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STRENGTHENING FEMINIST FOUNDATION IN VIETNAM

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MODULE 1:

Key Feminist Perspectives and their Contribution to Gender Equality

BASIC CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES

This lecture summarizes history of development of key feminist perspectives and their contribution to gender equality. These feminist perspectives can be summarized into three broad categories that reflect their theories and political strategies with regard to the gendered social order. These are gender reform feminisms, gender resistant feminisms, and gender revolution feminisms.

Each perspective has made important contributions to improving women's status, but each also has limitations.

It has not been a clear progression by any means, because many of the debates went on at the same time. As a matter of fact, they are still going on. And because all of the feminist perspectives have insight into the problems of gender inequality, and all have come up with good strategies for remedying these problems, all the feminisms are still very much with us. Thus, there are continuities and convergences, as well as sharp debates, among the different feminisms.

Any one feminist may incorporate ideas from several perspectives, and many feminists have shifted their perspectives over the years. A prominent feminist such as Judith Lorber, was originally a liberal feminist, then a socialist feminist, and now consider herself to be primarily a social construction feminist, with overtones of postmodernism and queer theory.

This lecture is not examining the ideas of particular feminists but speaking of perspectives that have emerged from many theorists, so it will talk of feminisms.

The reason for much of the change in feminist theories is that with deeper probing into the pervasiveness of gender inequality, feminists have developed more complex views about gender, sex, and sexuality. Gender is now understood to be a social status, a personal identity, and a set of relationships between women and men, and among women and men. Sex is no longer seen as a one-way input or basic material for social arrangements, but a complex interplay of genes, hormones, physiology, environment, and behavior, with loop-back effects. Sexuality is understood to be socially constructed as well as physiologically based and emotionally expressed.

The main point feminists have stressed about gender inequality is that it is not an individual matter, but is deeply ingrained in the structure of societies. Gender inequality is built into the organization of marriage and families, work and the economy, politics, religions, the arts and

other cultural productions, and the very language we speak. Making women and men equal, therefore, necessitates social and not individual solutions.

GENDER REFORM FEMINISMS

The feminisms of the 1960s and 1970s were the beginning of the second wave of feminism. They are liberal feminism, Marxist and socialist feminisms, and development feminism. Their roots were, respectively, 18th and 19th century liberal political philosophy that developed the idea of individual rights, Marx's 19th century critique of capitalism and his concept of class consciousness, and 20th century anti-colonial politics and ideas of national development. Gender reform feminisms put women into these perspectives.

Liberal Feminism

Theoretically, liberal feminism claims that gender differences are not based in biology, and therefore that women and men are not all that different -- their common humanity supersedes their procreative differentiation. If women and men are not different, then they should not be treated differently under the law. Women should have the same rights as men and the same educational and work opportunities. The goal of liberal feminism in the United States was embodied in the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which was never ratified. (It said, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex.") Politically, liberal feminists formed somewhat bureaucratic organizations, which invited men members. Their activist focus has been concerned with visible sources of gender discrimination, such as gendered job markets and inequitable wage scales, and with getting women into positions of authority in the professions, government, and cultural institutions. Liberal feminist politics took important weapons of the civil rights movement -- anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action -- and used them to fight gender inequality, especially in the job market.

Affirmative action calls for aggressively seeking out qualified people to redress the gender and ethnic imbalance in workplaces. That means encouraging men to train for such jobs as nursing, teaching, and secretary, and women for fields like engineering, construction, and police work. With a diverse pool of qualified applicants, employers can be legally mandated to hire enough different workers to achieve a reasonable balance in their workforce, and to police work. With a diverse pool of qualified applicants, employers can be legally mandated to hire enough different workers to achieve a reasonable balance in their workforce, and to pay them the same and also give an equal chance to advance in their careers.

The main contribution of liberal feminism is showing how much modern society discriminates against women. In the United States, it was successful in breaking down many barriers to women's entry into formerly male-dominated jobs and professions, helped to equalize wage scales, and got abortion and other reproductive rights legalized. But liberal feminism could not overcome the prevailing belief that women and men are intrinsically different. It was

somewhat more successful in proving that even if women are different from men, they are not inferior.

Marxist and Socialist Feminisms

Marx's analysis of the social structure of capitalism was supposed to apply to people of any social characteristics. If you owned the means of production, you were a member of the capitalist class; if you sold your labor for a wage, you were a member of the proletariat. That would be true of women as well, except that until the end of the 19th century, married women in capitalist countries were not allowed to own property in their own name; their profits from any businesses they ran and their wages belonged to their husband. Although Marx recognized that workers and capitalists had wives who worked in the home and took care of the children, he had no place for housewives in his analysis of capitalism.

It was Marxist feminism that put housewives into the structure of capitalism. Housewives are vital to capitalism, indeed to any industrial economy, because their unpaid work in the home maintains bosses and workers and reproduces the next generation of bosses and workers (and their future wives). Furthermore, if a bourgeois husband falls on hard times, his wife can do genteel work in the home, such as dressmaking, to earn extra money, or take a temporary or part-time job, usually white-collar. And when a worker's wages fall below the level needed to feed his family, as it often does, his wife can go out to work for wages in factories or shops or other people's homes, or turn the home into a small factory and put everyone, sometimes including the children, to work. The housewife's labor, paid and unpaid, is for her family.

Marxist and socialist feminisms severely criticize the family as a source of women's oppression and exploitation. If a woman works for her family in the home, she has to be supported, and so she is economically dependent on the "man of the house," like her children. If she works outside the home, she is still expected to fulfill her domestic duties, and so she ends up working twice as hard as a man, and usually for a lot less pay.

This source of gender inequality has been somewhat redressed in countries that give all mothers paid leave before and after the birth of a child and that provide affordable child care. But that solution puts the burden of children totally on the mother, and encourages men to opt out of family responsibilities altogether. To counteract that trend, feminists in the government of Norway allocated a certain portion of paid child care leave to fathers specifically.

Women in the former communist countries had what liberal feminism in capitalist economies always wanted for women -- full-time jobs with state-supported maternity leave and child-care services. But Marxist and socialist feminists claim that the welfare state can be paternalistic, substituting public patriarchy for private patriarchy. They argue that male-dominated government policies put the state's interests before those of women: When the economy needs workers, the state pays for child-care leave; with a down-turn in the

economy, the state reduces the benefits. Similarly, when the state needs women to have more children, it cuts back on abortions and contraceptive services. Women's status as a reserve army of labor and as a child producer is thus no different under socialism than under capitalism.

The solution of women's economic dependence on men thus can- not simply be waged work, especially if jobs continue to be gender-segregated and women's work is paid less than men's. Socialist feminism had a different solution to the gendered workforce than liberal feminism's program of affirmative action. It was comparable worth.

In examining the reasons why women and men workers' salaries are so discrepant, proponents of comparable worth found that wage scales are not set by the market for labor, by what a worker is worth to an employer, or by the worker's education or other credentials. Salaries are set by conventional "worth," which is rooted in gender and ethnic and other forms of discrimination. Comparable worth programs compare jobs in traditional women's occupations, such as secretary, with traditional men's jobs, such as automobile mechanic. They give a point value for qualifications needed, skills used, extent of responsibility and authority over other workers, and dangerousness. Salaries are then equalized for jobs with a similar number of points (which represent the "worth" of the job). Although comparable worth programs do not do away with gendered job segregation, feminist proponents argue that raising the salaries of women doing traditional women's jobs could give the majority of women economic resources that would make them less dependent on marriage or state benefits as a means of survival.

Development Feminism

Addressing the economic exploitation of women in post-colonial countries on the way to industrialization, *development feminism* has done extensive gender analyses of the global economy. Women workers in developing countries in Central and Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa are paid less than men workers, whether they work in factories or do piece work at home. To survive in rural communities, women grow food, keep house, and earn money any way they can to supplement what their migrating husbands send them.

The gendered division of labor in developing countries is the outcome of a long history of colonialism. Under colonialism, women's traditional contributions to food production were undermined in favor of exportable crops, such as coffee, and the extraction of raw materials, such as minerals. Men workers were favored in this work, but they were paid barely enough for their own subsistence. Women family members had to provide food for themselves and their children, but with good land confiscated for plantations, they also lived at a bare survival level.

Development feminism made an important theoretical contribution in equating women's status with control of economic resources. In some societies, women control significant

economic resources and so have a high status. In contrast, in societies with patriarchal family structures where anything women produce, including children, belongs to the husband, women and girls have a low value. Development feminism's theory is that in any society, if the food women produce is the main way the group is fed, and women also control the distribution of any surplus they produce, women have power and prestige. If men provide most of the food and distribute the surplus, women's status is low. Whether women or men produce most of the food depends on the kind of technology used. Thus, the mode of production and the kinship rules that control the distribution of any surplus are the significant determinants of the relative status of women and men in any society.

In addition to gendered economic analyses, development feminism addresses the political issue of women's rights versus national and cultural traditions. At the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women Forum held in Beijing in 1995, the popular slogan was "human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights." The Platform for Action document that came out of the UN Conference condemned particular cultural practices that are oppressive to women - infanticide, dowry, child marriage, female genital mutilation. The 187 governments that signed onto the Platform agreed to abolish these practices. However, since they are integral parts of cultural and tribal traditions, to give them up could be seen as kowtowing to Western ideas. The development feminist perspective, so critical of colonialism and yet so supportive of women's rights, has found this issue difficult to resolve.

Western ideas of individualism and economic independence are double-faced. On the one hand, these ideas support the rights of girls and women to an education that will allow them to be economically independent. They are also the source of a concept of universal human rights that can be used to fight subordinating and sometimes physically hurtful tribal practices, such as genital mutilation. On the other hand, Western ideas undercut communal enterprises and traditional reciprocal food production and shared child care.

Indigenous women's own solution to this dilemma is community organizing around their productive and reproductive roles as mothers -- so that what benefits them economically and physically is in the service of their families, not themselves alone. However, this same community organizing and family service can support the continuance of cultural practices like female genital mutilation, which Western development feminists want to see eradicated. The decision to not interfere with traditional cultural practices that are physically harmful to girls and at the same time work for their education and better health care is a particularly problematic dilemma for development feminism.

