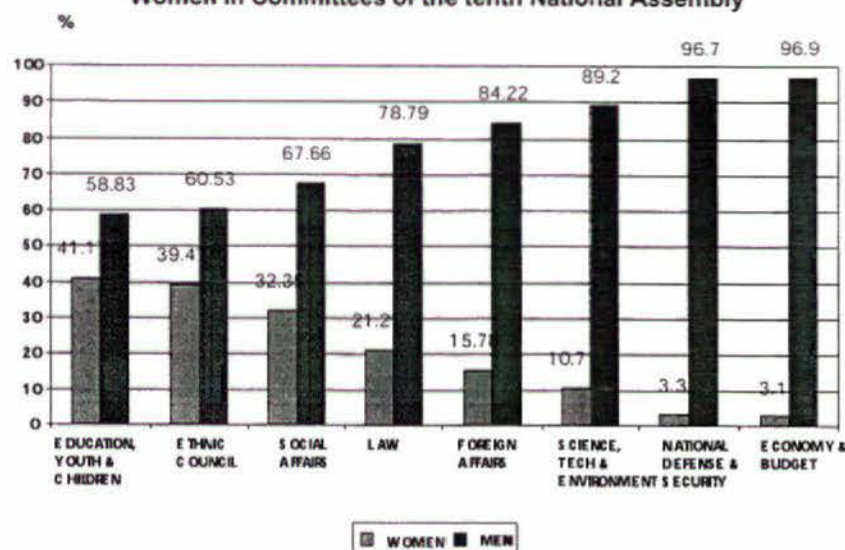
Influencing Factors

In general, in Viet Nam, state decisions regarding macro-economic planning are not considered to be a 'woman issue'. Officials and leaders responsible for public expenditure do not analyse the gender implications of budgetary decisions; thus potential gender biases are not addressed.

Women do not play a significant role in decisions regarding public expenditure. Very few women hold positions of authority at the agencies responsible for planning or approving the state budget. At MPI's Department of Finance and Money, for example, only two of the seventeen experts are female. However within the Ministry of Finance, there are a few women holding high level positions.

Moreover, within the public expenditure process there are no formal mechanisms for gender sensitive review and impact assessment of the state budget. Within central ministries and provincial departments, CFAWs are intended to monitor and appraise all policy for its impact on women. In practice, however, only those policies targeted at women are monitored and evaluated by CFAWs. CFAWs also have few staff, little resources and are often not trained in gender analysis. Thus the potential role of the CFAWs in policy review is limited. Within the National Assembly women are concentrated in Special Committees handling social affairs and are under-represented in the Committee of Economy and Budget.

Women in Committees of the tenth National Assembly



Within the Party there is no formal mandate to review and evaluate the impact of economic decision-making on women or on gender relations. Similarly, the VWU has no official institutional means to review or revise state spending policies. It can only work through personal connections in the ministries or in the Party.

In summary, within the ministries, the bodies of elected representatives and the mass organisations, there are no formal mechanisms through which budgetary decisions can be reviewed for possible gender bias, and if necessary, revised (Akram-Lodhi 2000).

Recommendations

1. Increase the number of women in decision making positions within the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Planning and Investment, and in the Committee of Economy and Budget of the NA.
2. Enhance the role of the VWU and NCFAW as advisors in public expenditure decisions.
3. Undertake studies (based on international experience in this area) into gender budgeting and other related issues. Develop standard mechanism to review and revise proposed budgets and policies regarding their impact on gender issues.
4. Provide training on gender analysis, gender budgeting and gender impact assessment of public expenditure decisions for both men and women members of the Committee of Economy and Budget of the National Assembly and leading cadres and officers in charge of public expenditure allocation in MPI and MoF, as well as for the NCFAW, CFAWs and WU.
5. A strategy to improve central level tracking of local budget expenditures should include strengthening capacity to collect and analyse sex disaggregated data. This would allow central and local government to measure one aspect of the equity dimension of their public expenditure, by illustrating, for example, to what extent men and women benefit from public services. This would be a critical first step towards reducing gender gaps in access to social services and social safety nets.

2.4.4 The Grassroots Democracy Decree

Background

With the passing of the Grassroots Democracy Decree (GRDD) and legislation regulating the conditions of its implementation, Viet Nam established a process through which all citizens may discuss and make decisions regarding local issues. The Decree provides a legal framework empowering citizens to meet at the village or hamlet level to express their opinions and develop recommendations on issues such as the construction of infrastructure and public works, local contributions to these and other projects or services, plans for the socio-economic development of the commune, commune conventions and rules, and poverty alleviation programmes. Surveys show that the GRDD is being actively implemented throughout the country - although with variation in rigor - with both men and women attending meetings in villages and hamlets, and chairpersons relaying reports on the people's opinions to the People's Committees.

In the implementation of the Decree, however, women do not participate equally, either in the organisation or chairing of discussions, decisions or leadership of the meetings. In interviews with women about their experiences with the Grassroots Democracy process, some reported that they do not participate in meetings, as attendance is perceived to be the responsibility of men. Others stated that even in situations where many women are in attendance, men dominate in the meetings. Women are less likely to talk within the meeting, and when they do, women generally address issues that they consider to be related to their areas of domestic responsibility, such as children's education, production loans for women, alcoholism amongst men, and women's security. Men discuss issues relating to economic development, infrastructure, and leadership. One woman reported,

"Men discussed many important issues such as infrastructure. Women only discussed about family problems such as male alcoholism, loans for production, difficulty of providing children with education: high school fees and contributions, poor road conditions and long distances for travelling, no electricity."

Some women stated that they were afraid to speak out, as they had little education, or that they were fearful of saying the wrong thing. Others stated that they did not speak up in meetings because their opinions were not respected.

"Men are chairpersons in the meeting. Men talk much. Women talked less and usually talk with each other about children, and their childbirth. Women did not discuss about commune's issues. We gave birth at home and did not go to hospital because the hospital was far away and we had to pay hospital fee. We did not have pay money when giving birth at home."

Closer analysis of these statements reveals that although women do not consider their ideas to be 'political issues' worth discussing, their concerns are directly related to macro-economic policy: for example impacts of cuts in public spending on basic social services such as health and education, and under-investment in rural infrastructure. (The above quotes are taken from in-depth interviews in Lai Chau, Tra Vinh, Quang Binh and Ho Chi Minh City, NCFAW, 2000).

Influencing Factors

Traditional values regarding the roles of men and women which presume politics and commune matters to be the realm of men, restrict women's participation in the implementation of the GRDD. First, the regulation describing the implementation of the GRDD specifies that heads of households will attend meetings. As men are considered to be the head of most households, more men than women are invited to participate in the meetings. Second, almost all leaders involved in the implementation of the GRDD, including the local Party and administration, members in the Guiding Board and the village/hamlet chiefs, are men. They do not expect women to participate fully in the local political process. Women are therefore less likely than men to be consulted on broad commune issues and less likely to be able to influence policies and decisions made as part of the GRDD.

Third, the perception is that women can only focus on traditionally 'female' areas of interest and expertise, and have little experience and knowledge about social and political affairs. As we saw in the analysis of the above interview statements, in reality women are

discussing issues of political interest but are not making that connection and do not have the 'words' to translate their concerns into policy recommendations, nor the 'voice' to articulate their concerns publicly. Women tend to have less education than men and less time to devote of activities which are not associated with income generation or domestic maintenance. With less experience and knowledge, women are unlikely to feel confident expressing their opinions or bringing up their concerns, and less likely than men are to participate actively in commune meetings or influence decisions regarding policy and programmes.

Recommendations

1. Increase the representation of women in Steering Committees overseeing the implementing of GRDD.
2. Revise GRDD regulations to invite both men and women within each household rather than heads of households to attend meetings.
3. Provide training for women in gender awareness, political participation and leadership. VWUs should mobilise women to participate actively in the GRDD.
4. Increase the number of women leaders at the commune and village/hamlet levels in charge of organising and chairing meetings, train them in leadership, decision making and gender sensitive policy analysis and advocacy skills. Develop a system of rotating chairs (male - female).
5. Provide gender awareness training for GRDD Steering Committee members and leaders at the commune and village or hamlet level.

