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# WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP IN VIET NAM



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# **Women's Representation in Leadership in Viet Nam**

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## ACRONYMS

CPC	Commune People Committee
DOVIPNET	Domestic Violence Prevention Network in Viet Nam
EOWP	Cambridge-Vietnam Women's Leadership Program: Empowering of women in the public sector in the context of international economic integration
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOC	Ministry of Construction
MOCST	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MOIC	Ministry of Information and Communications
MOIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs
MONDEF	Ministry of National Defence
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MOPS	Ministry of Public Security
MOST	Ministry of Science and Technology
MOT	Ministry of Transport
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NCAFW	National Committee for the Advancement of Women
NEW	Network for Empowerment of Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPGE	National Programme on Gender Equality
NSGE	National Strategy on Gender Equality
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VCP	Vietnam Communist Party
VND	Viet Nam Dong
VNA	Vietnam National Assembly
VASS	Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences
VAST	Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology
VWU	Vietnam Women's Union

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to highlight trends in women's representation in Viet Nam's government, provide an overview of the legal framework related to women's leadership and to discuss the challenges and barriers faced by women in the public sector. The report is a review and analysis of recent research findings and government reports related to women in decision making. The report highlights that although there has been considerable progress made by Viet Nam in promoting gender equality and women empowerment, there still remains a gap between the targets and expectations expressed in government legislation and in the actual figures of women's representation.

While Viet Nam's Gender Development Index shows that the country is making progress closing the gap in gender inequality<sup>1</sup>, in the area of women's leadership, the rates in the public sector are low. In terms of women participation in the parliament, the percentage of women representatives in the National Assembly is at its lowest since 1997. At the sub-national level, women's representation is better, although little progress between terms is observed and the target of a minimum of 30% women's representation by 2011 has not been achieved. Within the Viet Nam Communist Party, women's membership has slowly climbed and in 2010 was 33%. However, the number of women leaders in key positions such as in the Politburo, Central Committee and the Secretariat remains low.

These figures are surprising in light of the progressive policies, strategies and plans implemented by the government on women's leadership. Viet Nam has ratified and signed all international conventions and plans that call on countries to increase the number of women in leadership. In the national documents, targets are set, responsibility determined and a budget is given. These are measures that are in line with the conventions and international best practices. However, in this report, an analysis of the legal framework finds that some of the targets are un-measurable and there are limited measures in place to ensure implementation of policies.

The inability to achieve the targets set by the government is a result of a number of institutional and attitudinal factors. Such factors include inadequate government regulations and lack of implementation of existing policies, cultural factors and inherent systemic bias towards men. More specifically, women in the public sector face challenges regarding age-related training eligibility criteria and a retirement age that is five years earlier than males.

Workplace attitudes are challenges for women in their aspiration to leadership positions. Female leaders are assessed more harshly than their male counterparts, and their promotion can be dependent on a supervisor who is unwilling to implement gender-sensitive regulations; while at home, women are expected to perform almost all domestic duties. There are few women role models for young women to follow or to be inspired by. Women themselves do not necessarily see themselves as leaders, in part because of messages expressed in media, education and home.

To address these factors and to support the government in building an effective and inclusive governing system, the following recommendations are made:

### Policies and Programs:

- Consider removing the discriminatory practice of forcing women to retire 5 years earlier than men and at the pinnacle and most effective point in their career. Revise the labour code to ensure women and men have the same maximum and minimum retirement age.
- Consider removing age restrictions placed on women during hiring, promotion and nomination for training.
- Implement specific hiring, training, promotion policies to have a minimum of 30% women in deputy director and director positions in government (both department and division) and the Party. More importantly, put in place strict punitive measures if these targets are not met.

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP (2011), *Social services for human development: Viet Nam Human Development Report*

- Implement an award system to recognize departments that introduce progressive employment and human resource practices that result in an increase in women's representation in deputy and director level positions.
- Implement training and mentoring programs for women in junior positions to prepare them for advancement and to be effective in senior level positions.
- Conduct studies and begin conversations about the introduction of a parental or paternity leave to show government support for men to play a larger role in child care and to support their spouses in pursuit of careers.
- Implement training programs within established institutions (schools, universities, academies) that give preference to women students and that provide soft skills such as public speaking, debating, arguing, speaking with constituents, policy writing, action plan development and inform women of candidate selection and nomination processes.

#### **Attitudinal Change:**

- Implement awareness raising campaigns targeted at senior official of the Party and government arguing the importance and effectiveness of having an equal level of women in senior decision making positions and suggesting best practices for increasing the number of women in senior level positions.
- Implement awareness raising and behaviour change campaigns targeted at men in the public service on the role men need to play in the home to allow and support women to pursue and be successful in their careers and how male colleagues can mentor, support and promote their female colleagues.
- Carry out innovative awareness raising campaigns focused at the general public by showcasing prominent women leaders in Viet Nam and Asia.
- Support media to work more with current women leaders, to bring forward women's views in present debates and issues and encourage media to seek out women's views on issues and represent these fairly and equally.
- Implement young women's leadership training courses in high-schools and universities to engage women at a young age and to encourage them and provide them the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to become leaders.
- Work with youth to engage them on gender equality, rights of women, roles of men in child care and home management and roles of women as leaders in the workplace and community.

## 1. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN VIET NAM'S PUBLIC SECTOR

The purpose of this report is to share recent data on women's representation in Viet Nam, to analyze the factors affecting women's leadership, and to provide recommendations to the Government of Viet Nam to support agencies in their effort to increase women's leadership roles. The primary audience is the numerous stakeholders responsible for the promotion of gender equality in Viet Nam and the key agencies responsible for working on promoting women's representation. These stakeholders include government agencies such as Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), Central Party's Organization Committee, Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Committee for Ethnic Minorities (CEMA), National Committee for Advancement of Women (NCFW), National Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front and the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU).



This report comes at an important point for Viet Nam. Ministries are in the process of developing detailed plans on how to increase women's representation in senior level decision-making positions. Departments are reviewing implementation of important legal documents related to women's representation. Steps have been taken to implement strategic leadership courses for women. These are opportunities to build on. However, there is cause for concern about the level of women's representation. At the national level, over the last four terms there has been a slippage in the number of elected women, as well as the number of women appointed as Heads of Committees in the National Assembly. At the sub-national level, although there are small increases in representation, the targets on women's representation have not been met. Women's roles as Chairs of People's Councils or People's Committees is still low and there is no indication of an increase over time. At the administrative level, the proverbial 'glass ceiling' seems to be at the deputy director level. Women do make up the majority of the civil service, yet their positions are primarily in supportive roles rather than directive and decision-making positions. If Viet Nam is to reach its target of 35-40%<sup>2</sup> women's representation in parliament and for women to hold key leadership positions in government agencies, political will is essential for effective programmes to be implemented.

Why is this a concern? Why should we be apprehensive about women not being in decision-making roles? The first argument for having equal representation of women in all sectors is from a justice perspective. Women make up half of the population and therefore it is their right to have half of all decision-making positions. The second argument is that women have different experiences than men due to social as well as biological reasons. Therefore, women need to be in positions of influence to bring these experiences and perspectives forward. This argument is from an experience perspective. The third reason is from an interest group perspective. Women and men have different interests and it is more effective and legitimate if each group represents their own interests.

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

This report is conducted by Jean Munro, Senior Technical Advisor, Cambridge-Viet Nam Women's Leadership Program: Empowerment of women in the public sector in the context of international economic integration (EOWP). This project is implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with support from UNDP Viet Nam. The purpose of the project is to strengthen Viet Nam's women leaders through training, overseas experiences, opportunities for post-graduate studies and research grants; to conduct research on the barriers women face in the

<sup>2</sup> Government of Vietnam, *Government Programme of Action for the Period to 2020 on Implementation of the Resolution 11-NQ/TW on the Work for Women in the Period of Accelerating Industrialization and Modernization*, (27 April 2007)

political and administrative arena; and to build awareness of women's representation through policy dialogues and workshops.

This report is a review of findings and analysis of several research reports conducted between 2003 and 2012. Most of the data on current representation figures is from internet searches and communication with different agencies in 2012. The quotes used through the report are primarily drawn from an IFGS and EOWP report entitled 'Report on Insights into Women's Leadership in Viet Nam's Public Sector: Obstacles and Solutions' conducted in 2009.

For the purpose of this report, leaders are defined as being members of Parliament and Provincial People's Councils, senior officials in Party agencies and leaders at the levels ranging from deputy director and above of ministry departments at central and provincial levels.

## 2. A PROFILE OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN VIET NAM'S PUBLIC SECTOR

The data in this section provides an indication of the low rates of female representation across all regions and sectors of government. The public sector includes both legislative and administrative government bodies.