GENDER RESISTANT FEMINISMS

As gender reform feminisms made inroads into the public consciousness in the 1970s and women entered formerly all-men workplaces and schools, they became more and more aware of constant and everyday put-downs -- from bosses and colleagues at work, professors

and students in the classroom, fellow organizers in political movements, and worst of all, from boyfriends and husbands at home. These "microinequities" of everyday life -- being ignored and interrupted, not getting credit for competence or good performance, being passed over for jobs that involve taking charge -- crystallize into a pattern that insidiously wears women down.

The younger women working in the civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, and student new-left movements in the United States in the late 1960s had even earlier realized that they were nothing more than handmaidens, bed partners, and coffee-makers to their male co-workers. Despite the revolutionary rhetoric the young men were flinging in the face of Western civilization in many countries, when it came to women, they might as well have been living in the 18th century.

Out of this awareness that sisters had no place in any brotherhood came the gender resistant feminisms of the 1970's. They are radical feminism, lesbian feminism, psychoanalytical feminism, and standpoint feminism.

Radical Feminism

Radical feminism had its start in small, leaderless, women-only consciousness-raising groups, where the topics of intense discussion came out of women's daily lives -- housework, serving men's emotional and sexual needs, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, menopause. From these discussions came a theory of gender inequality that went beyond discrimination, to oppression, and a gender politics of resistance to the dominant gender order. Radical feminism's theoretical watchword is patriarchy, or men's pervasive oppression and exploitation of women, which can be found wherever women and men are in contact with each other, in private as well as in public. Radical feminism argues that patriarchy is very hard to eradicate because its root -- the belief that women are different and inferior -- is deeply embedded in most men's consciousness. It can best be resisted, radical feminists argued, by forming non-hierarchical, supportive, woman-only spaces where women can think and act and create free of constant sexist put-downs, sexual harassment, and the threat of rape and violence. The heady possibilities of creating woman-oriented health care facilities, safe residences for battered women, counseling and legal services for survivors of rape, a woman's culture, and even a woman's religion and ethics forged the bonds of sisterhood and the rationale for separation from men.

Radical feminism turns male-dominated culture on its head. It takes all the characteristics that are valued in male-dominated societies -- objectivity, distance, control, coolness, aggressiveness, and competitiveness -- and blames them for wars, poverty, rape, battering, child abuse, and incest. It praises what women do -- feed and nurture, cooperate and reciprocate, and attend to bodies, minds, and psyches. The important values, radical feminism argues, are intimacy, persuasion, warmth, caring, and sharing -- the characteristics that women develop in their hands on, everyday experiences with their own and their

children's bodies and with the work of daily living. Men could develop these characteristics, too, if they "mothered," but since few do, they are much more prevalent in women.

Radical feminism claims that most men have the potential to use physical violence against women, including rape and murder. They point to the commonness of date rape and wife beating, of murders of ex-wives and former girlfriends. The commercial side of this systemic misogyny, or women-hating, is the way women are depicted as sex objects in the mass media and as pieces of meat in pornography, and the global exploitation of girls and young women in prostitution. Even more insidious, they argue, sexual exploitation is the common downside of romantic heterosexual love, which itself is oppressive to women. The threat of violence and rape, radical feminism theorizes, is the way patriarchy controls all women.

Radical feminism's political battlefield has been protection of rape victims and battered women and condemnation of pornography, prostitution, sexual harassment, and sexual coercion. Since all men derive power from their dominant social status, any sexual relationship between women and men is intrinsically unequal. Consent by women to heterosexual intercourse is, by this definition, always coerced unless it is explicitly agreed to by a fully aware, autonomous woman. This viewpoint led to an expansion of the parameters of rape, and to making date rape visible and legally actionable.

The radical feminist political remedies -- women-only consciousness-raising groups and alternative organizations -- were vital in allowing women the "breathing space" to formulate important theories of gender inequality, to develop women's studies programs in colleges and universities, to form communities, and to produce knowledge, culture, religion, ethics, and health care from a woman's point of view. But they alienated many working-class women, especially those of disadvantaged ethnic groups, who felt that their men were just as oppressed as they were by the dominant society.

Radical feminism's critique of heterosexuality and its valorization of mothering produced a schism among feminists, offending many of those who were in heterosexual relationships or who didn't want children. Its praise of women's emotionality and nurturing capabilities and condemnation of men's violent sexuality and aggressiveness has been seen as essentialist -- rooted in deep-seated and seemingly intractable differences between two global categories of people.

This concentration on universal gender oppression has led to accusations that radical feminism neglects ethnic and social class differences among men and among women, and that it downplays other sources of oppression. By pitting women against men, radical feminism alienates women of color and working-class women, who feel torn between their feminist and their ethnic and class loyalties.

Lesbian Feminism

Lesbian feminism takes the radical feminist pessimistic view of men to its logical conclusion. If heterosexual relationships are intrinsically exploitative because of men's social, physical, and sexual power over women, why bother with men at all? Women are more loving, nurturant, sharing, and understanding. Men like having women friends to talk about their problems with, but women can only unburden to other women. "Why not go all the way?" asked lesbian feminism. Stop sleeping with the "enemy," and turn to other women for sexual love as well as for intellectual companionship and emotional support.

One theoretical lesbian feminism concept is that of the lesbian continuum, where a lesbian can be any independent, woman-identified woman. This lesbian metaphor transforms love between women into an identity, a community, and a culture. Lesbian imagery is not a mirror opposite of men's sexuality and relationships, but a new language, a new voice. Lesbian feminism praises women's sexuality and bodies, mother- daughter love, and the cultural community of women, not just sexual and emotional relationships between women.

Women bisexuals who have sexual relations with both women and men, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes serially, disturb the gender and sexual dichotomies that are the basis for lesbian feminism. Their presence has been severely resisted in many lesbian communities, but they have become a contradiction not yet resolved in lesbian feminism.

Psychoanalytic Feminism

Another important gender resistant feminism of the 1970s and 1980s came out of feminist re-readings of Freud and the French feminist engagement with Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault.

Freud's theory of personality development centers around the Oedipus complex -- the detachment from the mother. Psycho- analytic feminism claims that the source of men's domination of women is men's unconscious two-sided need for women's emotionality and rejection of them as potential castrators. Women submit to men because of their unconscious desires for emotional connectedness. These gendered personalities are the outcome of the Oedipus complex -- the separation from the mother.

Because women are the primary parents, infants' bond with them. Boys, however, have to separate from their mothers and identify with their fathers in order to establish their masculinity. They develop strong ego boundaries and a capacity for the independent action, objectivity, and rational thinking so valued in Western culture. Women are a threat to their independence and masculine sexuality.

Girls continue to identify with their mothers, and so they grow up with fluid ego boundaries that make them sensitive, empathic, emotional. It is these qualities that make them potentially good mothers, and keep them open to men's emotional needs. But because the

men in their lives have developed personalities that make them emotionally guarded, women want to have children to bond with. Thus, psychological gendering of children is continually reproduced. To develop nurturing capabilities in men, and to break the cycle of the reproduction of gendered personality structures, psychoanalytic feminisms recommend shared parenting -- after men are taught how to parent.

French psychoanalytic feminism focuses on the ways that cultural productions (novels, drama, art, opera, music, movies) reflect and represent the masculine unconscious, especially fear of castration. In French feminist psychoanalytic theory, patriarchal culture is the sublimation of men's suppressed infantile desire for the mother and fear of the loss of the phallus, the symbol of masculine difference. Since women don't have a phallus to lose and are not different from their mothers, they can't participate in the creation of the culture. Women's wish for a phallus and repressed sexual desire for their fathers is sublimated into wanting to give birth to a son; men's repressed sexual desire for their mother and fear of the father's castration are sublimated into cultural creations. What women represent in phallic culture is the sexual desire and emotionality men must repress in order to become like their fathers -- men who are controlled and controlling. No matter what role women play in cultural productions, the male gaze sees them as desired or despised sexualized objects.

Phallic cultural productions, according to psychoanalytic feminism, are full of aggression, competition, and domination, with an underlying misogynist subtext of fear of castration -- of becoming women. To resist and to counter with woman-centeredness, French feminism called for women to write from their biographical experiences and their bodies -- about menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and sexuality. That way, women can resist their suppression by the dominant phallic culture. However, urging women to produce woman-centered art and literature locks them into a categorically female sensibility and emphasizes their difference from men and the dominant culture even more. Women's emotional and erotic power is unleashed and made visible in women's cultural productions, but they are separated from men's culture, which is still dominant.

Standpoint Feminism

Radical, lesbian, and psychoanalytic feminist theories of women's oppression converge in standpoint feminism, which turns from resistance to confrontation with the dominant sources of knowledge and values. The main idea among all the gender resistant feminisms is that women and women's perspectives should be central to knowledge, culture, and politics, not invisible or marginal. Whoever sets the agendas for scientific research, whoever shapes the content of education, whoever chooses the symbols that permeate cultural productions has hegemonic power. Hegemony is the ideology that legitimates a society's unquestioned assumptions. In Western society, the justifications for many of our ideas about women and men come from science. We believe in scientific "facts" and rarely question their objectivity.

Standpoint feminism is a critique of mainstream science and social science, a methodology for feminist research, and an analysis of the power that lies in producing knowledge. Simply put, standpoint feminism says that women's "voices" are different from men's, and they must be heard if women are to challenge hegemonic values.

The impact of the everyday world in its experiential reality and the structures that limit, shape, organize, and penetrate it are different for people in different social locations -- but especially for women and men, because Western society is so gender- divided. Men do not recognize that the knowledge they produce and the concepts they use come out of their own experience. Rather, they claim that their scientific work is universal, general, neutral, and objective. But women know that it is partial, particular, masculine, and subjective because they see the world from a different angle, and they have been excluded from much of science.

The grounding for standpoint theory comes from Marxist and socialist feminist theory, which applies Marx's concept of class- consciousness to women, and psychoanalytic feminist theory, which describes the gendering of the unconscious. Standpoint feminism argues that as physical and social reproducers of children -- out of bodies, emotions, thought, and sheer physical labor -- women are grounded in material reality in ways that men aren't.