Conclusions

The full participation of women in leadership, decision-making and public life enhances the welfare of not only women but also the society at large (World Bank 2000). Women in positions of power help to ensure that the opinions of women are expressed and their needs addressed. Moreover, studies have found that higher levels of women in the politics and administration of the country lead to better governance. In a comparison of countries with the same education, civil liberties, legal institutions and income levels, it was found that

"countries where women have greater rights and participate more in public life tend to have cleaner business and government...As the influence of women in public life grows, the level of corruption declines (World Bank 2000).

In general, Viet Nam's record on the participation of women in leadership is commendable. Viet Nam's strong commitment to women's participation in leadership and decision-making is ratified in laws and policies. In comparison with other Asian countries, Viet Nam has a relatively high number of women in the National Assembly. In addition, recently Viet Nam has undertaken ambitious and progressive efforts to increase women's involvement in political leadership, such as the countrywide training for women candidates to the National Assembly in 1997 and the People's Councils in 1999.

Improving women's rate of participation in leadership, however, involves not only increasing the numbers of women in positions of power but also enhancing women's voice, which is women's ability to influence and contribute to the decision-making process. This will involve

the development of systems for implementing progressive policies, and mechanisms for enforcing, monitoring and reviewing implementation. Furthermore, all gender disparities are embedded in social norms and customs which influence decisions of both men and women leaders. Thus, additional measures will be necessary to address these social factors which undermine the implementation of policies, limit women's ability to voice their concerns in appropriate fora and restrict society's ability to respond to the interests and needs of women.

Current knowledge and understanding of the role of women in leadership and decision-making must be supplemented through further research. Studies should include a national focus, looking at specific regions and sectors, as well as an examination of the role of women in the legal system, and the fostering of women leaders in community-based politics. International research and experience should also be studied, including issues such as gender budgeting, the development of women's lobby groups or caucuses, and the role of women and leadership in the global economy.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
PUBLIC SAFETY CAMPAIGN

Objective: Support Ambassador Peterson's "Safe Vietnam" initiative to advance personal safety awareness and injury/disability prevention.

Key Points to Make:

- Coordinating with other major donors, NGOs, and private companies, Ambassador Peterson launched his "Safe Vietnam" initiative in 1999 because injury is the leading cause of preventable death and disability for children and adolescents.
- Subsequently, the Communist Party adopted "traffic safety" as one of its three social development priorities (the other two are "social evils" and HIV/AIDS), enacted a law requiring motorbike riders to wear helmets, and is developing a National Child Safety Plan.

Background:

Motorbikes are the primary mode of individual transportation in Vietnam, and, since most riders do not wear helmets, accidents often produce terrible injuries. Under the Ambassador's leadership, major donors, NGOs, and U.S. companies 3M, Ford, Coca-Cola, and American President Lines came to together to work with the Government of Vietnam to reduce Vietnam's serious accident rate. Following passage of Vietnam's new helmet law, Ford and Coca-Cola provided funding to purchase 750 motorcycle helmets, and Vietnam's newest NGO, the Asia Injury Prevention Foundation (AIPF) funded the importation of 15,000 child helmets to begin a National Safe Kids Program centered on primary schools. AIPF is currently developing educational games and teachers curricula, and it is tracking head injury rates of children over the next six months to demonstrate the effectiveness of helmets in preventing serious brain injuries resulting from accidents.

Both the Centers for Disease Control and USAID have contributed funding to the "Safe Vietnam" initiative.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO VIETNAM

Objectives: Reaffirm USG willingness to provide appropriate humanitarian assistance to Vietnam. Highlight USG disaster assistance to Vietnam to date, including both disaster response and preparedness initiatives.

Key Points to Make:

- USAID/OFDA has provided \$497,645 in flood relief assistance to Vietnam in recent weeks, nearly all of it in response to the Mekong Delta flooding. This includes assistance to support relief efforts of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and airlift of USAID/OFDA relief commodities delivered to Ho Chi Minh City October 18, 20, and 21. (DOD provided air transport for the October 18 and October 20 deliveries.)
- USG humanitarian assistance to Vietnam has been ongoing for several years. USAID/OFDA has provided disaster assistance to Vietnam every year since 1994 totaling more than \$3 million, most of it flood and storm-related.
- The USG, while committed to doing what it can to complement GVN efforts, recognizes that Vietnam has a well-developed disaster response capability, and notes that Vietnam was recently the recipient of a United Nations prize for its achievements in natural disaster prevention and relief.
- There is a growing recognition worldwide that disaster preparedness measures result in a large return on investments if properly targeted. We are pleased to support Vietnamese flood preparedness efforts. In this regard, USAID has recently awarded a grant to the United Nations Development Program for a flood early warning system in central Vietnam.

Background

Vietnam experiences nearly annual flooding primarily in its central provinces and in the Mekong Delta region in southern Vietnam. However, it is currently experiencing what is perhaps the worst Mekong river flooding in 75 years. USAID/OFDA supports flood preparedness efforts through a \$994,000, four year grant (2000-2003) to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to develop early warning systems in flood-prone central Vietnam.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
USAID Programs and Activities

Objective: Reaffirm USG interest in helping Vietnam carry out its economic reforms and overcome obstacles to its global competitiveness.

Key Points to Make:

- The growth of the USAID assistance program since 1991 from a \$1.4 million humanitarian program to a \$7.5 million multi-faceted program (\$38 million total to date) reflects the growing US-Vietnam partnership.
- USAID's strategy for Vietnam is focused on: (1) Enhancing the Environment for Trade and Investment; (2) HIV/AIDS and flood relief; and (3) Environmental Management.
- These areas are important for Vietnam's future and its leadership role in the region.

Background:

USAID assistance to Vietnam began in 1991, and was limited to humanitarian activities only. With the passing of legislation in 1997 and 1998, all legal restrictions on aid to Vietnam were lifted. Since then USAID assistance has grown almost six-fold to nearly \$8.0 million in FY2000.

Trade and Investment: Through the US-Vietnam Trade Council, USAID has helped Vietnam better understand the reforms required under the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). USAID supports Boise State University's partnership with the National Economic University in Hanoi to train Vietnam's future economic leaders to operate in a free market context.

War Victims/Displaced Children: Since 1991 the USAID's Leahy War Victims Fund has provided prosthetics, rehabilitation and improved accessibility for Vietnamese war victims. The Leahy fund has been expanded to address the huge need for orthotics, especially for children. In addition, the Displaced Children and Orphan's Fund (DCOF) assists displaced and disabled children through training, advocacy, and vocational rehabilitation. Vietnam leads the region in treatment for the disabled.

HIV/AIDS: As part of a regional effort, USAID is helping Vietnam control the spread of HIV/AIDS by improving surveillance capacity, policy-based interventions, and prevention programs. This will be part of the FY2001 expansion of the President's LIFE Initiative.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
HHS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Objective: Highlight the positive contributions Department of Health and Human Services programs are making to Vietnam's social and economic development.

Key Points to Make:

- DHHS, through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH), is helping build Vietnam's public health infrastructure and scientific research capability.
- CDC, along with the Rockefeller Foundation, is expanding public health education capacity and promoting personal safety awareness and injury/disability prevention.
- The NIH is funding a broad range of collaborative research and advanced training for scientists.

Background:

Following Secretary Shalala's 1997 visit to Vietnam, DHHS technical assistance and cooperative research programs have become been improving Vietnam's public health infrastructure. Major areas of cooperation include research on infectious diseases, chronic diseases, injury, environmental and occupational health, traditional medicine, reproductive health, and biomedical research.

CDC and the Rockefeller Foundation are expanding graduate-training capacity at the Hanoi School of Public Health. CDC also actively supports Ambassador Peterson's "Safe Vietnam" initiative through collaboration with UNICEF to advance personal safety awareness and injury/disability prevention.