### 2.1 POLITICAL ARENA

It is important to look at the current state of women's representation at different levels in the legislative and administrative arenas. It is especially important to monitor these figures as Viet Nam has set specific targets for women's representation. It is currently difficult to access and collect this type of data, however with the development of the Gender Statistics Indicator System, some of this data will be systematically collected and reported on by the General Statistics Office.

#### 2.1.1 WOMEN IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIET NAM

Viet Nam is a one-party state and is governed by the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV). Women's membership in the CPV has not been high since the CPV was formed in 1930, however, membership levels have increased in recent times. In 2010, the membership of women in the Communist Party reached 32.8%. This is a significant increase from 2005 when women's membership was only 20.9%.<sup>3</sup> Despite this increase, women's membership is still much less than that of men. The implications of having a low percentage of women members in the Party is that there is a small pool of women to put forward for leadership positions in administrative government and as candidates for elections. Moreover, the numbers indicate that few women have a voice in the direction and policies of the Party. Additionally, as the Party is the main gatekeeper in terms of recruitment and promotion, we see that it is largely men who decide who is recruited and promoted.



In the review of new Party members, the table below illustrates that there are consistently more men accepted into the Party than women.

<sup>3</sup> General Statistics Office of Vietnam (2012), *Gender statistics in Vietnam 2000-2010*

**Table 1: Numbers of new members and % of new members who are women in the Viet Nam Communist Party for Years 2008-2011**

	2008	2009	2010	2011 (first 6 months)
New Member	184,720	197,028	186,165	88,029
% of new members who are women	37.04 %	37.24%	37.85%	40.51%
Total membership	3,449,993	3,636,158	3,822,323	3,910,352

Sources: *Party Development in 2010 on the Party Development website at*

<http://www.xaydungdang.org.vn/Home/Dang-vien/2011/3719/Cong-tac-phat-trien-dang-vien-nam-2010.aspx> and <http://www.xaydungdang.org.vn/Home/Dang-vien/2011/4134/6-thang-dau-nam-2011-toan-Dang-ket-nap-hon-88-nghin.aspx>

The influential bodies within the Party are the Central Committee (175 official and 25 alternate members), the Political Bureau (currently 14 members) and the Central Committee Secretariat (10 seats). The top positions are the General Secretary, the State President, the Prime Minister, and the Chair of the National Assembly.

The table below illustrates the low representation of women in these main decision-making bodies and positions of the Party. In the Central Committee Secretariat, women have had low representation. In the Political Bureau, one woman was appointed in 2011, while in the Central Committee, the percentage of women has remained between 8 and 9% over the last three terms.

**Table 2: Women's Representation in the Communist Party**

	2001-2005			2006-2011			2011-2016		
	No. of Women	Total No.	% of Women	No. of Women	Total No.	% of Women	No. of Women	Total No.	% of Women
General Secretary	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Secretariat	1	9	11	2	10	20	2	10	20
Political Bureau	0	15	0	0	15	0	1	14	7
Central Committee <sup>4</sup>	13	150	8.6	13	181	8.13	18	200	9

Sources: *Hội Liên hiệp Phụ nữ Việt Nam 2007, Organization Department, Viet Nam Women's Union*

At the sub-national level of the Communist Party of Viet Nam, the percentage of women in key positions is also low and unrepresentative of the Party membership. As shown in table 3, women's representation in the Executive Committee at Central and Provincial level has not increased over 3 terms. At the District and Commune level, there has been a small increase. Women are more represented at the Commune level, possibly because there are more seats available.

<sup>4</sup> Also known in English as a Standing Committee. The total number includes official members and alternate delegates.

**Table 3: Percentage of Women in Central, Provincial, District and Commune Party Committees during 2001–2005, 2006-2010 and 2011-2016**

Executive Committee	2001-2006	2006-2010	2011-2016
Central level	8.6	8.13	8.57
Provincial level	11.32	11.75	11.37
District level	12.89	14.70	15.01
Commune level	11.88	15.08	18.01

Source: Viet Nam Women's Union, 2011

As shown in table 4, women are better represented in the Executive Committee than the Permanent Committee at all levels. There are more female Vice Secretaries than Party Secretaries mimicking similar findings in administrative and legislative government.

**Table 4: Percentage of Women in the Party Leadership at Provincial, District and Commune Levels for the Terms 2001-2005, 2006-2010 and 2011-2016**

	Provincial level			District level			Commune level		
	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2016	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2016	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2016
Party Secretary	1.6	6.25	0.25	3.7	4.46	5.5	0.9	4.59	7.25
Vice Secretary	6.6	3.88		5.1	5.54			7.25	
Permanent Committee	7.3	7.91			7.83		3.7	5.83	
Executive Committee	11.3	11.75	11.3	12.8	14.74	15	11.9	14.36	18

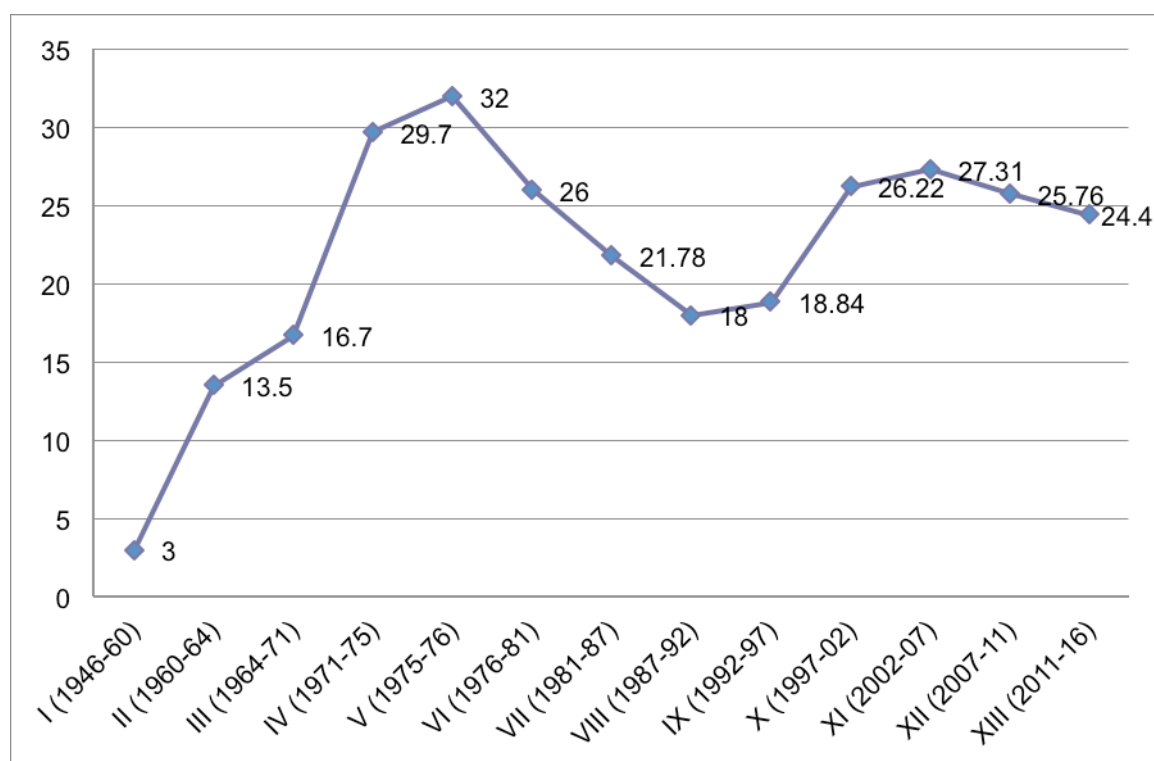
Sources: Document of the Xth National Women Congress on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007 and website of Central Organizing Committee <http://www.xaydungdang.org.vn/> (some data was not available)

Political parties around the world are largely dominated by men and this impacts on the culture, decision-making process and who is allowed to be included in main decision-making bodies. Parties are seen as the gateway to political participation and if a representative government is to be formed, the party needs to also be representative.

### 2.1.2 WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Though ranking high in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of women participation in the parliament, the proportion of women elected to the Viet Nam National Assembly (VNA) has hovered within two percentage points since 1997. It is currently at 24.4%, which is lower than in the last four terms as shown in the chart below. This is significant and an indicator that the decrees and resolutions set to increase women's political representation have not been effective.

**Chart 1: Percent of Women in National Assembly by Service Terms**



Source: Official website of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Danh sách Hội đồng dân tộc và các Ủy ban Quốc hội, available at <http://www.na.gov.vn/tailieukyhop/LDQHvaNN13/dsachUB.htm>

One of the reasons for this decrease in representation is the low number of women candidates selected or nominated to run in the election. According to Inter-Parliamentary Union figures, women only represented 31.4% of the candidates put forward for 2011 election at the National level.<sup>5</sup> Of the 260 women candidates, only 122 were elected (47%), whereas male candidates had an election rate of 67%. These findings are worthy of further investigation.