Women are responsible for most of the everyday work, even if they are highly educated, while highly educated men concentrate on the abstract and the intellectual. Because they are closely connected to their bodies and their emotions, women's unconscious as well as conscious view of the world is unitary and concrete. If women produced knowledge, it would be much more in touch with the everyday, material world, and with the connectedness among people.

Although men could certainly do research on and about women, and women on men, standpoint feminism argues that women researchers are more sensitive to how women see problems and set priorities, and therefore would be better able to design and conduct research from a woman's point of view. It is not enough, however, to just add more women to research teams or even have them head them -- these women have to have a feminist viewpoint. They have to be critical of mainstream concepts, which justify established lines of power, and recognize that "facts" reflect current values and past history. Most of all, they have to privilege women's experience.

But is all women's experience the same? And aren't the "facts" produced from a woman's perspective just as biased as those produced from a man's point of view? In "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" (Feminist Studies 14:575-99, 1988), a paper that was a commentary on Sandra Harding's groundbreaking *The Science Question in Feminism*, Donna Haraway proposed a way out of the dilemma. She says that all knowledge is situated, just as standpoint feminists claim, but situations differ, and so do all perspectives. Truths, therefore, must be partial. This diversity is a strength, not a weakness, in feminism.

Summary

Gender resistant feminisms have produced much controversy within feminist circles. A strong critique of what has been called cultural feminism focuses on its claims of essential differences between men and women, its view of heterosexual sexuality as coercive and potentially violent, its valorization of motherhood, and the promotion of a separate and distinctive woman's culture rooted in female bodies and life experiences. Many feminists feel that these views are a throwback to biological justifications of women's inferiority, and that a separatist politics isolates and ghettoizes women and forecloses affiliating with feminist men to change the wider society.

A woman-centered perspective was a needed corrective to a gender-blind neutralism that in the end seemed to advocate that women become just like men -- work-oriented, free of responsibility for child care, and sexually "liberated." Certainly, when women did try to emulate men, they ended up working a double shift (full-time job and continued responsibility for running a home), they felt guilty for neglecting their children (few men shared parenting equally), and they were vulnerable to date rape and sexually transmitted diseases.

But the focus of the gender resistant feminisms on "woman" is troublesome. Are women so monolithic that they can be expected to always have similar experiences and a unitary perspective? Do gender resistant feminisms create a universal Woman that is actually middle-class, Western, heterosexual, and white? Does this universal Woman suppress other women's voices? How can they be heard?

Ethnic and working-class feminists feel they can be "womanist" without male-bashing. Heterosexual and bisexual feminists say they can have relationships with men and keep their autonomy. Civil libertarian feminists dislike the calls for censorship of pornography.

Out of these critiques have come a group of feminisms that deal with the contradictions of gender resistant feminisms, especially the questions of the unity of women, the privileged perspective of women's standpoint, the source of identity in identity politics, and the complexities of sexuality.

GENDER REVOLUTION FEMINISMS

The 1980s and 1990s have seen the emergence of feminist theories that attack the dominant social order through questioning the clearness of the categories that comprise its hierarchies. These feminisms deconstruct the interlocking structures of power and privilege that make one group of men dominant, and range everyone else in a complex ladder of increasing disadvantage. They also analyze how cultural productions, especially in the mass media, justify and normalize inequality and subordinating practices. These feminisms thus have the revolutionary potential of destabilizing the structure and values of the dominant social order.

They are multi-ethnic feminism, men's feminism, social construction feminism, post-modern feminism and queer theory.

Multi-ethnic Feminism

Throughout the 20th century, social critics have argued that no one aspect of inequality is more important than any other. Ethnicity, religion, social class, and gender comprise a complex hierarchical stratification system in which upper-class, heterosexual, white men and women oppress lower-class women and men of disadvantaged ethnicities and religions. In teasing out the multiple strands of oppression and exploitation, multi-ethnic feminism has shown that gender, ethnicity, religion, and social class are structurally intertwined relationships.

Multi-ethnic feminism takes the standpoint perspective a step further. It is not enough to dissect a social institution or area of social thought from a woman's point of view; the viewpoint has to include the experiences of women and men of different ethnic groups and religions and must also take into consideration social class and economic conditions. Values, identity, and consciousness of self are rooted in all the major social statuses. Ethnicity, religion, social class, and gender are the walls and windows of our lives -- they structure what we experience, do, feel, see, and ultimately believe about ourselves and others. As Patricia Hill Collins points out in a recent comment on standpoint theory ("Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited': Where's the Power?" Signs 22:375-81, 1997), these experiences are not individual, but belong to groups; thus they are a vital source of both a world view and a sense of identity.

The important point made by multi-ethnic feminism is that the subordinate group is not marked just by gender or by ethnicity or religion, but is in a social location in multiple systems of domination. Men are as oppressed as women, but men and women of disadvantaged groups are often oppressed in different ways -- in the United States, Black men are punished for their masculinity; Black women seen as sexual objects or mothers. Thus, group consciousness reflects all social statuses at once.

Multi-ethnic cultural feminism finds art in what women of every culture produce in everyday life: quilts, folk songs, celebratory dances, festive food, decorated dishes, weaving and embroidery are all part of a vibrant women's culture. These women's modes of art and literature are interactive and emotionally expressive. They are the equivalent of men's subversive cultural productions, such as jazz and rap, and equally distinctive from the dominant group's way of talking and thinking.

A woman of a disadvantaged ethnic group may not feel loyalty or identity with "all women." But she may also feel alienated from the men of her own group, if they are oppressive to women because of a traditional patriarchal culture or because they are themselves subordinated by men at the top of the pyramid. Consciousness of subordination and the

forms of struggle may have to be different for women and men; the man who is Other may need to find the voice suppressed by dominant men; the woman who is Other may need to find the voice suppressed by both dominant and subordinate men.

Men's Feminism

Men's feminism is a burgeoning field of study that applies feminist theories to the study of men and masculinity. Men's feminism took on the task called for by feminists studying women in relationship to men -- to treat men as well as women as a gender and to scrutinize masculinity as carefully as femininity. A prime goal has been to develop a theory, not of masculinity, but of masculinities, because of the diversity among men. There are no universal masculine characteristics that are the same in every society. Nor, for that matter, in any one society, or in any one organizational setting, as earlier studies of working-class men and racial stratification made very clear.

The main theory developed in men's feminism, which has been used to dissect the differences between and within groups of middle-class and working class men of different ethnic groups and sexual orientations, is a concept of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic or dominant men are those who are economically successful, ethnically superior, and visibly heterosexual. Yet the characteristics of masculinity, hegemonic or otherwise, are not the source of men's gender status. Genders -- men's and women's -- are relational and embedded in the structure of the social order. The object of analysis is thus not masculinity or femininity but their oppositional relationship. Neither men nor woman can be studied separately; the whole question of gender inequality involves a relationship of haves and have-nots, of dominance and subordination, of advantage and disadvantage.

Men's feminism argues that gender inequality includes men's denigration of other men as well as their exploitation of women. Low-level men workers around the world are oppressed by the inequalities of the global economy, and young working class urban men's impoverished environment and "taste for risk" has made them an endangered species. Men's feminism blames sports, the military, fraternities, and other arenas of male bonding for encouraging physical and sexual violence and misogyny. It deplores the pressure on men to identify with but not be emotionally close to their fathers and to be "cool" and unfeeling towards the women in their lives and distant from their own children. But many men feminists have been critical of the men's movements that foster a search for the primitive or "wild man" and of religiously oriented men's organizations that link responsibility to family with patriarchal concepts of manhood. They argue that these movements seek to change individual attitudes and do not address the structural conditions of gender inequality or the power differences among men.

The sources of gender inequality that men's feminism concentrates on are embedded in the stratification systems of Western societies as well as in the homophobia of heterosexual men, who construct their masculinity as clearly opposite to that of homosexual men. Thus, it is

necessary for prominent men of all ethnic groups in politics, sports, and the mass media to appear heterosexual. Gender inequality is also embedded in men's jockeying for the leading positions in whatever arena they find themselves, and excluding women as much as possible from competition. It is not an accident that so much of the language of competition is the language of sports, because organized sports are not only an immediate site of masculinity displays, but also a source for vicarious competitiveness and for the creation of symbolic icons of masculine strength and beauty. Unfortunately, these are also icons of physical and sexual violence.

Men's feminism overlaps with gay studies in analyzing the social dimensions of male homosexuality. Examining homosexuality from a gender perspective shows that homosexual men are men, not a third gender, and partake of the privileges and disadvantages and life style of men of the same ethnic group and social class. Nonetheless, because homosexual men do not have sexual relationships with women -- an important marker of manhood in Western society -- they are considered not-quite- men. Thus, like other men who do not have the marks of hegemonic status (white, economically successful, heterosexual), homosexual men are lower on the scale of privilege and power in Western society. Homosexual men, however, do not subvert the gender order because they retain some of the "patriarchal dividend" of male advantage. Men's feminism provides a needed corrective in bringing men into gender research as a specific subject of study, but it does not offer new theoretical perspectives. Rather, men's feminism is an amalgam of social construction, multi-ethnic, psychoanalytic, and development feminism and gay studies. It is likely that men's feminism will eventually be absorbed into more general feminist perspectives.

Social Construction Feminism

While multi-ethnic feminism focuses on the effects of location in a system of advantage and disadvantage, and men's feminism on the hierarchical relationships of men to other men and to women, social construction feminism looks at the structure of the gendered social order as a whole. It sees gender as a society- wide institution that is built into all the major social organizations of society. As a social institution, gender determines the distribution of power, privileges, and economic resources. Gendered norms and expectations get built into women's and men's sense of self as a certain kind of human being, and alternative ways of acting and arranging work and family life are literally unthinkable.

In social construction feminist theory, inequality is the core of gender itself: Women and men are socially differentiated in order to justify treating them unequally. Thus, although gender is intertwined with other unequal statuses, remedying the gendered part of these structures of inequality may be the most difficult, because gendering is so pervasive. Indeed, it is this pervasiveness that leads so many people to believe that gendering is biological, and therefore "natural."