NIH collaborative biomedical research grants are funding research on vaccines for Typhoid Fever, Cholera, and Shigella, treatment to prevent breast cancer recurrence, and HIV/AIDS. The NIH's Fogarty International Center currently supports graduate study of Vietnamese scientists at the University of Washington, as well as training programs at numerous Vietnamese centers for higher education.

EDUCATION EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

The State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has an earmark of \$4 million for the Vietnam Fulbright program and in FY 2000 awarded a total of thirty-eight grants to eight U.S. scholars, seven Vietnamese scholars, eight U.S. students, and fifteen Vietnamese students. Another aspect of the program, the Vietnam Fulbright Teaching Center, is managed by Harvard University through a grant from the Bureau for \$1.55 million.

The Bureau is supporting two partnership grants between U.S. and Vietnamese universities to enable the institutional partners to pursue educational objectives through exchanges of professors and administrators over a three-year period. The current affiliations are University of Oregon/Oregon State University/Van Lang University/Payap University and University of San Francisco Law School/Ho Chi Minh City College of Law.

There are currently three Vietnamese scholars pursuing research projects in the U.S. via the Herbert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program. Their areas of study include gender issues and policies, AIDS prevention program management, and international fisheries development.

The Bureau will bring twenty-two Vietnamese in ten different International Visitor Program projects to the U.S. The programs cover issues ranging from information technology to drug abuse, the judicial system, the U.S. economic system, and urban planning.

The Bureau awarded a grant in the amount of \$110,534 to the U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council to implement a four-week U.S. exchange entitled "Trade and Commercial Law Fellowship Program."

BACKGROUND PAPER:
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
NATURAL RESOURCES AND BIODIVERSITY

Objectives: Reducing Vietnam's internal pollution and involving them in addressing regional environmental threats -- not only on environmental grounds but also to strengthen sustainable economic development.

Key Points to Make:

- It is important that Vietnam cooperate and support international efforts to combat illegal logging in the region.
- We urge Vietnam's support for riparian efforts to ensure the integrated and sustainable development of the Mekong River.
- We encourage expanded Vietnamese participation in APEC environment meetings, especially the Marine Resource Conservation Working Group and the Fisheries Working Group. The strong U.S.-Vietnam fisheries bilateral relationship can foster this cooperation.
- We urge Vietnam to give high priority to sustainable management of their marine resources particularly as they increase exports of hard coral.

Background:

Growing industrialization and population migration are threatening Vietnam's environment. In the highlands, illegal logging and slash and burn agriculture contribute to deforestation, soil erosion and river degradation. Rampant deforestation, which leads to erosion, has exacerbated the effects of monsoonal rains leading to the worst flooding in years. Pesticide runoff, industrial discharge and untreated sewage contaminate both the potable water supply and important irrigation systems. Land based sources of pollution and overfishing threaten marine resources.

Vietnam faces significant environmental challenges. It is, however, an emerging economy that has the capacity to promote sustainable development, particularly as it develops its tourism and agriculture sectors.

Although not a major emitter of greenhouse gases that contribute to global climate change, Vietnam hosted, with U.S. support, a regional workshop last year on Market Based Mechanisms to mitigate climate change. Due to its vulnerability to potential sea level rise and other impacts of climate change Vietnam may support our efforts to expand the participation of developing countries within the UNFCCC.

BACKGROUND PAPER:
VIETNAMESE ETIQUETTE

Through its long history and encounters with various foreign cultures, Vietnam has developed a host of often contradictory customs and mores.

Proper Names: In general, the Vietnamese proper name is composed of three words. The first word is the family name and the last word is a person's proper name. The word "Thi" (for females) or "Van" (for males) is often used as a middle name.

Usually, the given name (the last word) is used in both informal and formal circumstances. In general, the given name is preceded by a kinship term in informal circumstances, the words "Anh" (brother) or "Chi" (sister); on formal occasions, by "Ong" (Mr.) or "Co" (Ms.) For instance, Mr. Vo Van Kiet is addressed as Mr. Kiet (not Mr. Vo), or Brother Kiet, by his comrades, or Uncle Kiet, by younger people.

Greeting People: Handshaking is practiced by the Vietnamese, often clasping your hand with both of theirs and gently shaking it longer than necessary to show respect or admiration. Men and women always stand up to greet their guests; women who remain seated are considered arrogant or rude. It is very polite to give a name card or drink using both hands.

Body Language: Pointing a finger at someone, especially when accompanied by a loud remark, or beckoning someone with one or two of your fingers waving inward, is rude. The acceptable way to beckon a person is palm down, cupping the hand, and wiggling the fingers. A "Keeping-your-fingers-crossed" sign is considered a particularly obscene gesture.

Waving hands and making facial expressions excessively to emphasize to one's speech are regarded as evidence of a disturbed mind, especially when expressed by a woman. Jumping up and down in excitement is unacceptable to most Vietnamese.

Dress: Avoid white and black, the colors of death; red is Vietnam's favorite color. Shorts are not considered appropriate for women.

Dining: It is not polite to use chopsticks or silverware to clank glasses or china. One should clap hands to get attention.

Superstition: Traditionally, Vietnamese avoid beginning a trip on the 7th, 17th, and 27th of the month, and try not to return from travel on the 3rd, 13th, and 23rd. Vietnamese hang mirrors above their doors to fend off evil spirits. The household altar occupies the most sacred place in the home and the Vietnamese will never sit with their backs to the altar. Business locations also have a designated altar space. One should not compliment a baby's health, parents may fear that the devil may hear you and harm their child.

SHOW: ALL THINGS CONSIDERED (8:00 PM ET)

April 20, 2000, Thursday

LENGTH: 1961 words

HEADLINE: VIETNAM 25 YEARS AFTER THE END OF THE WAR, PART ONE

ANCHORS: LINDA WERTHEIMER

REPORTERS: DANIEL ZWERDLING

BODY:

LINDA WERTHEIMER, host:

This is NPR's ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I'm Linda Wertheimer.

Twenty-five years ago this month, the Vietnam War came to an end. The Communist North triumphed over the non-Communist South and a difficult era of reconstruction and reconciliation began. Peace and time have brought many changes. But as correspondent Daniel Zwerdling discovered on a recent trip for NPR News and American Radio Works, the scars of the nation's tragic division still linger.

DANIEL ZWERDLING reporting:

The billboard in the parking lot says 'Welcome to the Ku-Chi Tunnels.' They're big letters in plain English and there's probably no other spot in Vietnam that symbolizes so powerfully how the Vietnamese have made peace with the American role in the war.

Unidentified Guide: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. The tour through the tunnel is nearly one hour.

ZWERDLING: The guide is dressed like an American park ranger. He starts the tour in front of a video screen at a small outdoor theater in the woods.

Unidentified Guide: Follow me, please.

ZWERDLING: The Communist guerrillas dug 150 miles of tunnels here, right under the American troops. We're about an hour's drive from Ho Chi Minh City, or Saigon, as they used to call it. The guerrillas built barracks and weapons factories and hospital operating rooms, all underground. They'd live down there during the day, then sneak out at night and attack. The guide crouches at a pile of leaves.

Unidentified Guide: Now here, I show you the secret entrance of the tunnel.

(Soundbite of leaves rustling)

Unidentified Guide: If any American came, discovered entrance, opened trap

door--Boom!--Americans would be killed. Would you like to have a picture?

ZWERDLING: These days, Americans are welcome. In fact, the Vietnamese government has remodeled the Ku-Chi Tunnels to accommodate them. Back during the war, the guerrillas made the tunnel openings so narrow that usually only Vietnamese could slip through.

Unidentified Guide: Please take care.

(Soundbite of footsteps)

ZWERDLING: But they've enlarged the tunnels so 'big, fat Americans can go down, too.' His words.

Unidentified Guide: Take it slow, please.

ZWERDLING: You have to totally bend over so that you're no higher than your waist.

Unidentified Guide: Would you like to have picture in tunnel, madam? Have picture? No? Let's go on.