There are a number of key positions in the National Assembly that are discussed below. The President of the National Assembly is elected by members of the National Assembly. This term (2011-2016) there are two female Vice Presidents (out of four positions), which is an increase from the previous two terms. The National Assembly appoints a Prime Minister. In the Permanent Committee, two of the 12 members are women. There was a drop in representation from 26.7% to 14.3% in the X and XI term, however the rate has gradually increased over the last three terms and the membership rate of women in the Permanent Committee is at 23.5%.

**Table 5: Female and Male Representation in the VNA Permanent Committees**

	(1992-1997)		(1997-2002)		(2002-2007)		(2007-2011)		(2011-2016)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Presidents	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	1
Vice-Presidents	0	3	1	4	0	3	1	3	2	2
Members	2	9	3	5	2	7	2	11	2	10
Percent	13.3	86.7	26.7	73.3	14.3	85.7	16.7	83.3	23.5	76.5

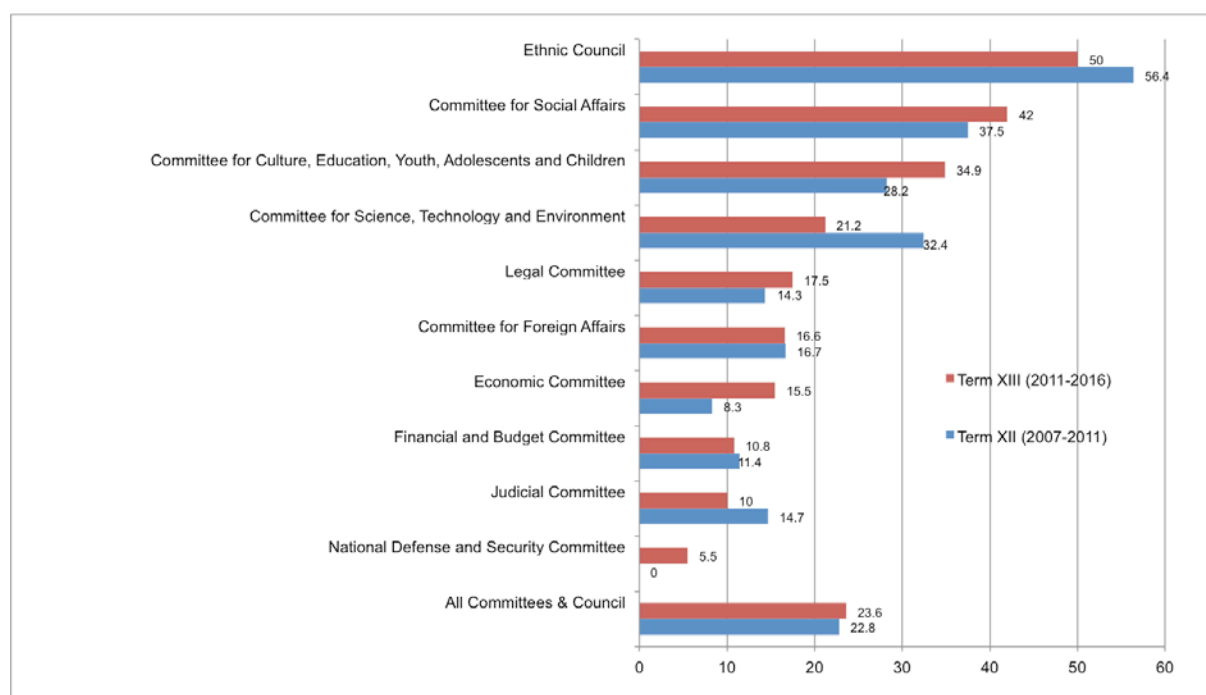
Source: Official website of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Danh sách ủy viên UBTVQH, available at <http://www.na.gov.vn/htx/Vietnamese/C1394/C1410/#slRnE4AfUyQ7>

<sup>5</sup> Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2012), *Vietnam Quoc-Hoi (National Assembly)*, available at: [http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2349\\_E.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2349_E.htm) [accessed 27 June 2012]

Within the VNA there are Committees that are created to review bills and legislative initiatives, legal documents and reports assigned to the National Assembly. They make recommendations within their field to the National Assembly and the Permanent Committee. Committee members are elected by members of the National Assembly.<sup>6</sup> There are currently nine Committees and one Council.

Overall, there has been a small increase in women's representation as members in Committees since the previous term. In the term 2007-2011, 22.8% of the Committee members were women, whereas in the current term there are 23.6%. The number of female Chairs has decreased from two Chairs to one in the current term however there are slightly more female Vice Chairs than in the previous term. Three of the 10 Committees/Council have over 30% women representation in the current term. Equal numbers of Committees and Council have experienced an increase and decrease in women's representation since the previous term.

**Chart 2: Percentage of Female Participation in Ethnic Council and VNA Committees for the Terms XII (2007-2011) and XIII (2011-2016)**



Source: Official website of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *Danh sách Hội đồng dân tộc và các Ủy ban Quốc hội*, available at <http://www.na.gov.vn/tailieukyhop/LDQHvaNN13/dsachUB.htm>

Being a member of a Committee or Council, a deputy has the opportunity to influence decisions in specific sectors. The majority of the work of the VNA is performed in Committees. National Assembly sessions are short, lasting only two months over two different sessions in the year. It is therefore important to assess the representation of women in the Committees and Council in comparison with women deputies not elected to other VNA activities. As well, part-time Committee members have fewer opportunities to influence decision-making processes and therefore, it is important to determine who are full and part-time Committee members. The analysis (shown in the table below) demonstrates that a higher number and percentage of male deputies are elected to Committee positions than their female deputy colleagues.

<sup>6</sup> National Assembly, Functions, Organization and Activities of the Vietnam National Assembly, available at: <http://www.na.gov.vn/htx/English/C1377/default.asp?Newid=1611#Hmhp19mTnGTG> [accessed March 21 2012]

**Table 6: Percentage of VNA Deputies Elected to VNA Committees or Ethnic Council**

	No. Elected to National Assembly (2011)	%	No. Elected to a Committee/Council <sup>7</sup>	%	Full-time Committee Members <sup>8</sup>	%	Part-time Committees Members	%
Women	122	24.4	94	23.2	25	17.5	67	27
Men	378	75.6	311	76.8	118	82.5	180	73
Total	500		405		143		247	

Source: Official website of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Danh sách Hội đồng dân tộc và các Ủy ban Quốc hội, available at <http://www.na.gov.vn/tailieukyhop/LDQHvaNN13/dsachUB.htm>

The table above illustrates a number of points. First of all, a large proportion of women-elected deputies do not have a decision-making role in the VNA. Only 77% of women elected are part of a Committee. The number decreases significantly again when we assess who are full-time members of Committees. Of the full-time Committee members (including Chair and Vice Chair), women only make up 17.5% of members. These numbers perhaps give a better indication of women's representation and participation in the National Assembly than the overall percentage of women elected.

### 2.1.3 WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN ELECTED BODIES AT PROVINCIAL, DISTRICT AND COMMUNE LEVELS

People's Councils are elected bodies at the Provincial, District and Commune level. The candidates are either self-appointed or appointed by the Fatherland Front and all candidates are required to be vetted by the Fatherland Front. Those nominated as candidates are then voted on by a 'voter's conference' organized by the Fatherland Front. The successful candidates are put forward to run in the People's Council elections. Each People's Council has a Chair, Vice Chair, as well as members of a Standing Committee and these positions are elected by deputies of People's Councils. The People's Committee is the executive branch of the government and is responsible for implementing policies.



The representation of female deputies at the Provincial, District and Commune level has increased over the previous terms. There has been a significant rise at the commune level from 16.1% in 1994 to 27.7% in 2011. However, as shown in table 8 the percentage of women holding Chair of People's Council positions is extremely low, ranging from 1.56% at the provincial level to 4.09% at the commune level. Women do hold more Vice Chair positions and there has been a significant increase from the previous terms, as shown in the table below. At the People's Committee level, similar low representation of women is seen, however there has not been a large increase of representation of women as Vice Chairs.