Social construction feminism focuses on the processes that create gender differences and also render the construction of gender invisible. The common social processes that encourage us to see gender differences and to ignore continuums are the gendered division of labor in the home that allocates child care and housework to women; gender segregation and gender typing of occupations so that women and men don't do the same kind of work; regendering (as when an occupation goes from men's work to women's work and is justified both ways by "natural" masculine and feminine characteristics); selective comparisons that ignore similarities, as in men's and women's separate sports competitions; and containment, suppression, and erasure of gender-inappropriate behaviors and appearances, such as aggressiveness in women and nurturance in men.

Social construction feminism argues that the dichotomies of male and female biological sex and physiology are also produced and maintained by social processes. Genital and hormonal ambiguities are ignored or overridden in the sex categorization of infants, and the gendering of sports and physical labor ignores the overlaps in female and male stature and musculature. In the social construction feminist perspective, the processes of gender differentiation, approval of accepted gendered behavior and appearance, and disapproval of deviations from established norms are all manifestations of power and social control. Religion, the law, and medicine reinforce the boundary lines between women and men and suppress gender variation through moral censure and stigmatizing, such as labeling gender-inappropriate behavior sinful, illegal, and insane.

Social construction feminism also analyzes the historical and cultural context in which sexuality is learned and enacted, or "scripted." What sexual behaviors are approved, tolerated, and tabooed differ for women and men and vary for social groups over time and place. Sexuality, in this perspective, is a product of learning, social pressures, and cultural values. Legal penalties, job loss, and violence uphold the heterosexual social order, defeating individual attempts at resistance and rebellion.

Most people, however, voluntarily go along with their society's prescriptions for those of their gender status, because the norms and expectations get built into their individual sense of worth and identity. Even transvestites (males who dress in women's clothes and females who dress in men's clothes) and transsexuals (people who have sex-change surgery) try to pass as "normal" men and women. So male cross-dressers tend to wear very feminine-looking clothing, and male transsexuals use hormones to grow breasts. Because contemporary Western men's clothing is acceptable for women to wear, female transgenders and gender rebels have an easier time "passing."

The power of social construction is evident not only in the re-gendering of bodies and dress, but in what happens in work and family roles. Male-to-female transsexuals find that the jobs they are hired for as women pay less than those they had as men. And married men who dress in women's clothes in the home do not do housework while they are so dressed. More

consequentially, all of a transsexual's identity papers, from birth certificates to passports, have to be reissued in their new gender and name. Married transsexuals have to get divorced, because, in our society, two women and two men cannot be legally married. (They can in other societies.) Changing gender is changing one's basic social status.

In the social construction feminist view, long-lasting change of this deeply gendered social order would have to mean a conscious reordering of the gendered division of labor in the family and at work, and at the same time, undermining the taken-for-granted assumptions about the capabilities of women and men that justify the status quo. Such change is unlikely to come about unless the pervasiveness of the social institution of gender and its social construction are openly challenged. Since the processes of gendering include making them invisible, where are we to start? With individual awareness and attitude change, or with restructuring social institutions and behavioral change? Certainly, both individuals and institutions need to be altered to achieve gender equality, but it may be impossible to do both at once.

Social construction feminism is faced with a political dilemma. If political activities focus on getting individuals to understand the constrictions of gender norms and expectations and encourage resistance to them in every aspect of their lives, it would not necessarily change social structure. If the focus is on getting work organizations and governments to structure for gender equality, it would not necessarily change gendered norms for individuals. The dilemma is built into the theory of social construction -- individuals construct and maintain the norms and expectations and patterns of behavior that become institutionalized, but existing institutions constrain the extent of allowable variation and individual and group difference. Socially patterned individual actions and institutional structures construct and reinforce each other. For this reason, social construction feminism recognizes that there is always change, but it is usually slow -- and it may not be in the direction of gender equality -- as recent backlashes and fundamentalist governments have shown so dramatically.

Postmodern Feminism and Queer Theory

Post-modern feminism and queer theory go the furthest in challenging gender categories as dual, oppositional, and fixed, arguing instead that sexuality and gender are shifting, fluid, multiple categories. They critique a politics based on a universal category, Woman, presenting instead a more subversive view that undermines the solidity of a social order built on concepts of two sexes, two sexualities, and two genders. Equality will come, they say, when there are so many recognized sexes, sexualities, and genders that one can't be played against the other.

Postmodern feminism and queer theory examine the ways societies justify the beliefs about gender at any time (now and in the past) with ideological "discourses" embedded in cultural representations or "texts." Not just art, literature, and the mass media, but anything produced by a social group, including newspapers, political pronouncements, and religious liturgy, is a "text." A text's "discourse" is what it says, doesn't say, and hints at (sometimes

called a "subtext"). The historical and social context and the material conditions under which a text is produced become part of the text's discourse. If a movie or newspaper is produced in a time of conservative values or under a repressive political regime, its "discourse" is going to be different from what is produced during times of openness or social change. Who provides the money, who does the creative work, and who oversees the managerial side all influence what a text conveys to its audience. The projected audience also shapes any text, although the actual audience may read quite different meanings from those intended by the producers. "Deconstruction" is the process of teasing out all of these aspects of a "text."

Queer theory is an offshoot of postmodern deconstructionist cultural studies. Neither are necessarily feminist, the analysis of cultural gender discourses has merged into postmodern feminism.

Much of postmodern feminist deconstruction has been of cultural representations, such as movies, videos, TV, popular music, advertising -- whether aimed at adults, teenagers, or children -- as well as paintings, operas, theater productions, and ballet. They all have discourses that overtly and subliminally tell us something about female and male bodies, sexual desire, and gender roles. A romantic song about the man who got away glorifies heterosexuality; a tragedy deploring the death of a salesman glorifies the traditional nuclear family. These discourses influence the way we think about our world, without questioning the underlying assumptions about gender and sexuality. They encourage approved-of choices about work, marriage, and having children by showing them as normal and rewarding and by showing what is disapproved of as leading to a "bad end."

Queer theory goes beyond cultural productions to examine the discourses of gender and sexuality in everyday life as texts ripe for deconstruction. In queer theory, gender and sexuality are "performances" -- identities or selves we create as we act and interact with other. What we wear and how we talk are signs and displays of gender and sexual orientation. What we do socially creates us as women and men of a particular ethnic group, social class, occupation, religion, place of residence, even if we try to create ourselves as individuals.

Queer theorists have explored whether transvestism, dressing in the clothes of the "other" gender, creates a freer social space or reproduces conventional gendering. Women and men, homosexual and heterosexual and bisexual, those who cross-dress for "drag" performances, costume parties, mardi gras, and gay pride parades, as well as those who live in the other's gender status are all texts with a gendered and sexualized discourse. What queer theorists often find is that gender roles are recreated in the same old way -- a transvestite passing as a woman wears a demure dress, stockings, and high-heeled shoes; a butch lesbian swaggers in men's jeans and cowboy boots. The bearded lady in a skirt still belongs in a circus, and is stared at openly on the street. Genders and sexualities may be mixed up, but they are not erased.

If social construction feminism puts too much emphasis on institutions and structures, and not enough on individual actions, postmodern feminism and queer theory have just the opposite problem. In queer theory, all the emphasis is on agency, impression management, and presentation of the self in the guise and costume most likely to produce or parody conformity. (Madonna is a supreme proponent of queerness.) Postmodern feminism is mainly concerned with deconstructing cultural productions, neglecting the more iron-bound and controlling discourses embedded in organizational, legal, religious, and political texts.

Social construction feminism's analyses of the institutional and organizational practices that maintain the gender order could be combined with postmodern feminist and queer theory's deconstruction of how individuals do and undo gender. Social construction feminism argues that the gendered social order is constantly restabilized by the individual action, but queer theory has shown how individuals can consciously and purposefully create disorder and gender instability, opening the way to social change. Social construction feminism can show where the structural contradictions and fault lines are, which would offer places for individuals, organizations, and social movements to pressure for long-lasting restructuring and a more equal social order for all kinds of people. Then queer theorists can destabilize it all over again!

Summary

Gender revolution feminisms all question binary oppositions. They use more gender categories than "man" and "woman," since each gender category is cross-cut inextricably by ethnicity, religion, and social class. Sexuality, too, is not binary or fixed. There are at least six sexualities -- heterosexual woman, heterosexual man, lesbian, gay man, bisexual man, bisexual woman. These gendered sexual statuses encompass a variety of feelings and experiences. Biological sex is also not binary -- to male and female, you can add hermaphrodite and transsexual. Physiologically, there is overlap in muscular strength and physical endurance -- a continuum rather than a male-female split. A recognition of multiple categories disturbs the neat polarity of familiar opposites and undercuts the assumption that one category is dominant and one subordinate, one normal and one deviant, one valued and one "other."

Gender revolution feminisms claim that all the statuses that structure our lives are socially constructed. Thus, it is possible to have multiple variations and mixes of whatever humans can invent in behavior, emotional and sexual relationships, and identities. Identity politics becomes a lot more complex, but the possibilities for political coalitions also multiply.