ZWERDLING: And when you emerge, there's one final stop.

(Soundbite of gunshots)

ZWERDLING: You can relive the war in a small way by banging away at the firing range on weapons that soldiers actually used. They charge a dollar for every shot. If that doesn't appeal to you, you can buy a memento at the souvenir shop. They've taken the profane sayings that American commandos used to mutter to build up their courage in battle and they've engraved the words with a skull and crossbones on cigarette lighters.

Unidentified Guide: 'Though I walk through the valley of death, I will fear no evil, for I am the evilest son of a bitch in the valley.' (Laughs)

ZWERDLING: A lot of Americans who visit Vietnam shake their heads at some point and say to themselves: Wait a minute. No matter how you felt about the war, whether you supported it or opposed it or fought in it, you can't escape the basic facts: The Communist-led army killed 58,000 American troops. The US military and their South Vietnamese allies killed roughly 3 million soldiers and civilians in their own country. American warplanes destroyed vast areas of Vietnam with bombs and pesticides and fire. So why don't Vietnamese hate Americans?

Mr. HU NYOK (Scholar): When I meet Americans, it is the first question they ask me, yeah.

ZWERDLING: Hu Nyok is one of the best-known scholars in Vietnam, and he's taken us to a sacred site in Hanoi to explain his answers.

Mr. NYOK: You see, this pagoda is unique in Vietnam. The first building dates back to Han '49.

ZWERDLING: Yes. The Vietnamese call it the One-pillar Pagoda. The pagoda rises on one pillar out of a murky pond that's covered with purple lotus flowers. Smoke keeps twirling around it from all the incense sticks that Buddhist pilgrims light at the altar. Hu says this pagoda reflects the first reason why Vietnamese have forgiven Americans.

Mr. NYOK: I think there's yet--until now for many Americans, Vietnam is synonym of war, but the true face of Vietnam is not war. Buddhism for the Vietnamese means the heart and compassion and pity, and it is our essential feature.

ZWERDLING: Of course, many religions preach forgiveness, but Nyok says there's another explanation that's more pragmatic. When you look at the whole sweep of Vietnam's history, the war against the Americans was a blip. For more than 2,000 years, Vietnam's main enemy has been China. In fact, the two countries fought their latest war only 20 years ago along their border. Many American didn't even hear about it.

Mr. NYOK: To survive, we have always, after the wars, waited for China to make peace and to forget the hardships of the war, to be able to live in peace with our giants.

ZWERDLING: He says the country's applied the same lesson to the United States. And finally, Hu says, the Vietnamese can embrace Americans now because Uncle Ho told them to. That's what many Vietnamese call the father of their modern nation, Ho Chi Minh. Ho led the country to triumph. First they kicked out the French colonizers, then they humiliated the United States. But many Vietnamese will tell you that even during the war, Ho said they shouldn't blame the American people for causing their suffering. They should blame America's leaders.

(Soundbite of bowling)

ZWERDLING: Everywhere you go in Vietnam, it seems like many people have taken these teachings to heart. One of the hip new sports in Hanoi is an American sport. Computers calculate your bowling score, and the players sing along with American rock music and munch fried onion rings with ketchup or stroll along the city streets. The government has plastered the buildings with huge red banners that hail the Communist Party, but Vietnamese whiz by on their motorbikes wearing jackets emblazoned with the American flag.

(Soundbite of traffic)

ZWERDLING: Maybe all this makes it sound like it's been a little too easy for Vietnamese to let go of the war, and one woman says the process has been more painful. Her name is Sen Wah.

Ms. SEN WAH (Marketing Director for Fashion Magazine): My daughter.

Unidentified Daughter: (Foreign language spoken)

ZWERDLING: Sen Wah is marketing director for a fashion magazine. She says her own childhood in Hanoi was war. Her home is squeezed with a bunch of row houses around a courtyard that's decorated with spindly plants. Sen Wah says she can still hear those nights when she was 12 years old and the US was bombing the city.

Ms. WAH: I just see the whole house shaking and the glass is broken and people screaming. I see the big hole on the street. I was so scared. I had to try to hide myself under anything that I can get myself in. I just want to say I just--the feeling is just to run.

ZWERDLING: Sen Wah says as she got older and became a mother and found a career, she thought she'd left the war behind. But then three years ago, a lifetime of buried resentments and confusion suddenly bubbled up inside of her. It happened on her first trip to America. She went on business to San Francisco.

Ms. WAH: I didn't expect that I'd have such mixed feelings. I thought that it's a beautiful country. I went to the beach, and I just walked slowly around and I see the landscape's so beautiful, and I thought 'They are nice people.' When I met them on the street, they are so lovely.

ZWERDLING: But the longer she stayed in San Francisco, the more she began to feel bitter. Vietnam is one of the poorest countries in the world. College professors here make \$ 30 a month. You can argue that the Communist Party's economic policies helped drag them down, but nobody would dispute the fact that the war also set the country back, way back, when other parts of Asia began surging.

Ms. WAH: I feel a little bit of envy, envy with the Americans. It is not fair to the Vietnamese people that the Americans, they have a good life, they have control. Why should they bomb Vietnam? Why should Vietnam suffer from the war that makes the Vietnamese people live in misery and they are far behind from their neighbors? Unfair.

ZWERDLING: Sen Wah touches on the very issue that could knit Vietnam and America together: the economy. If you drive along a stretch of road near downtown Hanoi, you come to what's called the labor market. In most ways, it's like any other street in Hanoi. The sidewalks are crammed with vendors making noodle soups and selling clothes and fixing bicycle tires. And every morning, young men who need jobs cluster on the street corners and just stand there, waiting.

(Soundbite of two men speaking in foreign language)

ZWERDLING: Everybody in Hanoi knows that this is where you come to hire unskilled workers for the day or even for just an hour. Some of the men are wearing khakis and helmets--they used to serve in the army. They say they live

part of the year on their families' farms, but they can't grow enough food to survive.

Unidentified Man #1: (Through Translator) We want to have more land for the cultivation, but you know that we are too crowded in Vietnam. It is too crowded. There's too many people. And you want to come to the city to find more jobs, to have more income for the family. If you have any jobs that you can offer us, we are ready to help you.

ZWERDLING: The problem keeps getting worse. The population's growing faster than almost anywhere in Asia.

Unidentified Man #2: My specials tonight. There's a seafood sorvita tossed in a cilantro-walnut pesto, which is very nice. There's a seafood stew with smoked chipolate...

ZWERDLING: It's lunchtime at The Red Onion, just a few minutes from the street corners where the unemployed men hang out. Foreign investors hope this restaurant reflects the future of Vietnam.

Unidentified Man #2: It's a seafood parfait which is...

ZWERDLING: Go back to the Vietnam War for a moment. Remember the infamous Hanoi Hilton? That was the nickname of the Hoa Lo Prison where the North Vietnamese kept American pilots who they shot down. A few years ago, the government tore down most of that prison, and in its place, investors from Singapore built the Hanoi Towers. It's a hotel and condo complex, plus this restaurant. Lots of foreign businessmen began flocking to Hanoi and began hanging out at this restaurant.

Mr. ATTICUS WELLER (Citibank): I also came to Vietnam because it is a transitional economy and I thought it would be the next Asian tiger. And I wanted to come to a place where I could witness that evolution firsthand.

ZWERDLING: Not just witness it, profit from it. This is Atticus Weller. He works for Citibank. Weller says he came to Vietnam in the same tide that brought executives from Coca-Cola and Procter & Gamble and the chef at this restaurant.

Mr. WELLER: There's a tremendous amount of entrepreneurial energy in Vietnam, so when you go out into the street, you see everyone's running a business and it feels very vibrant. They have a reputation for being very hardworking, and that's one of the main things that attracted people to Vietnam, and it's still one of the attractions of the place.

ZWERDLING: But lately, that enthusiasm has started to sour. Investors say government officials keep promising to do something about the corruption in Vietnam and all the frustrating Communist red tape. American and Vietnamese officials have been negotiating a major trade agreement that would tackle some of these issues, but many executives say they're tired of waiting around for reforms. Weller says companies that set up factories and offices here just a

few years ago have already begun to shut them down.