<sup>7</sup> Includes all Committees, the Ethnic Minority Council and the Permanent Committee

<sup>8</sup> Includes Chair and Vice Chair

**Table 7: Percentage of Women in Provincial, District and Commune People's Councils during Terms 1999-2004, 2004-2011 and 2011-2016**

	1994-2004	2004-2011	2011-2016
Provincial level	22.33	23.80	25.70
District level	20.12	22.94	24.62
Commune level	16.10	19.53	27.71

Source: Office of the National Assembly, 2011

**Table 8: Percentage of Women as Chairs and Vice Chairs in Provincial, District and Commune People's Councils during 1999-2004, 2004-2011 and 2011-2016**

Positions	Provincial level		District level		Commune level	
	1999-2004	2004-2011	1999-2004	2004-2011	1999-2004	2004-2011
Chair	1.64	1.56	5.46	3.92	3.46	4.09
Vice Chair	8.19	28.13	11.42	20.26	5.60	10.61

Source: Viet Nam Women's Union, 2011

**Table 9: Percentage of Women as Chairs and Vice Chairs in Provincial, District and Commune People's Committees during 1999-2004, 2004-2011 and 2011-2016**

Positions	Provincial level		District level		Commune level	
	1999-2004	2004-2011	1999-2004	2004-2011	1999-2004	2004-2011
Chair	1.64	3.12	5.27	3.02	3.74	3.42
Vice Chair	12.05	16.08	11.42	14.48	8.48	8.84

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011

These numbers can be misleading as there are some People's Committees with no women leaders and others with more than the percentage shown above. According to NCFW, only 24 of the 63 provinces and cities have women in positions of Chair, Vice Chair of People's Committees, (38%)".<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2 ADMINISTRATIVE ARENA

In the administrative arm of the government, this report finds that although there are a large percentage of women civil servants, the ratio of women holding decision-making positions is not high. When compared internationally, Viet Nam ranks 83rd out of 129 countries when comparing the number of legislators, senior officials and managers. This means that for every 78 senior male officials, there are 22 senior female officials. When looking at the number of women in ministerial positions Viet Nam is ranked 124<sup>th</sup> out of 129 countries.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> NCFW, "Women and Progress", newsletter No 1(20), (June 2012)

<sup>10</sup> World Economic Forum, 2011. *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*, p. 351

## 2.2.1 WOMEN IN STATE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT HIERARCHY

There are currently 22 government ministers of which two (MOLISA and MOH) are women (9%), which is one more than the previous term. If one calculates all ministerial type bodies, women only hold 3.3% of ministerial positions (see table 10 below). As shown in Appendix A, of the 111 vice minister positions, 9 are held by women (8%).<sup>11</sup> This is similar to the IOS and EOWP report that found in the previous term, women held 7.76% of vice-minister (or equivalent) positions.<sup>12</sup> According to NCAFW data, only 12 out of 30 ministries, ministerial-level agencies, and Government agencies have “female officers holding key leadership positions” which is a ratio of 40%.<sup>13</sup>

At the Director and Vice-Director level, the review of official government websites found that approximately 6.8% of Directors are women and 12.4% of Vice-Directors are women.<sup>14</sup> The table below shows that women’s leadership is more prominent in Ministries such as Health, Education and Training and Social Affairs and is low in Transport, Natural Resources and Environment, and Construction. These findings are slightly lower than a study conducted by IOS in 2009 which found that the percentage of female directors was 9.1% and female vice-directors was 14.4%.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 10: Percentage of female leaders in provincial departments (2012)**

No.	Sectors	Number of provinces covered	Percent of Female Directors	Percent of Female Vice Directors	Percent of Female Leaders
1	MOLISA	63	22.2	22.3	22.3
2	MOIT	63	7.9	6.6	6.9
3	MOST	49	6.1	14.8	12.2
4	MARD	55	5.5	6.4	6.2
5	MOHA	42	2.4	11.5	9.6
6	MOFA	29	3.4	24.5	16.7
7	MOET	62	4.8	29.9	23
8	MPI	63	3.2	8.5	7.1
9	MOJ	44	11.4	15.7	14.5
10	MOIC	63	3.2	7	5.8
11	MOCST	44	6.8	9.5	9
12	MONRE	40	2.5	1.8	1.9
13	MOF	43	16.3	20	19
14	MOC	43	0	2.8	2
15	MOH	41	7.3	22.7	18.9
16	MOT	45	2.2	1.7	1.8
	<b>Total in all sectors</b>		<b>6.8</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>11</b>

Sources: Viet Nam government websites from provincial departments

<sup>11</sup> Official website of Vietnam Government, ‘Ministries and Ministry-level agencies’, available at: <http://chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/English/ministries>

<sup>12</sup> IOS and EOWP (2009), p. 22

<sup>13</sup> NCAFW. “Women and Progress” Newsletter, No. 1 (20), (June 2012)

<sup>14</sup> Public data was only available for 16 ministries.

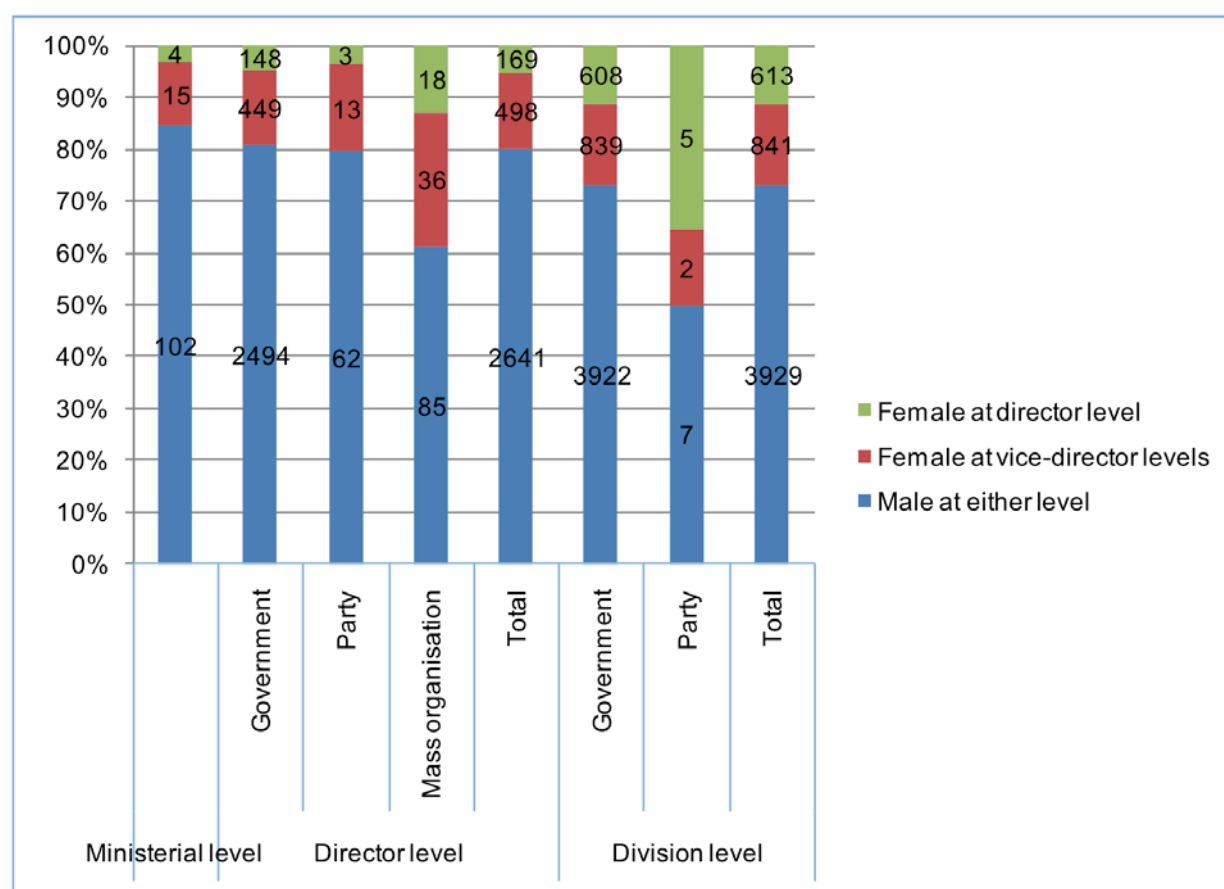
<sup>15</sup> IOS and EOWP (2009), *Empowerment of Women in the Public Sector Project: Quantitative Research on Women’s Leadership in Viet Nam’s Public Sector*

**Table 11: Percentage of female and male leaders at all government levels**

Agencies		Quantity			Percentage %		
		Male	Female at director level	Female at vice-director levels	Male	Female at director level	Female at vice-director levels
<b>Ministerial level</b>		102	4	15	84.3	3.3	12.4
<b>Director level</b>	Government	2494	148	449	80.7	4.8	14.5
	Party	62	3	13	79.5	3.8	16.7
	Mass organisation	85	18	36	61.2	12.9	25.9
	<b>Total</b>	2641	169	498	79.8	5.1	15.1
<b>Division level</b>	Government	3922	608	839	73.0	11.3	15.6
	Party	7	5	2	50.0	35.7	14.3
	Mass organisation	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<b>Total</b>	3929	613	841	73.0	11.4	15.6

Source: Center for Women's Studies, 2012. p. 8 - results of a survey conducted in 2011 with 29 ministries and central departments

**Chart 3: Percentage of female and male leaders at all government levels**



The table and chart above illustrates that women's leadership is not consistent across government bodies. It shows that at the division level, near parity is met in Party offices. It also demonstrates the international phenomenon where women can reach vice-director positions but there is a significant gap between percentage of women in vice-director positions and director positions. It shows that women leaders are more prevalent in lower levels of the government

system; 11.4% at division level, 5.1% at director level, and 3.3% at ministerial level. It also emphasizes the predominant role that men have in leadership at all levels; they hold 84.3% of decision-making positions at ministerial level, 79.8% at director level and 73% at division level.