CONCLUSION

Gender reform feminisms laid the theoretical groundwork for second-wave feminism. Their politics are practical and perhaps the best way to redress gender inequality at the present time. The fight for equal legal status and political representation for women and men, and for

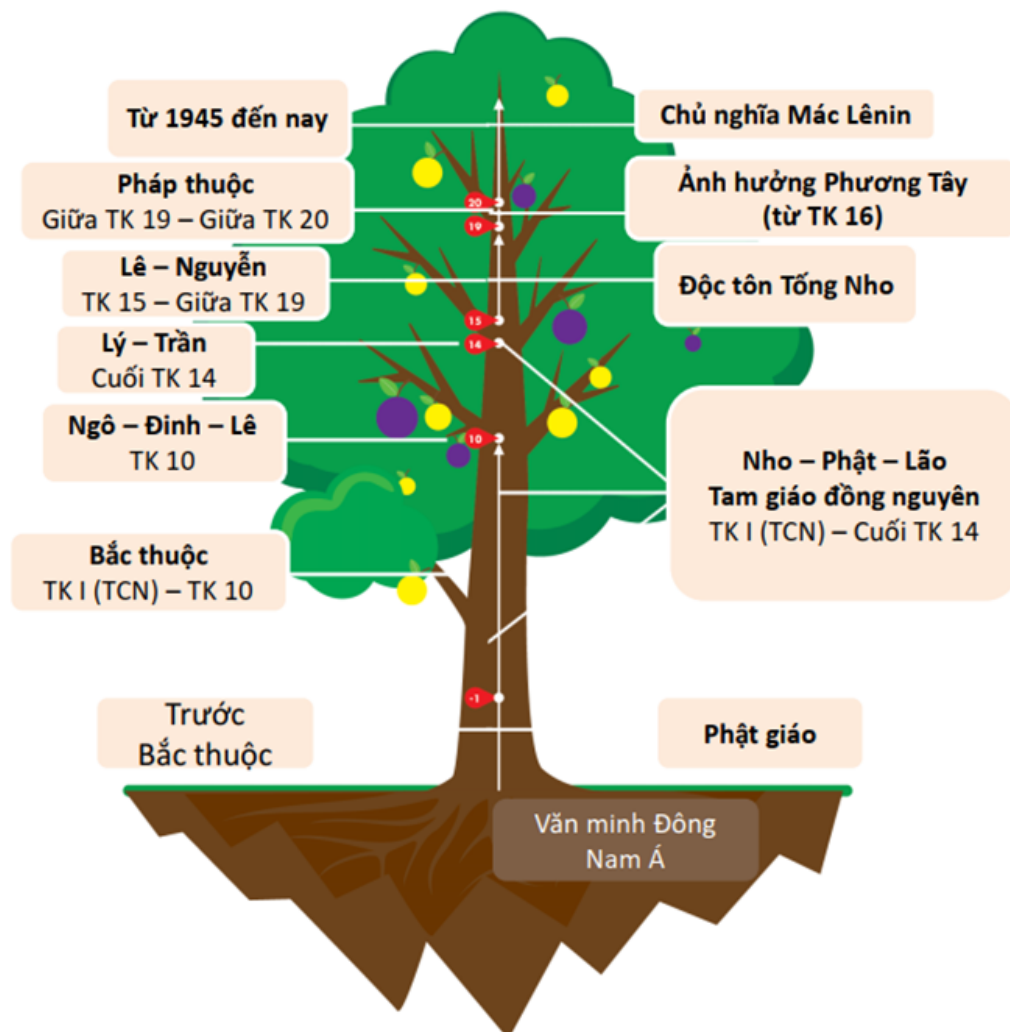
autonomy for women in making procreative, sexual, and marital choices still has not been won in most countries of the world. Gender segregation in the workplace and lower pay for women's work is pervasive in capitalist and socialist economies. The global economy, with its exploitation of poor women and men as cheap labor, and economic restructuring in industrializing and post-industrial economies, with its reduction in social-service benefits to mothers and children, has worsened the material conditions of life for many people throughout the world. Thus, economic problems are another arena for feminist gender politics.

While the politics of gender reform feminisms spills over into a politics for every disadvantaged person, the battles of gender resistant feminisms are for women alone. Fighting to protect women's bodies against unwanted pregnancies and sterilizations, abortions of female fetuses, genital mutilation, rape, beatings, and murder has been an enormous and never-ending struggle. And the sexual integrity of women and girls needs protection from forced prostitution, exploitative sex work in pornographic productions and nightclubs, and loveless marriages. Both lesbians and gay men need to be able to live free of discrimination and violent attacks, but many lesbian women also want their own physical space and their own cultural communities, where they where they live free of sexual harassment and men's domination, nourish their loves and friendships, and produce books, music, art, and drama that reflect their different ways of thinking and feeling.

Multi-ethnic feminism is part of a powerful political movement to redress past and present legal and social discrimination of disadvantaged groups in so many societies, and to preserve their cultures. Men's feminism follows in the footsteps of working-class social research and politics, but expands their political arena to include gay men. Their condemnation of the price paid for the rewards of professional sports and the physical and sexual violence they foster are their particular political agenda. In conjunction with the radical feminist fight against rape and pornography, men's feminism has gone directly to men in college workshops, seminars, and conferences to make them aware of how their behavior can be so harmful to women.

Social construction and postmodern feminisms have only begun to translate their theoretical and linguistic destabilization of the gender order into politics or praxis. Degendering needs to be translated into everyday interaction, which could be revolutionary enough. But to fulfill their political potential, the gender revolution feminisms need to spell out what precisely has to be done in all the institutions and organizations of a society -- family, workplace, government, the arts, religion, law, and so on -- to ensure equal participation and opportunity for every person in every group. Gender revolution feminists have said that there are multiple voices in this world; now, they have to figure out how to ensure that every voice can be heard in the production of knowledge and culture and in the power systems of their societies.

HISTORY OF FEMINISM IN VIETNAM AND KEY ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM



Southeast Asian civilization is rice farming, mostly wet rice. The process of growing wet rice is the process of sowing, harvesting, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting. This is a labor process that never lacks the labor of women and children. As long as we eat rice, women are still important in Vietnamese society, because they also participate in the production process to create material wealth. Southeast Asian civilization is mostly matrilineal, also a polytheistic civilization and goddess occupies the most important position.

Vietnam was deeply influenced by the ideology of Tong Confucianism, but not exclusively because Tong Nho appeared only in the court and schools. Therefore, Tong Nho only had an orthodoxy, but in the people's culture, it did not really have an impact.

Among the people, other ideologies such as the Three Realms and the Plains, indigenous beliefs, pre-Confucian practices, the roots of Southeast Asian civilization (rice, matriarchy, polytheism in which there are many goddesses) respected, and those rooted traditions are

always preserved in real life. Therefore, it can be said that the rise of Feminism in Vietnam in the second half of the twentieth century is not only an exogenous factor from the West.

FEMINISM IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

- 1918: Feminism (February 1, 1918-1919), this was the time when students who attended French schools began to graduate from school and become socially engaged citizens with different levels of education. with before. The birth of the Common Woman, a women's newspaper. This is a supplement of a French newspaper, the first editor is Suong Nguyet Anh.
- 1918: started the journalistic career of Dam Phuong nun (1881-1947). She is the grandson of King Minh Mang, because she is the daughter of the royal family, so she did not step foot in any French colonial and Confucian schools. But by self-study, she knows not only Chinese, Nom, and Quoc Ngu, she is also fluent in French and a number of other foreign languages and does self-study in her own language. She started writing newspapers in 1918.
- 1926: The Women's Study Association was founded by Mrs. Dam Phuong in Hue and recognized by researcher David Marr as the first feminist organization in Vietnam.
- 1929-1934: Women's New Literature, newspapers were opened in Saigon for only 5 years but had a great impact on literature as well as the feminist movement.
- 1945: wave of decline of feminism. This was the time of the August Revolution, then a year later the entire people were swept up in the war against the French. During this period, the topic of national liberation was the main topic of politics, so the feminist struggle was put aside.

"Nationalization" and "revolutionization" of women, the women's movement and even the feminist struggle. Appeared in World War I, when women were allowed to participate in the common war of the nation, temporarily putting aside the struggle for gender equality with the desire to be respected and protected after the war, but often did not achieve the desired result.

National language and women

The national language script, from the middle of the 16th century, has been disseminated to society since colonial times. The national language script is easier to learn, quickly eradicates illiteracy, and creates opportunities for the disadvantaged, especially women.

Then the national language press was born in turn, in 1865-1907, 1907-1981, 1918-1930 was the period of development and until 1930-1945 was the peak period. Women's and feminist newspapers were also born at the same time, 1918-1929, 1929-1936, 1936-1939, 1939-1945.

Modern literature, i.e. literature written in the national language script, has given birth to new genres such as novels, short stories and new poems, which have created new ideas.

Key figures' feminism ideals

Dam Phuong historian

- *Women's problems*

"...It's not too late to promote feminism in our country now. Because human rights and women's rights are still a close connection with each other. Mr. Luong Khai Sieu said: Human rights movement in the broad sense, ie feminist advocacy. But talking about feminism, but we women have not had a human life [haven't become human yet, BTP] is still the same. If you are not qualified to be a human being, human rights are also useless and harmful" (Dam Phuong female history, September 13, 1926).

- *Dependency is the origin of slavery*

"The female dependency has left us almost a chronic disease. Ỡ is the origin of that slave. If we want to bring back feminism, we must first eliminate that disease of dependence" (Dam Phuong female history, September 25, 1926). In fact, the habit of dependence only appeared in the upper classes.

- *Women's independence by having a profession*

When she realized her dependence, she wrote, "What medicine should I take now? That remedy is the most important purpose of the Society. That remedy is to cause the masses to apply a spirit with their profession, in that ethical and intellectual sphere, Eastern and Western, in harmony with each other. After that, the union was connected to defend each other's power" (Dam Phuong female history, Trung Bac Tan Van, September 25, 1926).

"Compassionate language", Ly Van Phuc explained, Cong is the smell of sticky rice and cake, the task of picking up the needle instead of the needle. Dung is a dignified jade face, not eager to let loose. Language is teaching, yes yes. Happiness is the right path to respect and faith. (Keep the word virgin with the man in your life no matter what).

Phan Boi Chau

- *Rewrite history*

Phan Boi Chau rewrote history, breaking away from feudal and Confucian views. He said that Queen Trung was "the true ancestor of our country, "a Buddha of our country, the ancestor of our southern country, the one who gave birth to the people of our country, and a person of great merit to the South. I, [...] **the Trung Vuong is the ancestor**". He also added, "If it is said that Queen Trung is a woman who is not worthy to be called an ancestor, then it is too formal to say that: at the beginning of the human race, when people were born, they only knew that there was a mother but did not know that there was a father, so they called their mother an ancestor, then what harm?".

- *Women and nation*

Phan Boi Chau also wrote, "Heaven is father, earth is mother, people are in the world, everyone is not a compatriot. What's more, in the mother's womb, Vietnam was born,

everyone is not a precious child, still worthy of being called aunt, uncle, aunt. Without these foods, how could twenty-five million compatriots be enough? Among twenty-five million of our compatriots, if there were no sisters, twenty-five million compatriots would soon be extinct."