Mr. WELLER: The danger for Vietnam is not that it's gonna have an adversarial relationship with the US, or the US is interested in being imperialistic or dominating Vietnam. The danger for Vietnam is that the US and other countries will--just won't pay attention and Vietnam will become irrelevant.

WERTHEIMER: We'll continue with our report from Vietnam in just a moment.

You're listening to NPR's ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.

(Soundbite of music)

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: May 3, 2000

SHOW: ALL THINGS CONSIDERED (8:00 PM ET)

April 20, 2000, Thursday

LENGTH: 1244 words

HEADLINE: VIETNAM 25 YEARS AFTER THE END OF THE WAR, PART TWO

ANCHORS: LINDA WERTHEIMER

REPORTERS: DANIEL ZWERDLING

BODY:

... WERTHEIMER, host:

This is NPR's ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I'm Linda Wertheimer.

Correspondent Daniel Zwerdling continues his report now from Vietnam.

DANIEL ZWERDLING reporting:

You can see Vietnam's dilemma in the city they used to call Saigon.

(Soundbite of music)

ZWERDLING: On the face of it, the city's bursting with promise. ...

... Chi Minh City is more exciting.

ZWERDLING: But if you peer beyond the traffic and blazing lights, you see the struggling face of Vietnam. All over the city there are skeletons of half-finished office buildings and hotels. Investors started them a few years ago when it looked like the economy was going to take off, then they walked away when the economy stalled. And some people say that Vietnam will never get out of its rut until leaders welcome two groups of people back from the fringes.

Mr. "NU WHEN": ...

... a new life in the United States. But he declined, and he's glad he did. He says no matter who runs the government, Vietnam is his country.

Mr. WHEN: There's one very important thing: the reunification of Vietnam. That's very, very, very important to me. If there's a chance to reunify under any slogan, we can find a way to survive.

ZWERDLING: The country's Communist ...

... who they've always seen as foes. It's too late for people like Nu When--he's 64 years old--but Vietnam needs all the help they can get from the next generation.

(Soundbite of telephone ringing)

Mr. TONY NONG (Travel Consultant): ...

... right. We have arranged a city tour for Hanoi.

Unidentified Woman #2: Fabulous.

ZWERDLING: When American tourists come to Vietnam, they might hire Tony Nong to arrange their trip. He's been at the office since 6 AM on this particular morning. He's been fielding ...

... days that I as a seven-year-old will remember for the rest of my life.

ZWERDLING: Nong escaped from Vietnam exactly 25 years ago this week. When his mother heard that the Communist forces were about to take over, she grabbed Tony and his brother and ...

... it was taking off, mothers carrying kids and also men hanging onto the bay doors as it was closing. And that was my last image of Vietnam.

ZWERDLING: Nong grew up with relatives in California. He became an American citizen. He tried to get in touch with his ...

... mother's voice, and she cried for 15 minutes. She says, 'Do you remember me? Do you miss me?'

(Soundbite of telephone ringing)

ZWERDLING: Nong flew to Vietnam for a family reunion, and these days he's commuting between his homeland and the United States. He's running the family's travel agency in ...

... people like Nong back to the country. For the first time ever, Viet Q will be allowed to buy property in Vietnam; they can grow new roots here.

Mr. NONG: Many do want to come back, but they've just got that fear of, 'What would ...

... up, letting Viet Q's know that, 'Hey, you know, it's OK. You're safe to come back.' I think Vietnam will develop a lot quicker and the misunderstandings will be put to the past.

ZWERDLING: So far, Viet Q in ...

... Vietnamese population was born after the war ended. By the time they have children, many people will only dimly remember that Vietnam and America fought a war. I'm Daniel Zwerdling for NPR News and American Radio Works.

(Credits given)

WERTHEIMER: We'd like to know how the legacy of the Vietnam War has affected your life. We're collecting personal stories and pictures from listeners at our Web site, www.npr. ...

COUNTRY: VIETNAM (96%);

CITY: HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM (69%); HANOI, VIETNAM (63%);

LOAD-DATE: May 3, 2000

SHOW: WEEKEND ALL THINGS CONSIDERED (8:00 PM ET)

April 23, 2000, Sunday

LENGTH: 1854 words

HEADLINE: NEW ECONOMIC TRENDS IN VIETNAM SEEM CAPITALISTIC

ANCHORS: STEVE INSKEEP

REPORTERS: DANIEL ZWERDLING

BODY:

STEVE INSKEEP, host:

The people of Vietnam fought 30 years of war against France, against the United States, against each other. The fighting ended on April 30, 1975, when the last Americans boarded the last helicopters out of the country. Now Vietnam is fighting another struggle with its economy. Much as guerrillas once infiltrated the countryside, private enterprise now infiltrates one of the last communist nations on earth. The government is allowing it, hoping to raise living standards in one of the world's poorest countries. Reporting for NPR and American Radio Works, correspondent Daniel Zwerdling visited one changing village.

(Soundbite of celebration)

DANIEL ZWERDLING reporting:

When we get to the village of Phu Tho, their annual celebration has already started. Families have gathered around the village meeting house. This building has a steep roof with curlicues at the corners. And just inside the massive doorway, there's a huge shrine painted all red and gold. The village leader is asking everybody who's at least 70 years old to please step up to the altar.

Unidentified Man #1 (Village Leader): (Vietnamese spoken)

ZWERDLING: Every year, this village of 1,000 people honors all the elderly residents. The guests of honor dress up in bright silk robes. They wear different colors depending on their ages. One of the village farmers explains what's going on.

Mr. BOY SHUN TANG(ph) (Village Farmer): (Through Translator) Now we can see coming three old men. And the head of village will come and present the gifts and flowers to them just to show our thanks to the old people for their contributions to the village.

ZWERDLING: Now a very old-looking woman makes her way up front. And she kneels in front of the shrine and presses her forehead to the bamboo mat.

Mr. TANG: (Through Translator) You can see that she's wearing the red color. And it means that she's 80 years old--90 years old--yeah, 90.

ZWERDLING: And that gets us wondering how life in Phu Tho has changed over these 90 years. We ask the farmer if we can come back one morning and spend the day with his family. And a few days later, he's waiting at 7 AM at the village gate.

(Soundbite of people talking)

ZWERDLING: Our host's name is Boy Shun Tang. Actually, he should pronounce his name himself.

Mr. TANG: Boy Shun Tang. Boy Shun Tang.

ZWERDLING: The Vietnamese speak a tonal language. Your pitch has to be just right.

To get into the village, you walk under a faded yellow archway. And as you walk down the path to Tang's home, you can literally feel how the economy's changing--under your feet. Tang says only five years ago we would have been walking in mud. Today, we're strolling on bricks. When we get to Tang's house, his wife shows us more dramatic changes.

Ms. WIT TI DIEN(ph) (Boy Shun Tang's Wife): (Vietnamese spoken)

ZWERDLING: Her name is Wit Ti Dien. She has a huge smile and a mouth full of black teeth from a lifetime of chewing betel nuts.

Ms. DIEN: (Vietnamese spoken)

ZWERDLING: She says 15 years ago, they had a thatched roof made of rice stalks and they lit the home with kerosene lanterns. Today, the roof is covered with orange clay tiles and they've got lightbulbs dangling from the ceiling.

Ms. DIEN: (Vietnamese spoken)

ZWERDLING: But they're getting antsy answering questions. First things first.

Mr. TANG: (Through Translator) In Vietnam whenever we have a guest, we should offer tea first. And after that, talking.

ZWERDLING: And supposing somebody starts talking to you before you serve and drink tea?

Mr. TANG: (Through Translator) We would think those people, they are impolite.

ZWERDLING: Now they can talk about their lives. Both Tang and his wife were born here back in Phu Tho back in the 1930s. Everybody in the village was poor

and everybody was a colonial subject. The French ruled Vietnam like a serfdom. And since then, Tang's whole family has grown up trapped in the middle of wars. During World War II, the Japanese invaded and the village was wasted by famine.