### 2.2.2 WOMEN IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTES

In a study conducted in 2009, it found that all the directors of Viet Nam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and Viet Nam Academy of Science and Technology (VAST) were men. VASS has 31 national-level institutes while VAST has 24 national-level institutes. Of the 36 Vice Directors of VASS and the 59 Vice Directors of VAST, each only have eight women represented (8% and 14% respectively).<sup>16</sup>

## 2.3 HOW DOES VIET NAM COMPARE?

Internationally, over the last decade women's political representation in Parliament has seen a gradual increase. In 2011, the global rate for women's representation was 19.5%, a slight increase from the rate of 19% in 2010.<sup>17</sup> At the end of 2011, Viet Nam was ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> compared to other countries in terms of women's political representation, a drop from its position of 36<sup>th</sup> in 2010 and 2009, 33<sup>rd</sup> in 2008, 31<sup>st</sup> in 2007, 25<sup>th</sup> in 2006 and 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2005. Viet Nam is one of 21 states that saw a reduction in women's political representation at the national level in 2011. 27 countries experienced an increase in political representation.<sup>18</sup>

Among the geographical regions, Asia has an average of 18.3% (in single or lower houses), which is slightly below the world average and it is also the region that has experienced the least increase in representation since 1995. Timor-Leste and Lao People's Democratic Republic have the highest rate of women's representation at the national level; 32.3% and 25% respectively.<sup>19</sup>

Among other single-party states, Viet Nam is 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 7 states in women's representation at National level. Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cuba have 25% and 45% women's representation respectively. China has a high rate of 43% women's political representation at the sub-national level.<sup>20</sup>

According to a UNDP Status Report from 2010 on women's political representation at the sub-national level, Viet Nam ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the Asia Pacific region after India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, New Zealand, Australia and Bangladesh. In 2010, Viet Nam's women's political representation rate was 22.14%. The report concludes that the Asian countries using quota system were able to attain the highest representation of women.<sup>21</sup>

At the administrative level, Viet Nam ranks 83<sup>rd</sup> internationally in relation to the number of women legislators, senior officials and managers. This means that for every 78 senior men officials, there are 22 senior women officials. In terms of women holding ministerial level positions, Viet Nam ranks 124<sup>th</sup> out of 129 countries.<sup>22</sup>

## 2.4 SUMMARY

What do these numbers tell us? The primary message is that, at the central level, there is a decline in women's representation. This is contrary to the world trend of an increase in women's representation. It is argued that a minimum of 30% women's representation is required in order to have a critical mass of people to negotiate and advocate effectively. This is particularly important when considering parliamentary institutions and government administration are historically patriarchal. In Viet Nam at the sub-national level, the numbers are more promising. However,

<sup>16</sup> Institute of Sociology (IOS) and Empowerment of Women in the Public Sector (EOWP) (2009), *Quantitative Research On Women's Leadership In Viet Nam's Public Sector* (Draft Report, Unpublished)

<sup>17</sup> IPU, (2012)

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

<sup>20</sup> UNDP (2010), *Women in Local Government: Status Report*, available at: <http://www.undp.mn/publications/WomenInLocalGovernmentStatusReport2010.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

<sup>22</sup> World Economic Forum, 2011. *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

despite the small increase, People's Councils will not be able to reach the target of a minimum of 35% representation by 2016 if significant changes are not made. In the administrative arm, the figures show that women experience a glass ceiling at the Deputy Director level and few women are able to attain higher positions. Women leaders are more prevalent in lower levels such as division but are rare in higher levels.

To have a better understanding of the direction and goal of the government, Viet Nam's policy framework in relation to women's leadership will be discussed in the following section.

### 3. VIET NAM'S CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

Women's full participation in leadership at all levels is a benchmark of an advanced and modern society. One of the key ways to ensure that leadership positions are held by women is to enforce it through laws and to guide this course with strategies and programmes. Viet Nam has numerous supportive documents that will be summarized below. The table in Appendix B outlines the international conventions and programmes, as well as the national policies that are supportive legal documents with specific measures related to women's representation.

#### 3.1 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Viet Nam has demonstrated its commitment to increasing women's representation by ratifying significant international conventions. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and ILO conventions on equal remuneration and discrimination. As a signatory to these conventions, Vietnam is committed to ensuring women's participation in politics and the public sector as a right to be supported by government interventions.

#### 3.2 NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS

At the national level, Viet Nam has numerous supportive policies, decrees and resolutions promoting representation of women in the legislative and administrative government. The Constitution (1992) ensures that men and women enjoy equal rights under the law and the Gender Equality Law (2007) provides a legal framework through which women can realize their rights to equal representation. Government Plan of Action for Women's Affairs in the Country's Era of Industrialization and Modernization by 2020 (adopted in December 2009) calls for equality of women and men in all fields. The National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020 and the National Programme on Gender Equality 2011-2015 include a specific objective and project activity area on strengthening women leaders at the administrative and legislative level, as well as strengthening women candidates in preparation for the 2016 elections. The National Strategy and Programme are the two main current guiding documents for Viet Nam on gender equality.

What is significant about the policy framework are that targets are set and responsibility for implementation is allocated. Several women's representation targets have been set at different levels: Party, political and administrative. These are specifically: 25% and more of positions in Party Committees are held by women by the term 2016-2020; more than 35% of members of National Assembly and People's Councils at all levels are held by women by 2016; ministries (95%) with over 30% women employees are required to have women as key leaders in such organizations by 2020 and 100% of Party and State agencies with over 30% women employees to have women leaders.<sup>23</sup>

Guidance to implement the Gender Equality Law is found in resolution 11-NQ/TW (27/4/2007), resolution No. 57 (01/12/2009) and decree 48 (19/5/2009) of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Resolution 57 states specifically, "Setting up and ensuring mechanism to promote further participation of women in decision making processes and increasing rates of women nominated as candidates to the National Assembly, People's Council at all levels."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Prime Minister of the Government of Vietnam, *National Strategy on Gender Equality (2011-2020)*, Decision No. 2351/QĐ-TTg, (24/12/2010)

<sup>24</sup> Resolution No. 57 (01/12/2009)

In 2011 and 2012, five decrees were signed which lay out punitive measures for civil servants at different levels and agencies who violate the legal provisions of gender equality.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.3 ANALYSIS OF POLICY FRAMEWORK

The analysis of the policy framework finds a number of strengths. First of all, the National Strategy on Gender Equality demonstrates a shift in direction on gender equality from a Women in Development perspective to a Gender and Development approach.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, the decisions and resolutions lay out roles and responsibilities of ministries and agencies. MOHA and MOLISA are the primary implementers of projects related to women's leadership as stated in the National Programme. Moreover, the National Programme on Gender Equality is attached with a state-funded budget of \$46 million over five years (2011-2015). To support the monitoring process, some baseline comparative data is provided in the National Programme and National Strategy. Additionally, some of the targets are clearly stated and measureable. For example, target 1 of objective 1 of the National Strategy states "rates of female members of the National Assembly and People's Councils at different levels will reach 30% and above for the term of office between 2011 and 2015 and more than 35% for the term of office between 2016 and 2020."<sup>27</sup> The targets are "30% and above" and "more than 35%", which indicates a direction towards *parity* and avoids the pitfall many countries are in of setting a goal of only 30% rather than 50% or a minimum of 30%.

One of the strong aspects of the policy framework is the development of a system to monitor the implementation of guiding documents. As stated in the Resolution 57<sup>28</sup>, the Gender Statistics Indicator System was set up by General Statistics Office (GSO) in 2011 in order to monitor the implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality. This system collects and reports data on a range of issues (105 indicators), including nine related specifically to women's leadership and management positions. This system is a step forward in monitoring the implementation of the numerous legislative documents and more importantly, gender equality, in Viet Nam.