Dang Van Bay: Men and women with equal rights, 1928

Dang Van Bay discusses Feminism in the book Men and Women's Equality:

"According to the above words, feminism means the rights of women and girls, just like men's rights are rights of boys. But when it comes to the origin of truth, to the philosophical source, feminism and masculinity all boil down to the two words "human rights". Human rights are human rights but also human rights. That the right of a human being is the right to be a human being, that the right to be a human is to be a human being and all have the right to be a human without being a buffalo or a horse.

Although everyone has the right to be a human, why do women still have to fight because "Boys are people, girls are people too, in the two words "human rights" are all covered, not male discrimination women's rights, if distinguishing between men's and women's rights is also redundant. But because of the terrible tyranny of the monarchy, the sentence on the doctrine of the Three Gangs caused harm to a very large number of people, losing all the rights of viewers like buffaloes and horses."

- Debate about equality between men and women

He said: "It is not equal to men and women that wives will have the right to beat their husbands and scold their husbands, like in the past husbands have beaten and scolded their wives.", "Our national level is narrow, but not narrow yet. with my vision.", "Boys and girls must have a human personality."

- Righteousness

"The law of justice is that the two sides are equal, neither contemptuous nor important, neither low nor high", "According to heaven, a man and a woman are equal (...). Born, whether male or female, is also a human being, at that time the human rights were not only for one faction of boys, but also for the female side. "Men and women have equal rights, inherent in life, but men and women have equal rights, life does not. There is no, there is no, it's just human's will, it's really not in heaven."

- Treat wife like a slave

"The biggest vice is that of a man who often lets a woman say anything wrong." "There are people who are so rude that they cause a lot of insults and beatings, and no longer consider their fellow human beings as humans, but as animals. Rape this thing, gradually the habit of bullying to other things, then the person who didn't take it at first was a slave, and soon became his slave again. On the surface, the husband usually does not treat him with contempt and contempt like the other slaves, but persists in taking his wife as a servant of his own character."

- He also explains why women do not resist because of the habit of slavery
 - Among those women, not many people dare to complain about the oppressive power of men, just as there are not many among the other slaves who dare to complain about the oppressive power of the powerful.
 - Capable of being a slave, the result will be me forever.
 - Some people do not feel oppressive, because they have learned the habit of slavery.
- Personality and nation

"Not the weak or self-indulgent person, the same cruel or raped people, but what a stubborn person who is not used to being a slave to someone so dependent." "There is no right in all things, because unrighteousness is never called right. He is no longer a home, the people are no longer a country, even if there is, there is no way to call the culmination of civilization."

Nguyen Thi Minh Khai

- For hundreds of years, the old feudal laws have made Eastern women silently and obediently enslaved to their parents and husband, paralyzing their will and darkening their intellect.
- I would like to say that women's work is not only mild in our country, but clearly even in a range of other Communist parties. As we can see, on the important issues discussed at this Congress, very few women expressed their opinions. Yes, that's right, even our number of women delegates to this Seventh Congress is very limited.

Gender consciousness of the early twentieth century

The definition of women's leader roles

"The title grandma, we want to use here (...) according to our opinion and the evolution of our society today (..). This is an old woman, referring to any woman, any aunt, whether married or not, whether her husband is an official or what profession, as long as compared to sisters, they If she is more educated than people, has more talent than people, we consider them to be the oldest women." (New Literature Women, No. 69, 11/1931)

Women liberation

"No matter what job I do, as a woman, I have to pay attention to women's liberation. Because only women can fully understand the unhappiness in the hearts of sisters, the oppression of feudalism, empire, respect for men and despise women. But only women can dare to promote women's thoughts deeply and persistently. Only when many women become enlightened will the cause of women's liberation be completed. Even if the revolution is successful, the cause of women's liberation still has to continue" (Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, 1932).

Revolutionary struggles and feminism

- **Nguyen Thi Kiem**

Feminist definition: "All of you who understand and clearly examine the status of women in society, then stand up for the rights of women who have been oppressed from the past to the present, stand by us to guide, encourage, and encourage them. , what is the level of life of women in terms of material and spiritual being equal to that of men in society"

- **Phan Boi Chau** gave a speech the next day to launch the Female Consortium:

"Only thanks to the automatic power of my sisters, I educate myself, that is the best book. Your eyes still see, your ears still hear, your mouth always speaks, your spiritual mind always thinks, your hands and feet always act. If you do not blind yourself, who will make you blind; I don't make myself deaf, I make myself dumb; I don't fool myself, but who makes me stupid? [...] Whenever any career is very difficult, very big, and cannot be done by men, we are determined to do it. [...] women who want to keep their human rights, and who want to compete for women's rights, only know how much."

- **Nguyen An Ninh**

Women and politics

"The group of women who oppose the liberation of women in this world (...) the special blessing of the self-directed, they don't know, (...) their brains are still caught in the oppression of customs." (1127)

"Why can't women participate in politics? From time immemorial, in society, what kind of people have to take care of their families every day, to be full, to have their children healthy and wise? Isn't it a woman? Women's minds, on the contrary, I have to admit that they understand the word "rights" better than men." (Nguyen An Ninh, 1128).

Liberation and happiness

"Happiness, unhappiness, in women these words are often associated with the two words of marriage. (..) How narrow-minded the word "happy" has with only such meaning!"

"When stepping on the career path, women know a new scene, which is the scene of their independence, doubting their profession. (...) The new happiness is the health of the mind of an independent person. (...) The happiness in that lightness and joy, of course, is more precious than the happiness of the concubine.." (Nguyen An Ninh, 1130-1131)

Cultural feminism

A series of feminist newspapers were born, although they did not last long, but left a great impact, and in the North, South and Central Vietnam, there are: Women Tan Van (1929-1934), New Women (1934-1937), Women Women in Talks (1930-1934), Modern Women (1930-1934), Female Students in the Association: Unfulfilled Dreams (1933), Phong Hoa (1932-1936), Today (1935-1943), Self-help Van Doan (1934-1942). Moreover, women also participate in sports such as Red Number, Southern women's soccer team.

- **Phan Thi Bach Van**

Her real name is Phan Thi Mai, an excellent journalist and writer in Cochinchina in the early years of the twentieth century. The first book was published by Nu Luu Tho Quan (July 1928), which is also the publishing establishment founded by her. Accordingly, the purpose of the Lady of Poetry is determined:

“Choosing to sell to all girlfriends at a very low price, stories are published in the country, useful for the moral spirit of the country's morality, helping female intellectuals to quickly access higher education.”

In 1930, Ms. Phan Thi Bach Van was the first person to hold a pen to the Court of the colonial government for the crime of disturbing public peace by writing books. She defended herself by saying, “Because I see that Annamite women are still ignorant and oppressed by men, I wrote these books with the intention of encouraging women to study more to expand their knowledge. knowledge, practice occupations like men”. Her French lawyer Vin also explained that “public service” was mistranslated, which was actually a public job but translated as political corruption, making the government think she wanted to rob the government. Lawyer Vincent Toti added, “I don't think this case is worthy of any guilt, but rather something that should be commended for my client knowing the way to quit a woman's career and she herself set an example by setting up a printing house. poetry shop”. Finally he said, “If France imprisons a pregnant woman because of her political opinion, then France does not deserve to be a republic” and she was acquitted in the Colonial Court.

The first women who set foot in the cultural spaces:

- Female journalists: Suong Nguyet Anh, Dam Phuong, Nguyen Thi Kiem, Ms. Nguyen Duc Nhuan (Cao Thi Khanh), Huynh Bao Hoa...
- Women, feminist and feminist researchers: Dam Phuong, Huynh Bao Hoa, etc.
- Female writers: Dam Phuong, Huynh Bao Hoa,...
- Female poets: Anh Tho, Tuong Pho, Ngan Giang, etc.
- Female storekeeper: Phan Thi Bach Van.

Political and social feminism

Socialization of child rearing, kindergarten. The Duc Anh Association was set up by Tan Van Women's Newspaper to take care of children for women carrying burdens, so that they could go into business and earn a living, while their children were still raised according to Western methods. Socializing housework, Female Congregation (1926) turned housework into a profession. Nonviolent political struggle or women in the struggle for nationalism (Nguyen Thi Giang and Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang)

Perspectives of the Communist Party of Vietnam and those of female party members/leaders (Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Nguyen Trung Nguyet).

Feminists in fiction: The Poison Cup (1921), Court of Conscience (1923), You and Your Wife (1927), Co Tan (1935), New Woman (1944) by Vi Huyen Dac, Vu Dinh Long; Tan Nu (Kem,

1934); Doan Tuyet (1935), Cold (1936) by Nhat Linh; Midway through Spring (1934), Escape (1938) by Khai Hung; In Me (1938), Tan Phong female singer (1937) by Ho Bieu Chanh.

Achievements of the feminist movement in the early twentieth century

- Feminist awareness and affirmation with a degree of collaborative review. Women in this period also realized that independence, against "dependence, the origin of slavery" (Dam Phuong). Moreover, it has revolutionized in relations with others but has not really gone deep into the individual woman.
- Women at the beginning of the twentieth century were recognized with the right to go to school to become a person and assert themselves as useful to society and with sisterly affection (gender awareness).
- It can be seen that this period had a theoretical conceptual system of feminism and had a great impact on society. However, all feminist movements sided with *doi moi* and anti-colonial movements, however, they still defended feminist independence and women's rights for gender equality, not commanded. mobilize women to oppose the French.
- Movements that have recreated the appearance and identity of women such as clothes, hairstyles, scarves, high heels, tight dresses, and L-muya ao dai. When there is gender inequality, "Beauty is humiliating, the more you dress, the more shameful!" (Nguyen Trung Nguyet). At this time, the word "virgin" changed, the word "virtual virginity" and "physical virginity" were not only for women but also for men. Movements are increasingly bursting with brilliance because of the new, modern values of the West and because of the common status of colonists like Phan Boi Chau or Nguyen An Ninh, all of which rely on women to fight the French. Especially the strength and vitality of the pre-Confucian and non-Confucian traditions also had a great impact. However, it must be recognized that these movements are just like a shooting star because of the colonial government's suppression of even peaceful movements, and the movements have not shown a concerted effort to act. National-scale activities and organization, the "cultural", political and social barriers at that time also caused certain difficulties.
- Questioning the existence of the second wave: Women and feminism in war and revolution and the third wave: Since the opening and integration of Vietnamese women.