Mr. TANG: (Through Translator) Because of the hunger, people just went out on the road and so many people died. And especially at the corner when you turn to the village, so many people die at that corner.

ZWERDLING: Then the world war ended. The French came back. And Tang and his wife started their family. They eventually had six sons. But they hardly had any peace because Vietnamese rebels began fighting the French for independence. When the French gave up, the United States continued the war.

Mr. TANG: (Through Translator) I saw the US bombers and so many US airplanes look like birds flying across the sky. And whenever they came, we heard the siren.

Ooooooh!

(Through Translator) Our people at that time told each other that the land of the village is the land of God. Some bomb was dropped, but didn't explode.

ZWERDLING: When the war finally ended in 1975, Tang's family felt jubilant; after all, three of their sons went off to fight the Americans, and all three made it back alive.

But gradually they faced another crisis: The communist economy began to collapse. And to tell that part of the story, Tang leads the way to his rice fields.

Unidentified Translator: (Vietnamese spoken)

Mr. TANG: (Vietnamese spoken)

Unidentified Translator: Yeah, he's over there where you can see the machine.

ZWERDLING: The rice paddies surround the village in every direction. From a distance, the houses of Phu Tho look like an island in a green sea. Irrigation canals keep the fields ankle-deep in water. Tang says when they farmed before the economic reforms it was like going to work in a factory. They had roll call.

Mr. TANG: (Through Translator) Everyone had to be on the field at 6:00 in the morning.

ZWERDLING: All these fields were part of government-owned collectives. It didn't matter if Tang's family grew a lot of rice or only a little. The collective paid them wages and the government took the harvest.

By the late 1980s, the country was producing such measly rice crops that even Vietnam's leaders were basically saying, 'This economy's in shambles. These

policies are a failure.' Plus, it didn't help that the Soviet Union was collapsing and cutting off their aid to Vietnam. So Vietnam's leaders announced sweeping reforms. They parceled out the fields to the villagers. And today farmers can do pretty much what they want.

Mr. TANG: (Through Translator) You can go eat late or early. It's up to you. And how many rice you can produce from that piece of land is up to your labor. It's up to you.

ZWERDLING: The Vietnamese call this philosophy doi moi. It means new way of life, and it's motivating farmers to become more productive. Vietnam had to import rice only 10 years ago. But now it's becoming one of the biggest exporters in the world. And doi moi's turning Phu Tho's farmers into entrepreneurs.

(Soundbite of pounding)

ZWERDLING: As we walk back into the village, we pass Tang's neighbors. They're sitting on the ground pounding metal sheets into trunks and suitcases which they sell on the streets of Hanoi. Back at Tang's house, his family's selling hogs.

(Soundbite of water pouring; hogs)

ZWERDLING: These are huge changes. Before doi moi, you were breaking the law if you sold anything on your own and kept the profits. Now you're a patriot. You're helping develop the country. So when Boy and his wife and a couple of their sons sit down for an afternoon meal, they can eat more lavishly than ever before. Dien has made chicken and mushroom and sausages and potatoes and rice. And granted, they don't eat like this most of the time. Most days they eat mainly rice. But now they can afford to splurge when they have guests. And they talk about topics that would have been unthinkable five years ago.

(Soundbite of conversation)

ZWERDLING: They're discussing the merits of those sexy music videos on television. They bought a TV.

Ms. DIEN: (Through Translator) Dien a woman, so I don't like to see those sexy girls on TV. I just only want to hear the traditional Vietnamese music. So whenever they have that type program, I turn the TV off or I will leave the room to let the young people to watch it alone. Not me.

ZWERDLING: Vietnam is still one of the poorest countries in the world. Malnutrition is a major problem. But development specialists say the economic reforms are dividing the population into classes. Roughly one-third of the farmers are as poor as ever. In fact, thousands of the peasants rioted a few years ago about 50 miles from this village. They were demanding more land and protesting high taxes and corruption. Then another third of the farmers are doing somewhat better. And finally, a third of the farmers are like Tang's family. Their standard of living is surging.

Cracks are showing up in the society. We see warning signs when we take a stroll after lunch. Some of the most prosperous families in Phu Tho are building new homes. Now most people have one-story bungalows. But these new houses are three-story towers with balconies and gaudy turrets. And the owners are embedding the walls around their houses with broken shards of glass. Jealousy and crime have come to Phu Tho.

Mr. TANG: (Through Translator) There are some people they are too lazy. They don't want to work. They cannot be rich. They become robbers or thieves. It's sad, but it happens. Everywhere in the world there are always some poor people stealing from each other.

ZWERDLING: Some Vietnamese leaders are worried that the new economic policies might accidentally accomplish something that America's military could never do--destroy communism.

A couple of years ago, one of Tang's sons announced that he didn't want to spend his time in the rice fields anymore. He borrowed money and opened a shop.

(Soundbite of motor whirring)

ZWERDLING: Today, he and his wife have two gleaming machines which clean the village farmers' rice and then spew it into burlap bags. And with that, Tang's family has ended hundreds of years of traditions. Nobody in this family works in their rice paddies anymore. They make most of their money in the new economy and they hire poor farmers from distant villages to do the field work for them.

Mr. TANG: (Through Translator) I think that by this way our life is better because we can hire the people who are unemployed to come so that they have jobs and at the same time we can other things that make more profit. It's better.

ZWERDLING: Do you wonder some days, though, whether you are becoming capitalists?

Mr. TANG: (Vietnamese spoken)

Unidentified Translator: He said yes, and then after he said no. (Laughs)

Mr. TANG: (Vietnamese spoken)

ZWERDLING: So when Tang goes home and lights the incense sticks and prays at his family's altar, he has a lot of reasons to thank his ancestors' spirits.

Mr. TANG: (Vietnamese spoken)

ZWERDLING: And Tang's altar symbolizes one more reason why his family's prospering. After the war, some of the relatives fled to the United States, and they send money back to Tang's family. It's not much by American standards, but it goes a long way in a country where the average income is barely more than \$ 300 per year. Tang's relatives bought this altar. It's so big it almost fills

the room.

Mr. TANG: (Vietnamese spoken)

ZWERDLING: 'We would like to invite you, the god of our house and our ancestor, to come and celebrate with us,' Tang says. 'We put sticky rice, chicken, wine and beautiful flowers on the altar. We hope you'll enjoy them with us. And we ask you to bless our family with health and happiness and with success in business.'

Mr. TANG: (Vietnamese spoken)

ZWERDLING: I'm Daniel Zwerdling for NPR News and American Radio Works.

(Soundbite of Vietnamese music)

INSKEEP: Deborah George is the producer of our Vietnam anniversary stories. We'd like to know how the legacy of the Vietnam War has affected your life. Share your thoughts with ALL THINGS CONSIDERED and American Radio Works at www.npr.org. We'll be posting your memories and pictures later this month.

(Soundbite of Vietnamese music)

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: May 24, 2000

SHOW: MORNING EDITION (10:00 AM ET)

April 24, 2000, Monday

LENGTH: 1205 words

HEADLINE: COMPARISON BETWEEN HANOI AND HO CHI MINH CITY

ANCHORS: MADELEINE BRAND

REPORTERS: ERIC WEINER

BODY:

MADELEINE BRAND, host:

This is NPR's MORNING EDITION. I'm Madeleine Brand.

On April 30th, 1975, North Vietnamese troops marched into Saigon, ending the war and effectively reuniting North and South Vietnam. Now more than two decades later, North and South Vietnam remained very different, epitomized by two very different cities: Hanoi, the capital, and Saigon, now known as Ho Chi Minh City. NPR's Eric Weiner visited both cities and filed this report.

ERIC WEINER reporting:

Divisions between North and South Vietnam are nothing new. In the 16th century, the Nguyen and Trinh dynasties carved up the country into two halves. Later, French Colonialists deepened those divisions, then the so-called American war pitted North against South.