However, the policies lay out little accountability for whether the resolutions are followed or the targets met. The recently established decrees which apply punitive measures to civil servants who violate the legal provisions of gender equality is one step in accountability. However, the decrees are vague; there are no details provided on "legal provisions of gender equality" and there is nothing specific in the decree that discuss the targets set on women's representation. The National Programme on Gender Equality is stronger than the other documents as it establishes which agency is responsible for project areas, yet it still falls short of establishing accountability measures. Additionally, some of the targets of the National Strategy on Gender Equality are difficult to measure. For example, target 3 of Objective 1 states "Efforts to be made so that by 2015, 70% of the Party's and State agencies and socio – political organizations with women making up 30 per cent and above of their labour force must have women among their leaders and by 2020, 100%."<sup>29</sup> This target is unmeasurable as "key leadership positions" is not defined and a specific numerical target for the number of percentage of leadership positions is not set. Moreover, the target is vague as it states "efforts to be made" which dilutes the significance of the target.

There are some discrepancies between different documents related to targets. For example, resolution 11 Resolution 11-NQ/TW of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam dated 27/4/2007 sets a target of 35% to 40% women's representation in the National Assembly and People's Councils by 2016 whereas the National Strategy on Gender Equality states 'more than 35%'. Although these targets are not in conflict, there is no explanation provided for the discrepancy.

<sup>25</sup> Decree No. 34/2011/ND-CP, Decree No. 66/2011/ND-CP, Decree No. 112/2011/ND-CP, Decree No. 27/2012/ND-CP in NCFAW 2012. New Laws and Policies, p. 8

<sup>26</sup> UN Women (2011), "Viet Nam National Programme on Gender Equality", available at: [http://www.unwomen-eseasia.org/Vietnam/docs/National\\_Programme\\_on\\_Gender\\_Equality\\_overview.pdf](http://www.unwomen-eseasia.org/Vietnam/docs/National_Programme_on_Gender_Equality_overview.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> National Strategy on Gender Equality, 2010

<sup>28</sup> Government Plan of Action until 2020, No. 57/NQ-CP

<sup>29</sup> NSGE, 2011

Although the Gender Statistics Indicator System is comprehensive in design, in collecting data related to women's leadership and equal representation it is somewhat limited. It currently does not collect (and therefore monitor) the percentage of women in director and deputy director positions in government ministries, nor the number of women candidates put forward for the elections. These two indicators are required to thoroughly monitor the steps in achieving the targets.

Although Viet Nam's policy framework is strong in many ways, there are still large gaps that will hinder the ability of the government to ensure equal representation of women. A discussion on suggested policy revisions is included in the conclusion.

## **4. OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

There are a number of institutional and attitudinal factors that serve to maintain the predominance of men in senior positions in the government. These factors do not necessarily result from any systematic attempt to limit opportunity or discriminate against women in the workplace. Rather it is a combination of legislative, cultural and historic factors that effectively make it much harder for women to attain the same level of seniority.

Not all barriers impact on women the same. Some women have many more opportunities to advance in their careers than other women. As well, there are differences in the barriers for women to advance in political careers or to advance to senior positions in government administration. Explored below are some of the institutional and attitudinal challenges faced, in general, by women as identified in several research reports.

### **4.1 INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS**

The first barriers described below largely affect women political candidates or women in elected positions. However, as candidates are primarily drawn from administrative government, the challenges overlap.

#### **4.1.1 TARGET SYSTEM**

Viet Nam uses a target system to build a diverse political representation. For example, there is a target for ethnic minority, youth, non-party members or independents. Although the target system is an attempt at diverse representation in the political system, if one person is selected to meet all targets than it can prove difficult to be elected. A candidate, often a female, is selected to fulfill a number of quotas reflecting age, ethnic background and other criteria in addition to her gender, thus presented her with more challenges to be elected because of discrimination.

#### **4.1.2 WINNABLE SEATS**

Although conclusive research has not been conducted on this issue, anecdotal evidence shows that women candidates are often put in election ridings where they are competing against men with more experience and higher qualifications. As discussed by a parliament candidate in 2009 "Some places have a male director of a department and a female head of division in a unit, so it is obvious that [the woman's] chances (of being elected) are much lower."<sup>30</sup>

#### **4.1.3 RETIREMENT AGE REGULATIONS**

The retirement age in Viet Nam is 55 for women and 60 for men.<sup>31</sup> This differential in retirement age disadvantages women in a number of ways: shorter working life and period for advancement, less chance of promotion, overall smaller income and limited ability to contribute effectively as they are forced to retire when they are potentially at the height of their careers. Additionally, the

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<sup>30</sup> IFGS and EOWP (2009), p.11

<sup>31</sup> As stated in the Labor Code and Social Security Law

discriminatory retirement age impacts on the employees career path even before retirement. The age regulations relating to human resource planning, training, nomination, and appointment, all derive from the difference in ages of retirement. This is explained in more detail below.

The personnel staff and leaders in organizations face a number of issues due to the differential retirement age. First, in terms of cost effectiveness, training women civil servant is less efficient than a man because a man's working period is five years longer than that of a woman's, shorter if she takes breaks for maternity leave. Second, the higher the level of a management position, the smaller the number of eligible women candidates in comparison with men. Third, when considering two candidates of different sex in the similar scenario of age (for instance, both have four years more to work), the woman candidate is very likely to be less competitive than men in terms of experiences and seniority and salary level, simply because the woman candidate is likely to have had a shorter working life, due to career breaks such as maternity leave and childcare. The age regulations are only one significant factor in a series of policies and practices that work to limit women's opportunity for career advancement.

#### 4.1.4 WORK ROTATION, TRAINING AND CAREER SUPPORT NETWORKS

An important factor for promotion in Viet Nam is work rotation, which is a process of gathering hands-on experience and participation in refresher/training courses. Training and capacity building in this context means short and long-term courses to improve professional qualifications of civil servants, for instance, political theory, administrative management, and postgraduate study. In these activities, the participation of women is less than that of men. According to a Women's Union study, women account for 10-20% of all participants of political theory and administration courses so far at the central level.<sup>32</sup> This is supported by 2012 study by the Centre for Women's Studies which found that the "Professional knowledge and skills, level of political science of a proportion of female leaders and managers in some ministries/branches, sectors and mass organizations are relatively low. Some of the division-level female managers are having lower professional skills and knowledge as required."<sup>33</sup>

Criteria used to determine eligibility for training includes one's age and how many years of service the employee has had and, in some cases, salary level. Age is a criteria as the closer one is to retiring, the less desire there is to train the employee. As the retirement age is unequal, so to is the age for eligibility for training. The practice is that only men younger than 40 and women younger than 35 are eligible for training courses on administrative and political refresher courses or to study abroad. Moreover, men and women are only eligible to be sent to training and refresher courses after 3-5 years of working. Due to this, men are more likely to be selected for training because it is more cost effective as they have a longer potential working life. The 2012 Centre for Women Studies report found that in a review of all regulations and policies related to hiring, promotion, nomination for training, there were no specific measures in place to increase women's representation in senior management. It found that human resource policies were applied to men and women equally and that no special activities or programmes were created specifically for women despite the barriers women face in being promoted and in the low levels of women in senior level positions.<sup>34</sup>

"I am 30 years old and just completing my master's degree. There is a special political training for senior civil servants, which is an important condition for people to be promoted to a leadership position. The criteria for participants are different for men and women. Men have to be under 41 and women under 36-years-old with a certain salary level (3.6). In order to get this level, I would need eight years more. By this time I will be 38 years old and will no longer be eligible to participate in the training. If I were a man, I would still be eligible until I was 40. It is so unfair. I have worked so hard, but already my chances are over before I ever really begin!"

Source: Kristy Kelly (2010), "Learning to mainstream gender in Vietnam: Where 'Equity' Meets 'Locality' in Development Policy", p. 141

<sup>32</sup> Vietnam Women's Union (2009)

<sup>33</sup> Center for Women's Studies, Women's Cadres School (2012), *Finding Solutions and Recommendations for the Promotion of Women's Participation in Leadership in Ministries and Sectors: Summary Report*, p. 14

<sup>34</sup> Centre for Women Studies (2012), *Summary Report of the Findings Solution Recommendations For The Promotion of Women's Participation In Leadership In Ministries And Sectors*

The quote in the text box is from a women employee of the Ministry of Planning and Investment. It is one example of how the discriminatory retirement age impacts on women throughout their career creating an unequal environment for women to compete with men.

According to the National Administrative Academy, the rate of rotation of female officials at provincial and central levels is 0.8 and 0.9 times in five years, respectively. The rate of male officials is 1.3 and 1.2 times, respectively. The percentage of female officials attending 1-2 training courses is 38.5% against the percentage of male officials of 42.3%. The percentage of female and male officials attending three training courses is 2.9% and 8.7%, respectively. The percentage of female civil servants who never attend a training course is 58.6%, compared with 49% for male civil servants.<sup>35</sup>

Similar to limited training opportunities, women also have less career support networks than men. A study conducted in 2005 by the National Administrative Academy found that female civil servants take part in fewer career support networks and receive less support from their colleagues and supervisors than men (2005). As there are fewer women in senior positions, there will naturally be reduced support networks and mechanisms available to aspirational women.