SUGGESTED READINGS IN FEMINIST THEORY

Overviews

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Phelan, Shane. 1989. *Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Wittig, Monique. 1992. *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Psychoanalytic Feminism

Chodorow, N. 1978. *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
1994. *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

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Alcoff, Linda and Elizabeth Potter (eds.). 1993. *Feminist Epistemologies*. New York and London: Routledge.

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QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

- Discuss: how different gender theories applicable in resolving the gender issues in contemporary Vietnam?
- What are the key concepts in the post-colonial feminist theories when used in non-western context?
- Evidences of the impacts of key cultural influences throughout the history of Vietnam in contemporary life? (South East Asian culture before Chinese domination, Buddhism, Confucianism, Western influences, the Vietnam wars and Nationalism...)
- How the 4th wave of feminism manifests in the current Vietnam's society

MODULE 2

Feminist perspectives on gender and sexuality

This module will provide with an understanding and exploration of the following questions:

- We will start with the most common understanding in the society that there are men and women but what does it mean?
- What are the differences of key concepts: Sex – Gender – Sexuality?
- Is gender biological or socially constructed?
- What does masculinity and femininity mean in society, especially contemporary one?
- Is there only one way to be of certain gender – sex – sexuality?
- How gender differences define our everyday life?

BASIC CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES

KEY CONCEPTS

Sex

- Refers to biological and anatomical attributes
- Assigned at birth

Gender

- Cultural or social interpretation of sex
- Behavioral expectations associated with being a socially appropriate man or woman

From assignment of sex...

- Male
- Female
- **Intersex**
- Other

...To Socialization of gender

- Gender is how people learn to conform to social roles of being male/female; gender appropriate/gender inappropriate behavior
- The process by which people learn to be feminine and masculine
- Why doesn't recognition of gender difference appear until about age 3?

Gender-centric reasoning—what one gender likes other does not Gender stereotypes: cultural characteristics associated with male/female, most entrenched in ages five to eight

Gender Socialization:

- Socialization—process by which a person acquires a sense of self, identity; learns expectations of society that will hold individuals accountable.
- Gender is how people learn to conform to social roles of being male/female; gender appropriate/gender inappropriate behavior).

GENDER IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Doing gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987 p.126)

“doing” gender is defined as involving the everyday performance of “a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures.’ When we view gender as an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct, our attention shifts from matters internal to the individual and focuses on interactional and, ultimately, institutional arenas”.

Gender performativity – J. Butler (1993)

“The view that gender is performative show[s] that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this way, it show[s] that what we take to be an “internal” feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures”. (Butler 1993, p. xv).

Intersectional theory

A feminist framework for understanding and analyzing social issues first introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989)

Discusses on how the intersections of socially constructed identities (characteristics) impact people’s lives focuses on the power dynamics within social structures

Without an intersectional lens, our efforts to tackle inequalities and injustice towards women are likely to just end up perpetuating systems of inequalities. Feminist writer [Zoe Samudzi reminds us](#) that “intersectionality is such a vital framework for understanding systems of power, because ‘woman’ is not a catchall category that alone defines all our relationships to power”. A black woman may experience misogyny and racism, but she will experience misogyny differently from a white woman and racism differently from a black man. The work towards women’s rights must be intersectional – any feminism that purely represents the

experiences of white, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual etc. women will fail to achieve equality for all.

What's intersectionality got to do with violence against women and girls?

To eliminate violence against all women and girls we have to address how violence differs between groups of women, because the violence women and girls experience isn't *just* based on their gender. [44% of lesbian women experience intimate partner violence](#), compared to 35% of heterosexual women. Women and girls with disabilities are [2 to 4 times more likely to experience domestic violence](#) than women without disabilities. For more information on women with disabilities' experiences of violence in Nepal, check out ['Invisible Realities', a report from Womankind partner Nepal Disabled Women Association](#).

Gender Socialization

Parents and Gender Socialization:

- Children's clothing and toys reflect their parents' gender expectations.
- Children are often assigned household tasks according to gender.

Agents of socialization:

- Parental modeling and parents - child interactions.
- Family
- Peers
- Teachers
- Media
- Religion
- Authority
- Figures
- Workplaces
- Memberships
- Political groups/government

Gender identity

Gender identity is the personal sense of one's own gender. Gender identity can correlate with a person's assigned sex at birth or can differ from it. Gender expression typically reflects a person's gender identity, but this is not always the case.

Gender stereotypes

A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women

and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives.

Whether overtly hostile (such as "women are irrational") or seemingly benign ("women are nurturing"), harmful stereotypes perpetuate inequalities. For example, the traditional view of women as caregivers means that child care responsibilities often fall exclusively on women.

Further, gender stereotypes compounded and intersecting with other stereotypes have a disproportionate negative impact on certain groups of women, such as women from minority or indigenous groups, women with disabilities, women from lower caste groups or with lower economic status, migrant women, etc.

Gender stereotyping refers to the practice of ascribing to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men. Gender stereotyping is wrongful when it results in a violation or violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Examples include:

- Not criminalizing marital rape, perceiving that women are the sexual property of men;
- Failing to investigate, prosecute and sentence sexual violence against women, believing that victims of sexual violence agreed to sexual acts, as they were not dressing and behaving "modestly".

Wrongful gender stereotyping is a frequent cause of discrimination against women. It is a contributing factor in violations of a vast array of rights such as the right to health, adequate standard of living, education, marriage and family relations, work, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, political participation and representation, effective remedy, and freedom from gender-based violence.

Double standards

A double standard "implies that two things which are the same are measured by different standards" (Eichler 1980:15). Thus a gender double standard suggests that we evaluate the same behavior of men and women differently; what is acceptable or appropriate for one may not be equally so for the other.¹

The sexual double standard (SDS) consists of judging heterosexual men and women differently for the same sexual behavior. The traditional SDS implies that men always think about sex and women must be "gate-keepers" of their own sexuality (Seabrook et al., 2016). As a result, the traditional SDS favors highly sexually active heterosexual men to be evaluated more positively than women who exhibit the same behavior (Zaikman and Marks, 2017).

¹ Axinn, W. G., Young-Demarco, L., & Ro, M. C. (2011). Gender Double Standards in Parenting Attitudes. *Social science research*, 40(2), 417–432. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2010.08.010>

The assessment of the prevalence of SDS is relevant for understanding sexual health, which is related to the ability to freely enjoy and express sexuality (Lottes, 2000). In accordance with this, SDS has been associated with several sexual related issues, such as sexual victimization (Sierra et al., 2011; Eaton and Matamala, 2014) sexual assaults (Sierra et al., 2009; Bliss, 2014; Eaton and Matamala, 2014; Moyano et al., 2017), victim-blaming attitudes (Gracia et al., 2018), higher risk of acquiring sexually transmitted infections (Bermúdez et al., 2013; Fasula et al., 2014; Ramiro-Sánchez et al., 2018) and lower sexual satisfaction (Haavio-Mannila and Kontula, 2003; Santos-Iglesias et al., 2009).²

Examples: Sexual liberation has gradually contributed to the manifestation of traditional SDS to be expressed in a more subtle way in some fields. For example, premarital sex is increasingly accepted in men and women (Wells and Twenge, 2005). However, the age of first sexual intercourse of men is lower than that of women (Ortiz et al., 2011; Peixoto et al., 2016) and men have more number of sexual partners (Chi et al., 2015; Sánchez-Fuentes et al., 2016).

Femininity vs. masculinity

Femininity is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally associated with women and girls.

Traits traditionally cited as feminine include **gracefulness, gentleness, empathy, humility, and sensitivity**, though traits associated with femininity vary across societies and individuals, and are influenced by a variety of social and cultural factors.

Traits traditionally viewed as masculine in Western society include **strength, courage, independence, leadership, and assertiveness**. Machismo is a form of masculinity that emphasizes power and is often associated with a disregard for consequences and responsibility.

Masculinity

Toxic masculinity vs. Hypermasculinity:

- **Toughness:** This is the notion that men should be physically strong, emotionally callous, and behaviorally aggressive.
- **Anti-femininity:** This involves the idea that men should reject anything that is considered to be feminine, such as showing emotion or accepting help.
- **Power:** This is the assumption that men must work toward obtaining power and status (social and financial) so they can gain the respect of others.

(Thompson & Pleck, 1986)

² <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01869/full>

The term toxic masculinity originated in **the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s and 1990s**. It later found wide use in both academic and popular writing. Popular and media discussions in

Thus, accusations of toxic masculinity often **work to maintain gender hierarchies and individualize responsibility for gender inequalities to certain bad men**. the 2010s have used the term to refer to traditional and stereotypical norms of masculinity and manhood.

Hypermasculinity, sociological term denoting **exaggerated forms of masculinity, virility, and physicality**. ... A female lead character with exaggerated “feminine” qualities is often added to accentuate the masculine traits of the hero.

Hypermasculinity is a psychological term for the exaggeration of male stereotypical behavior, such as an emphasis on physical strength, aggression, and sexuality. This term has been used ever since the research conducted by Donald L. Mosher and Mark Sirkin in 1984.

Chodorow (1978): **masculinity constructed in opposition to femininity**, it only exists because of existence of femininity

Brannon's (1976) 4 components to successfully attain the appropriate 'sex' role :

- 1) 'No sissy stuff' – distancing from feminine
- 2) 'Be a big wheel' – power, status, wealth
- 3) 'Be a sturdy oak' – stoicism, boys don't cry
- 4) 'Give 'em hell' – take risk, courage, aggression (dominates women)

Heterosexual, competitive, practical not theoretical, physical not intellectual, independent, lacks sensitivity, **sporting hero is a model**

Construction of masculinity through competitive sport, media, government –favour of male values

Inclusive masculinity

Significant changes in masculinities in the last part of the 20th century and early part of the 21st in Western countries in particular;

Man showing to be more expressive with their emotions and more inclusive with their gender
Changes in employment patterns;

Changes in family structures;

New models of fatherhood/masculine subjectivity;

'Crisis in masculinity'?