(Soundbite of street activity)

WEINER: Hanoi, in the North, is Vietnam's austere capital; a city of lakes and tree-lined streets where no one seems in a hurry. Women in straw hats still carry bushels of vegetables on wooden poles, balance precariously across their shoulders. Yes, a decade of doi moi(ph), or economic reform, has brought an increase in traffic. A few air conditioned office buildings have sprouted amid the faded French Colonial mansions. But life in Hanoi hasn't changed much over the centuries. The pace is still languid, or sleepy, depending on your perspective, and that's the way the Vietnamese, not to mention the growing number of foreigners who live here, like it.

Peter Rider(ph), president of the American Chamber of Commerce, has lived in Hanoi for the past seven years.

Mr. PETER RIDER (American Chamber of Commerce): To me, Hanoi is an enchanting place. I love kind of the size and scale of the city. I--you know, the French architectural heritage is phenomenal. I mean, it's a beautiful, beautiful, wonderful place to live. And it just drips and oozes with history.

WEINER: A brutal history in many ways. Hanoi has borne the brunt of several

foreign invasions and occupations: The Mongols, the Chinese, the French and the Americans, who invaded from the air with B-52 bombers. Today, there's little evidence left of the infamous Christmas bombings of 1972, which destroyed entire neighborhoods. Only a bronze statue of a woman clutching a child in her arms. Few people visit the memorial. The Vietnamese prefer to focus on their capital city's triumphant moments.

(Soundbite of music)

WEINER: Musicians perform at Hanoi's Ba Dinh Square(ph) where, on September 2nd, 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence in front of a crowd of half a million people. And it is here where Ho Chi Minh's embalmed body--he died in 1969--is on display.

(Soundbite of Vietnamese people)

WEINER: Every day, busloads of Vietnamese from every corner of the country come here to have their picture taken and pay their respects to Uncle Ho, as he's affectionately known. Fon Viatwan(ph), a merchant from a remote northern province of Vietnam, says the journey was worthwhile.

Mr. FON VIATWAN (Merchant): (Through Translator) The museum is beautiful, and we have very strong feelings for Uncle Ho, and we respect him. His spirit will last in Vietnam forever, for many, many generations, generation after generations.

WEINER: Uncle Ho's spirit and his Communist ideology still drives political life in Vietnam, despite the Coca-Cola signs on the shiny office buildings. Hanoi is the centerpiece of that ideology, a city that businessmen seeking their fortunes in the new Vietnam can't afford to ignore. Andre Sovrayjeau(ph) is a Vietnam vet who moved to Hanoi to represent a large American corporation.

Mr. ANDRE SOVRAYJEAU: We have a saying in Vietnam that Hanoi (foreign language spoken) means Hanoi is the heart of the entire country. This is the political center, the cultural center. This is where decisions are made.

WEINER: Decisions may be made in Hanoi, but money is made elsewhere.

(Soundbite of train)

WEINER: Every day, the Reunification Express chugs out of Hanoi station. Thirty-six long hours later, the express train arrives in Ho Chi Minh City. That's the official name of Vietnam's commercial capital, but many natives like Tron Vin(ph), a cyclo driver, insist on calling it by its traditional name.

Mr. TRON VIN: I born in Saigon, I say Saigon city. I say Saigon. I say only Saigon. Saigon, Saigon.

(Soundbite of laughter; street activity)

WEINER: Whatever its name, Vietnam's largest city moves to a frenetic beat.

The air is filled with the sound of motor scooters buzzing down the broad boulevards and workers hammering away at yet another high-rise building. This is a city in a hurry. Fee Tron(ph), a software executive, has lived in both Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. Two cities, he says, with two very different temperaments.

Mr. FEE TRON (Software Executive): I think Hanoi's more cerebral in general; whereas in Saigon, it's more commercial. Everybody's hustling to make money. You know, every house in every district got something for sale, got something to sell.

WEINER: Even the American war, as it's known here, is for sale.

(Soundbite of music)

WEINER: This is Apocalypse Now, the bar, not the movie. Huey helicopters are painted on the ceiling, a surfboard is nailed to the wall and inscribed with the words, 'Charlie don't surf,' a famous line from the movie. The bar is packed with Western men and Vietnamese women. Twenty-five years since Saigon fell to the Communists, it's once again a magnet for business, a place where, in theory, fortunes can be made. Every day, thousands of hopefuls arrive from the countryside. They come with little, but business in Saigon doesn't require much. A chair and a mirror on the side of the road is transformed into a barbershop. A beat-up 1982 Honda motorcycle--well, that's a deluxe taxi. Many of the migrants end up working in construction or peddling postcards to foreign tourists.

Ms. LON HOME(ph): People always say about American Dream, but in Vietnam, it's Saigonese dream.

WEINER: Lon Home, owner of an art gallery in Ho Chi Minh City, has lived here all of her life.

Ms. HOME: It's like a chance for many families to make their living. Since in their hometown is not so much developed and they could not survive over there. They move down to the South, where they think is the promising land.

WEINER: There is more wealth concentrated here than anywhere else in Vietnam. Per capita income is more than \$ 1,000 a year, three times the national average. Ho Chi Minh City is fast becoming another Bangkok or Manila, an Asian megalopolis brimming with opportunity, but also plenty of disappointment and despair. Many of the migrants from the countryside end up on the streets working as beggars or prostitutes, just as people did during the height of the American presence in Saigon.

Officially, any citizen of Vietnam can live and work anywhere in the country, no matter their war record. But 25 years since Vietnam was reunified, a psychological border between North and South remains. Nam(ph)--he only gave his first name--ekes out a living as a cyclo driver peddling tourists around Saigon. During the war, he fought alongside the Americans and, even today, he says he's afraid of traveling to northern Vietnam.

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

BIOS

Divider Title: _____

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

**EVENTS IN
VIETNAM**

Divider Title: _____

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

HANOI

Divider Title: _____

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

ARRIVAL CEREMONY

Divider Title: _____

SCENESETTER:
ARRIVAL CEREMONY

On Friday, November 17, President Luong will greet you at the Main Entrance of the Presidential Palace. Both of you will walk to the dais and then continue on to review, in turn, the band, the honor guard, and members of the Vietnamese delegation. Moving back toward the front steps of the palace, you will proceed into the building and turn right into the meeting room. You will take the end seat on the left, with Luong sitting on the right. The interpreter will sit behind you over your right shoulder. To your immediate right sits the Ambassador and other delegation members extending along the wall. GVN counterparts will sit along the opposite wall. The media will then advance from their position at the end of the room to take photos for five minutes. Behind you will be a very large bust of Ho Chi Minh. Like the arrival ceremony at Tiananmen Square in China, while we would prefer to avoid it, this is where the Vietnamese President receives foreign visitors. Our press will relish the picture. It also is unavoidable. The meeting with Luong will begin immediately after the photo session and is scheduled to last about thirty minutes.

The Presidential Palace is an elegant structure built by the French in 1901-1906 to serve as the Residence and Office of the Governor of Indochina.

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

Yen Tang Village

Divider Title: _____

SCENESETTER:
Yen Tang Village Micro-credit Program

Yen Tang Village Program

On November 17, you will depart Hanoi at 10:30 A.m. and travel approximately one hour (40 km) from Hanoi to Yen Tang village, the site of a successful Women's Union micro-credit program, entitled "Tao Yeu Mai," a colloquial way of saying "I love you." You will be met by village leaders and representatives of one of the village's four program groups. You will proceed first to the house of a participant to observe and discuss with her the benefits of the micro-credit program. Following this conversation, you will attend a special meeting with one of the 40-women "centers" in Yen Tang's "Dinh" or village communal hall. Participants, clad in their pink "Tao Yeu Mai" blouses, will conduct an abbreviated version of a weekly meeting. You will then visit the village pagoda, where, after a greeting by the head monk, you should light incense and offer a brief prayer.