#### 4.1.5 LIMITED PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND EDUCATION

A number of reports argue that women have not advanced because of a lower educational qualifications compared to men.<sup>36</sup> This is in line with the findings stated earlier regarding the barriers women face in being nominated for training, the lower levels of women who hold post graduate degrees and the small percentage of women in political theory courses. However, a study also found that female Party secretaries, Chairs and Vice Chairs of People's Committees at Commune level had higher education levels than their male colleagues in equivalent positions. The report concludes that "for women to attain the position of Commune Party Secretary, they have to have higher education to gain prestige among party members at local level."<sup>37</sup> In a training needs assessment for potential women leaders, it found that women required training in public speaking, negotiations, debating and speaking with constituents. Having such skills leads to women increasing their confidence levels.<sup>38</sup>



It can be concluded therefore that lack of education and skills are factors to address however, to do this, long-term measures are required. Short trainings will not address these issues. Instead, long-term institutional programmes are required that can effectively and systematically build women's leadership skills.

#### 4.1.6 HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING

The IFGS and EOWP study found that there was limited human resource planning with the intention of increasing the number of women in senior level government positions (2009). It found that the limited training provided to junior level women officials had a direct impact on the pool of potential women to nominate for senior level positions. This conclusion is supported by a recent study conducted by the Center for Women Studies of the Women's Cadres School. The report states "there is almost no guidance and specific regulations on percentage women in recruitment, planning use, training, re-training, rotation and appointment. There is no obligation to implement

<sup>35</sup> National Administrative Academy and AusAID (2005), pp. 25, 29

<sup>36</sup> PYD (2011); World Bank (2011)

<sup>37</sup> IOS and EOWP (2009), p. 12

<sup>38</sup> PYD (2011)

or to set out the percentage for women in all above-mentioned processes.”<sup>39</sup> Without a clear plan and measures in place, the targets will not be met.

#### 4.1.7 IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER-BASED LEGISLATION

A review of various studies found that there were no accountability, incentive or punitive measures in place to support the implementation of targets set on women’s representation. This is a large gap in the government’s ability to reach its targets. As discussed in the previous section, Viet Nam has an impressive legal framework with guiding documents that not only disallow discriminatory practices towards women but suggests measures and targets to build up a cadre of strong capable women leaders. However, when one reads these documents, it states that offices are ‘urged’ to implement policies but there are no accountability measures in place. However, recently the government has set a number of decrees that may make a difference in this area. Their effectiveness in supporting the enhancement of women’s leadership is still not assessed however the decrees call for punitive measures to individual civil servants who violate legal provisions on gender equality.

“The government has a female leadership quota. If a locality fails to maintain the quota, it does not influence the locality’s achievements. It is just a small issue.”

*Source: A quote from a female leader of a City Department, IFGS and EOWP (2009), p. 7*

A review of the legal and supportive documents also finds that there are no incentive initiatives in place to recognize offices/ministries that implement policies and reach targets. Incentive measures are becoming more commonly used by international businesses and governments and are known as international best practices in empowering women in the public sector.

#### 4.2 ATTITUDINAL FACTORS

A common view among citizens is that women’s main domain is in the household and they are the main caregivers of children, the elderly and the ill. This is a role that is continually supported by media, education and folklore. Similarly, the view that a man’s domain is outside the home and that men are natural leaders is prevalent among both men and women.

“If a woman and a man are of equal capacity, it is certain that a man will be chosen. It is not that only men vote for men but women do as well. It is likely that people don’t like being under the leadership of a woman, especially men. Probably, people think that women have less time for work because they are responsible for family chores.”

*Source: quote from a woman leader of a department, IFGS and EOWP (2009)*

Vietnamese customs, attitudes and beliefs are largely influenced by Confucianism. This is a significant factor in the prevalent view that women’s main role is in the home and in child care. It is also the backing for the belief that men are the ‘natural’ leader and women are not leaders and should not be leaders. Common Confucian quotes are “A woman’s duty is not to control or take charge.” or “Woman’s greatest duty is to produce a son.”<sup>40</sup> This type of messaging has influenced Vietnamese education, myths and media. The impact that this attitude and belief has on women’s access to leadership roles and desire to become leaders has numerous layers. How this plays out in the work environment and the home is discussed below.

“If the husband is superior to his wife, it is okay. If the wife outdoes [him], the husband will feel unhappy. The family members and society will look down [on] that husband and that is a pressure on the women in leadership.”

*Source: IFGS and EOWP (2009)*

<sup>39</sup> Center for Women’s Studies (2012), p. 15

<sup>40</sup> Women in World History, *Women in Confucianism*, available at: <http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/lesson3.html>

#### 4.2.1 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT GENDER ROLES IN THE HOME

In a patriarchal society where the concept of male superiority is generally accepted, female leadership can create friction at work and in domestic life. In this context, it is very difficult for a woman to be a supervisor of a man or for her to be in a more senior position than her husband. As more women become leaders, supervisors and managers, there will be more acceptance of them. However, where women leaders are scarce, “issues of face” for men can result in negative reactions to women in leadership positions.

“ When agencies were reviewing the personnel and preparing promotion plan for the next period, many leaders complained that “female candidates are too few, too weak”. The city Party secretary asked them try to find some. Some agencies said they have tried but failed. He then responded that the reason why they couldn’t find capable women for leadership positions is their viewpoint. It is the way people assess women’s capacity and it is not that women do not satisfy the requirements.”

*Source: A quote from a female Deputy Secretary of the City Party Committee, source: IFGS and EOWP (2009)*

In domestic life, the prevalent norm is that women are mainly responsible for domestic duties and that these duties take precedence over their careers. Domestic duties include not only shopping, cooking and housework, but all childcare and supervision of children’s studies. It is the custom and norm that a woman seek approval from her husband to pursue a higher position with greater status. His consent is required however the same may not apply for a man seeking career advancement.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4.2.2 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT GENDER ROLE IN THE WORKPLACE

There are differences in human resource practices across the civil service. The common promotion process is described below. When a position comes available, the other members of the department can nominate/appoint themselves to the position. Based on the nomination, the department members then vote on who they think would be the best person for the position. The final decision for the position is made by the Director General of the department based on the results of the vote and her or his opinion.

“Existing policies pay attention to women but they are at a macro level. The policy application in different agencies and in particular contexts depends heavily on how the head of agency brings into play of women’s capacity, how he or she has created favorable conditions for female leaders development.”

*Source: Woman working in a government ministry, IFGS and EOWP (2009)*

There has not been a thorough analysis of how this process impacts on men and women. The IFGS and EOWP study found that stereotypical views restrict women from being promoted and give men an unequal advantage for promotion. The study suggests that expectations of men and women’s roles often are a main criteria used when assessing whether someone is capable of a position. Additionally, it found that women are judged much harsher than men.

The difference in expectations means female leaders are expected to display both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ characteristics. For instance, it is expected that female leaders combine management skills with emotions and gentle behaviour. However, too much masculine traits can be perceived as unfeminine or too determined.

This review of research findings highlights the importance of addressing attitudes of both women and men as a key step to break down barriers

#### 4.2.3 IMPORTANCE OF HEADS OF AGENCIES

The attitude of the head of agency plays a key role in women’s advancement. It is ultimately their decision whether there is compliance with Central level legislation and decrees on women’s leadership. Vietnamese workplaces are highly hierarchical and the head of each agency<sup>42</sup> is

<sup>41</sup> IFGS and EOWP (2009)

<sup>42</sup> The head of the agency might be the director and or the party committee secretary depending on the characteristics of agencies.

responsible for the tone and agenda of that agency. Their attitude towards gender equality determines whether gender equality policies are observed and enacted. The activeness of the head of an agency in dealing with female personnel issues is signified in strong commitment to the development of the agency's human resources in general, and female leaders in particular. The activeness of the head of agency includes abilities to reach gender targets in their specific context, having fair and objective methods of staff assessment and having prospective plans and gender-sensitiveness in training and fostering of personnel.

The institutional and attitudinal factors shape the environment in which supporting government bodies and donors work in to enhance women's leadership. Based on these factors and the current situation in terms of representation and supportive legal framework, described below are some recommendations for ways forward.

## **5. THE WAY FORWARD**

This report illustrates that Viet Nam has not reached its target on women in leadership positions. Although we have witnessed a gradual increase in some areas such as in People's Council at local levels, at this slow rate, the targets will not be met. There is agreement that this is due to weak political will at many levels, lack of measures to effectively implement policies, limited support from men to take responsibility in the home allowing women to pursue their careers, lack of confidence among women to pursue higher positions and discriminatory policies and human resource practices that impede women's advancement in the political arena and civil service.

To address these factors, the following options in the area of policies and programmes and attitudinal change are suggested:

### **5.1 POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES**

- Consider removing the discriminatory practice of forcing women to retire 5 years earlier than men and at the pinnacle and most effective point in their career. Revise the labour code to ensure women and men have the same maximum and minimum retirement age.
- Remove age restrictions placed on women during hiring, promotion and nomination for training.
- Implement specific hiring, training, promotion policies to have a minimum of 30% women in deputy director and director positions in government (both department and division) and the Party. More importantly, put in place strict punitive measures if these targets are not met.
- Implement an award system to recognize departments that introduce progressive employment and human resource practices that result in an increase in women's representation in deputy and director level positions.
- Implement training and mentoring programs for women in junior positions to prepare them for advancement and to be effective in senior level positions.
- Conduct studies and begin conversations about the introduction of a parental or paternity leave to show government support for men to play a larger role in child care and to support their spouses in pursuit of careers.
- Implement training programs within established institutions (schools, universities, academies) that give preference to women students and that provide soft skills such as public speaking, debating, arguing, speaking with constituents, policy writing, action plan development and inform women of candidate selection and nomination processes.

### **5.2 ATTITUDINAL CHANGE**

- Implement awareness raising campaigns targeted at senior officials of the Party and government arguing the importance and effectiveness of having an equal level of women in senior decision making positions and suggest best practices for increasing the number of women in senior level positions.

- Implement awareness raising and behaviour change campaigns targeted at men in the public service on the role men need to play in the home to allow and support women to pursue and be successful in their careers and how male colleagues can mentor, support and promote their female colleagues.
- Carry out innovative awareness raising campaigns for the general public on the importance of women in decision-making positions, showcasing prominent women leaders in Viet Nam and Asia and arguing the benefits when women have leadership roles.
- Support media to work more with current women leaders, to bring forward women's views in present debates and issues and encourage media to seek out women's views on issues and represent these fairly and equally.
- Implement young women's leadership training courses in high-schools and universities to engage women at a young age and to encourage them and provide them with the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to become leaders.
- Work with youth to engage them on gender equality, rights of women, roles of men in child care and home management and roles of women as leaders in the workplace and community.

## APPENDIX A: GENDER BREAKDOWN OF MINISTERS AND VICE-MINISTERS, 2012

No.	Sector	Minister		Vice Minister		Total	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1	MOPS	0	1	0	7	0	8
2	MOIT	0	1	1	8	1	9
3	MOST	0	1	0	6	0	7
4	MOLISA	1	0	0	6	1	6
5	MARD	0	1	1	7	1	8
6	MOHA	0	1	1	5	1	6
7	MOFA	0	1	1	5	1	6
8	MONDEF	0	1	0	6	0	7
9	MOET	0	1	1	3	1	4
10	MPI	0	1	0	4	0	5
11	MOJ	0	1	1	4	1	5
12	MOIC	0	1	0	5	0	6
13	MOCST	0	1	0	3	0	4
14	MONRE	0	1	0	7	0	8
15	MOF	0	1	2	7	2	8
16	MOC	0	1	0	6	0	7
17	MOH	1	0	1	3	2	3
18	MOT	0	1	0	6	0	7
19	VASS	0	1	0	2	0	3
20	VAST	0	1	0	2	0	3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>120</b>

Source: Official website of Vietnam Government, 'Ministries and Ministry-level agencies', available at <http://chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/English/ministries>

## APPENDIX B: ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Framework	Goals/targets related to women and leadership
<b>International Conventions and Plans</b>	
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country.
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (ratified 1982)	"The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant." (Article 3)
Beijing Platform for Action	Strategic objective G.1. Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.  Strategic objective G.2. Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (ratified 1982)	Articles 7a, 7b, 7c, 5a, 16, recommendation 23  States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:  (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;  (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.
Millennium Development Goals	MDG 3 - Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women  Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (IPU).
ILO Convention on Discrimination in Employment (111)	Each member of the convention is to enforce non-discriminatory practices in the hiring and promotion of workers.
<b>National Commitments, Targets, Strategies</b>	
Constitution (1992)	Article 7 - Elections to the National Assembly and the People's Councils are held in accordance with the principles of universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage.  Article 54 – The rights of all citizens to stand for election.  Article 63 - Male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields - political, economic, cultural, social, and the family.
Gender Equality Law (approved in 2006)  Law No.73/2006/QH11	To eliminate gender discrimination, to create equal opportunities for man and woman in socio-economic development and human resources development in order to reach substantial equality between man and woman.  Article 11. Gender equality in the field of politics  1. Man and woman are equal in participating in the state management and social activities.  2. Man and woman are equal in participating in the formulation and implementation of village codes, community regulations, agencies and organizations regulations.  3. Man and woman are equal in self-nominating as candidates or in nominating candidates to the National Assembly, people's councils; and are equal in self-nominating as candidates and in nominating candidates to leading agencies of political organizations, socio-political organizations, socio-political and professional organizations, social organizations, socio-professional organizations.

	<p>4. Man and woman are equal in term of professional qualifications and age when they are promoted or appointed to the same posts of management and leadership in agencies and organizations.</p> <p>5. Measures to promote gender equality in the field of politics include:</p> <p>a) To ensure the appropriate proportion of the National Assembly female members and people's committees female members in accordance with the national gender equality goals.</p> <p>b) To ensure the appropriate proportion of women in appointing officials to hold titles in the professions in state agencies in accordance with the national gender equality goals.</p>
Resolution 11-NQ/TW of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam dated 27/4/2007 on the Work for Women in the Period of Accelerating Industrialization and Modernization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build up a team of highly-skilled female scientists, leaders, managers to meet the demands from pushing up the industrialization and modernization.</li> <li>• By 2020, the percentage of female participants in the party committees will reach 25% or over; female members in the National Assembly and the People's Councils at different levels will reach 35% to 40%. Agencies and organizations having 30% or more women must have women among their leaders.</li> <li>• Percentage of female participants in the training courses at the political training schools, public administration courses of over 30%.</li> </ul>
Government Programme of Action for the period to 2020 on implementation of the Resolution No. 11-Q/TW dated 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2007 of the Political Bureau on the work for women in the period of accelerated industrialization and modernization of the country (Issued together with the Resolution No. 57/NQ-CP dated 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2009 of the Government)	<p>"Setting up and ensuring mechanism to promote further participation of women in decision making processes and increasing rates of women nominated as candidates to the National Assembly, People's councils at all levels."</p>
Decree Providing for Measures to Assure Gender Equality the Government, No. 48/2009/ND-CP	<p>Formulating, submitting to the Government for submitting to the National Assembly a proportion of female candidates for members of the National Assembly, People's Council in accordance with the targets of gender equality in the succeeded term, ensuring gender equality in the negotiating process.</p>
Decree 48 (19/5/2009)	<p>Regulating an adequate proportion of men and women, setting up provisions on right-to-choose of woman and preferential provisions for woman in recruiting, planning, training, retraining and appointing</p>
<p>National Strategy on Gender Equality (2011-2020)</p> <p>Prime Minister decision - decision 2351/QĐ-TTg</p>	<p>Objective 1: Strengthen women's representation in leadership and management positions in order to gradually reduce a gender gap in politics.</p> <p>- Target 1: Efforts to be made so that the rate of women representing in the Party's committees at different levels will reach 25% and above for the term of office between 2016 and 2020; the rates of female members of the National Assembly and People's Councils at different levels will reach 30% and above for the term of office between 2011 and 2015 and more than 35% for the term of office between 2016 and 2020.</p> <p>- Target 2: Efforts to be made so that by 2015, 80% of Ministries, the ministerial-level agencies, the agencies attached to the Government, the People's Committees at different levels must have women among their leaders and by 2020, 95%.</p> <p>- Target 3: Efforts to be made so that by 2015, 70% of the Party's and State agencies and socio – political organizations with women making up 30 per cent and above of their labour force must have women among their leaders and by 2020, 100%.</p>

<p>National Programme on Gender Equality (2011-2015)</p> <p>Prime Minister decision - decision 1241/QĐ-TTg</p>	<p>Activities will be conducted to build the capacity of management and leadership position holders and those who are planned for holding such positions in government agencies and civil service agencies; and to create a supply of personnel for leading positions of the Party, elective bodies, and political-social organizations.</p> <p>Activities will be conducted to enhance the capacity of female members of the 13th National Assembly and 2011-2016 People's Councils in promoting gender equality.</p>
<p>Decree No. 34/2011/ND-CP, Decree No. 66/2011/ND-CP, Decree No. 112/2011/ND-CP, Decree No. 27/2012/ND-CP</p> <p>Decrees take effect in 2012</p>	<p>Disciplinary sanctions imposed on civil servants who violate legal provisions of gender equality.</p> <p>Disciplinary sanctions include reprimand, caution or warning, wage reduction, demotion and removal from office.</p>

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