Background

The Tao Yeu Mai (TYM) micro-credit and savings program, operated by the Women's Union, is designed to help very poor women in rural Vietnam. It provides loans and requires regular savings, allowing participants to start businesses to improve the livelihood and welfare of their families and to increase their self-confidence and self-esteem. Groups meet weekly to make loan payments, to contribute to savings plans, to distribute new loans, and to give mutual support.

Initiated in 1992, the program now operates in five northern provinces. It has disbursed over US \$2 million to 10,866 beneficiaries. TYM currently receives funding from the Oxfam USA and Catholic Relief Services. Oxfam USA has also supported replications of the TYM program by authorities in three additional provinces.

TYM began operations in Yen Tang village in 1995. There are 160 participants in this village of 3300 people. They are organized into 4 "centers" of 40 people. While relatively close to Hanoi, the village lies in Soc Son district, one of the region's poorest.

TALKING POINTS
TO BE PROVIDED

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

**President's Speech
at Hanoi University**

Divider Title: _____

SCENESETTER:
REMARKS AT HANOI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

On Friday afternoon, November 17, you will give a speech at Hanoi National University in Hanoi. The University was founded in 1993 and unified some major leading universities in Hanoi dating back to the 1950s. It is a multidisciplinary institution and research center. The University consists of three affiliated colleges, five affiliated faculties and schools, 11 affiliated institutes and centers, 42 departments, and 27 research centers. The student population encompasses over 22,700 full-time and 34,000 part-time students and over 1,300 full-time and 200 part-time graduate students.

Your audience will be composed of over 400 students and educators. You will deliver the speech in the school's auditorium, and it will be broadcast to approximately 1,500 students in the courtyard outside the auditorium. Additionally, the speech is scheduled to be broadcast live around the country.

Following the speech, you will proceed to an area that is adjacent to the auditorium building and is in front of the University's Hanoi School of Business. At this location, you will proceed to a stage or podium and deliver brief remarks to a crowd of approximately 1,500 Vietnamese students.

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

**Craft Link
Retail Stop**

Divider Title: _____

CRAFTLINK RETAIL STOP

SO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT CRAFT LINK...

What is Craft Link?

Craft Link is a Vietnamese not-for-profit organization that seeks to assist small Vietnamese craft producers to develop their businesses and find market opportunities in a changing economy. Craft Link operates a shop that is open daily at 43 Van Mieu, hosts 2-3 handicraft bazaars a year, and does wholesale and export sales.

Why was Craft Link formed?

Craft Link was started by international non-government organizations (NGOs) interested in the production and sale of handicrafts as a means of generating income for poor and marginalized people. While some people were benefiting from the new economy in Vietnam, many others were left behind. One approach to this problem involves handicraft projects that develop new skills, design new products, help organize products, and help organize people into production groups. Research shows that there are also many traditional handicraft producers who are having difficulty finding new markets within Vietnam's changing economic system. Craft Link was formed to help these handicraft producers find markets for their products.

In addition to Craft Link's help in accessing new markets, through our shop and bazaars, handicraft producers have requested assistance with new product design and business training in areas such as marketing, quality control, basic accounting, and price-setting. Our aim is to provide producers with the skills needed to create practical, high quality products, and to adapt designs to market changes.

Who runs Craft Link?

Craft Link activities are guided by a board comprised of independent Vietnamese individuals and representative of NGOs. Some of the international NGOs currently involved on the board are the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Oxfam Hong Kong, Oxfam Quebec, the Ford Foundation, Nordic Assistance to Vietnam, and the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV). Board members do not receive any financial benefit from their involvement with Craft Link.

How are producer groups chosen?

All groups with which Craft Link works meet basic criteria such as fair wages, environmental and employee safety. Craft Link does not work with state-owned factories or joint-venture organizations because these groups already have access to market opportunities. Craft Link works as closely as possible with the people who actually produce the handicrafts. Craft Link gives preference to producers who are marginalized or disadvantaged, such as ethnic minority people in remote areas, street children, and people with disabilities. Producer groups, organizations, or small businesses that are investing in the handicraft producers' social welfare, who are not simply treating them as a means of production, are given preference.

What are some examples of Craft Link producers?

Three of the original groups emerged as a result of projects that trained the Black Thai, Nung, and Ta Oi ethnic minority groups in remote areas to use their traditional weaving and embroidery skills to produce items for sale. Another group, Mai Handicraft, was initiated by a group of Vietnamese social workers to create employment opportunities for street children and disadvantaged women. This group alone sold over U.S. \$25,000 through Craft Link initiated market opportunities. Other groups include a group of Hanoi street children who are learning stone carving skills, a group that teaches quilting skills to handicapped and disadvantaged girls, and a wood carver with physical disabilities in Hue. Craft Link has traveled to the central highlands and other remote areas to purchase traditional products from villagers who have few income-earning opportunities.

CRAFT LINK has also developed its own products. For example, Craft Link purchases handmade paper from a traditional papermaking village north of Hanoi. These producers were not in a position to make other products with the paper, so Craft Link developed its own stationary sets, gift boxes, and notebooks.

Does "not-for-profit" mean that Craft Link doesn't make money?

No, Craft Link makes money and we operate in a business-like fashion. Three things make us different. First, we are committed to working with producers who need our services. Second, profits are used for the organization's development activities, and not for the benefit of the owner or board. Finally, because the profits do not go into the pockets of individuals, many people share our vision and willingly invest time and energy to make this vision a reality.

What happens to Craft Link's profits?

Craft Link is committed to helping producers. Craft Link pays its producer groups fair wages and uses profits to assist in new product design and business training. Craft Link is committed to treating all of its handicraft producers fairly and providing markets for their products through its shops and bazaars.

Craft Link also needs to be financially self-sustainable and not dependent on outside money. If Craft Link cannot sustain itself, then its efforts to help producers cannot continue.

Why does Craft Link use volunteers?

Craft Link invites expatriate and Vietnamese individuals to help with our bazaars and other activities. Craft Link works with volunteers for two reasons. The first is that volunteers help keep costs low, allowing us to provide more services to the producers. The second is that, through volunteers, Craft Link helps ensure that our work remains a community endeavor – one in which we can work together to address the issues of poverty and unemployment in our world.

How can you become a "link" in the Craft Link chain?

The first way is to purchase handicraft products through Craft Link's shop and bazaars. The second way is to tell others about our products and vision. Finally, you can volunteer to assist at Craft Link's bazaars and shop, and with other activities. We can be contacted at 43 Van Mieu, Hanoi, or via phone at: 8.437 710 or 7.336 101.

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

**Embassy
Meet and Greet**

Divider Title: _____

SCENESETTER:
MEETING WITH U.S. EMBASSY STAFF

This event will take place in the first floor ballroom of your hotel. Upon entering the ballroom, you will make brief (five-minute) remarks from a small podium at the front of the room. The audience will consist of embassy American staff and families, temporary duty U.S. Government employees, and Vietnamese employees of the embassy, some 250-300 persons in all. After the remarks, you will participate in three group photograph sessions with the American staff and families, temporary duty employees, and the Vietnamese employees of the embassy, respectively. The photo sessions should last no longer than 15 minutes.

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

State Dinner

Divider Title: _____

SCENESETTER:
STATE DINNER

After being greeted at the entrance to the Presidential Palace by President Luong, you will be invited to join the Vietnamese delegation for dinner in the main dining room. This room is at the top of the stairs on the left side of the main entrance of the building. The table will be set for 100 guests with the Americans and Vietnamese on opposite sides of the table. At the beginning of the meal, the Vietnamese President will propose a brief welcoming toast to which you will be expected to respond. (The text of the toasts will be given to the press as part of the official releases related to the visit.) The Vietnamese do not propose to have any entertainment in the banquet hall during the meal but a small music group may provide background music. At the conclusion of the dinner, President Luong will stand and invite you to attend the cultural performance.

Background

The Presidential Palace is a large French-built structure which formerly housed the Governor General of Indochina. It is set back along a circular driveway behind ornamental wrought iron gates. The banquet room itself has about one-third of the overall space partially separated from the main room by large columns.