Challenges to heteronormativity too ...

Inclusive masculinity: as homophobia is declining, homosexuality is acceptable, multiple forms of masculinity without domination, equal.

Examples:

- Men expressing emotional intimacy
- Men sharing household duties with women
- Gay men coming out in sport – traditional arena of hegemonic masculinity
- Having gay men as friends, roommates
- Gay relationships

Changing femininities

- Changing educational access
- Women's employment: key social change in 20th;
- Patterns of marriage & family: later, more complex, fewer children;
- Continuities and challenges;

Sexual identity

Sexual orientation refers to an **enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions** to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's **sense of identity** based on those attractions, related behaviors, and **membership in a community of others who share those attractions**. Research over several decades has demonstrated that **sexual orientation ranges along a continuum, from exclusive attraction to the other sex to exclusive attraction to the same sex**.

The label or terms we use to describe our sexuality.

Labels may include lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, heterosexual, straight, asexual, and others.

Heteronormative

Another useful way of thinking about sexuality is through the Feelings/Fantasies, Behavior, Identity (FBI) model.

Some people refer to sexuality as whether we are gay, straight, bisexual, etc., but this is more correctly referred to as *sexual identity*.

We'll be using a definition of sexuality that encompasses a wide range of attractions, desires, experiences, behaviors and the understandings we make of these things in our everyday lives.

- Desire: a strong feeling of wanting sexual and/or romantic activity to happen

- Sexual attraction: who we are attracted to – emotionally and physically.
- Sexual behavior: the sexual practices we engage in, and incorporates the gender(s) we choose to do these with.

Compulsory heterosexuality

New forms of relationships (explored more in module 3)

KEY ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY VIET NAM

SEX EDUCATION

PREMARITAL SEX AND ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY AND ABORTION

EXTRAMARITAL SEX

PROSTITUTION

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

CASES STUDIES AND SELECTED READINGS

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Why would we be interested in how science, medicine and biology understand gender?
- What are some of the dangers of relying on scientific understandings to think about gender? In what ways are sexualities 'gendered' in Western/ Eastern society? What impact does this have on men and women?

- What are the examples of gender/sexual double standards in different fields?
- How have the messages about sexual roles/ identities shown in media changed in past decades? Choose a specific mass media form (for example movies, video games, advertisements) to analyze.
- In what ways are expectations for men and women changing? Continuity? Perspective from your field of work?

MODULE 3

Feminist perspectives on family and reproduction

This module explores the major perspectives used to study families and relationships and we examine historical change in the way we experience love, romance and courtship. We will also reflect on cultural diversity in the context of family formation. We also examine both paid and unpaid labour and the interactions between these domains in the context of the family. We will reflect on gender as a central organizing principle of both the paid labour market and domestic labour within families. The changing nature of work, and the impact this has on families will be explored. Moreover, we explore how the concept of family might be applied to a range of living situations. Looking beyond the cohabiting couple, we will reflect on diverse and new kinds of families. We will also examine the rising rates of divorce and family dissolution and reflect on the causes and consequences of changes to the family unit.

BASIC CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES

FAMILY

Specific set of people; social institution; set of personal meanings

Intimate Life – variety of relationships associated with care, love, belonging, and intimacy or “woven webs of relationships” (Smart 2007)

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES:

Families are socially constructed: Culture and family intertwined.

Example: South East and East Asian

- Multi-generational households
- Filial piety
- Colonization, War, Revolution
- Globalisation and instability

Families change over time:

<u>Pre-modern Family: pre-18th century</u>	<u>Modern family: mid 20th century</u>	<u>Late modern family: – 1970s-onwards</u>
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Families in Britain and USA (Focus on white families) Traditional, Pre-industrial Patriarchal units of production and consumption Family members labour together on interdependent tasks Marriage for economic reasons	Split between productive work and family work - public and private sphere Marriage about love and companionship The doctrine of privacy in family life Breadwinner/Homemaker model Demographic changes: Marriage boom; Baby boom -	Post-industrial economy Marriage bust; Baby bust Youth phase elongated Second-wave feminism Sexuality freed from reproduction Single women and homosexuals child- rearing No single dominant pattern
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BASIC CONCEPTS TO UNDERSTAND FAMILY RELATIONSHIP:

Gender norms are social principles that govern the behavior of girls, boys, women, and men in society and restrict their gender identity into what is considered to be appropriate. Gender norms are neither static nor universal and change over time. Some norms are positive, for example, the norm that children shouldn't smoke. Other norms lead to inequality. (Save the children)

Gender roles are the behaviors men and women exhibit in the private and public realm. They are the sociocultural expectations that apply to individuals on the basis of their assignment to a sex category (male or female). - Tong R, 2012

Gender roles are **learned behaviours** in a given society/community or other social group that condition which **activities, tasks and responsibilities** are perceived as male or female.

Gender roles **vary considerably across settings** and also **change over time**. The following factors can shape and change gender roles:

- age
- class
- race
- ethnicity
- religion and other ideologies
- geographical environment

The concept of gender roles has been developed from the work of Caroline Moser. She explains this concept as follows: Gender planning recognizes that in most societies low-income women have a triple role: women undertake *reproductive*, *productive*, and

community managing activities, while men primarily undertake *productive* and *community politics* activities.

- *Reproductive role*: Childbearing/rearing responsibilities, and domestic tasks done by women, required to guarantee the **maintenance and reproduction** of the labour force. It includes not only biological reproduction but also the **care and maintenance of the work force** (male partner and working children) and the **future work force** (infants and school-going children).
- *Productive role*: Work done by both men and women for **pay in cash or kind**. It includes both **market production with an exchange-value**, and **subsistence/home production with actual use-value**, and also potential exchange-value. For women in agricultural production, this includes work as independent farmers, peasant wives and wage workers.
- *Community managing role*: Activities undertaken primarily **by women** at the **community level**, as an extension of their reproductive role, to ensure the provision and maintenance of scarce resources of collective consumption, such as water, health care and education. This is **voluntary unpaid work**, undertaken in 'free' time.
- *Community politics role*: Activities undertaken primarily **by men** at the **community level**, organising at the **formal political level**, often within the framework of national politics. This is usually **paid work, either directly or indirectly**, through status or power.

Gender relations are the ways in which a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and the identities of men and women in relation to one another. - Bravo-Baumann, 2000

DOMESTIC DIVISION OF LABOUR

Housework analysed as labour (Anne Oakley 1974)

Women continue to do most domestic labour and childcare

We are on a path to gender convergence but progress is slow and there are substantial obstacles (See Kan, Sullivan and Gershuny 2011)

More women engage in 'double burden' or 'second shift' of paid labour and domestic labour

Gendered division of labour in families:

- feminine (cleaning, childcare)

- masculine (DIY, repairs)

- even in childcare men do less routine work (they play with children rather than clean after them)

Housework analyzed as labour by feminists: children and husband as unpaid customers

More women than men engage in ‘**second shift**’ - **unpaid domestic labour after work** (twice as much as men)

Unpaid care work includes a wide spectrum of domestic tasks as well as care for people at home and in the community. The report says that while this form of work is generally not recognized in national accounts and is often undervalued and overlooked by policymakers and legislators, estimates reveal that unpaid care work would constitute between 10 and 50 per cent of GDP if it was assigned a monetary value. - UN Special Rapporteur

Care economy: The notion of the ‘care economy’ has emerged out of the past two decades of feminist critiques of the conventional conceptualisation of how economies operate and the gender impacts of government policy. Mainstream economists have traditionally only considered goods and services in the market as productive in an economy. These conventional conceptualisations of the economy leave out much of the productive activities (or work) that women undertake on an unpaid basis. Feminists argue that gender equality and women’s economic well-being require a new vision of economic life that counts women’s care work in statistics, explains the role of care (as well as commodities) in the working of economies and integrates the care economy into policy. (Adams, 2010: 1)

Social reproduction:

- Often not viewed as ‘work’ – but crucial for social survival;
- Not biological, but everyday by everyone
- Basic Marxian distinction between **productive & reproductive labour** – tied to our on-going gendered distinctions;

→ **BUT this is not valued work – whether it is paid or unpaid.**

Second shift:

Shift 1: Paid work

Shift 2: Household + childcare

Women tend to bear more responsibility than men in shift 2

The second shift is a term coined and popularized by sociologist Arlie Hochschild. It refers to **the household and childcare duties that follow the day's work for pay outside the home**. While both men and women experience the second shift, women tend to shoulder most of this responsibility.

Hochschild interviewed 50 couples in an attempt to extrapolate from their answers an idea of how American couples are adjusting to life in the wake of the women’s rights movement.

Hochschild concluded from her research that despite the fact that they had professional careers, the women did most, if not all of the domestic work. This included housework and childcare. She also concluded that while the men supported the women in their careers, they failed to acknowledge the idea that the men should do half of the domestic work. In addition, Hochschild noted that though the couples supported women's rights and projected an image of equality, both men and women in the relationships tended to hold traditional beliefs about gender. Working class couples, in particular, acknowledged a preference for traditional male/female roles and embraced the idea of male dominance at home, if not in the workforce. Examples of possible research questions about gender inequality in the household division of labor:

- Is shared work more common in dual-wage families?
- Do couples who share more equally in household and childcare responsibilities report higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship?
- How do women's education levels and occupations relate to the household division of labor?
- Do men who work fewer hours than their wives contribute more to the housework and childcare?
- What are the consequences of the second shift on women's mental and physical well-being?
- How does the second shift affect women's careers and career choices?

Emotional labour:

Women remember children's allergies, we design the shopping list, we know where the spare set of keys is. We multi-task. We know when we're almost out of Q-tips, and plan on buying more. We are just better at remembering birthdays. We love catering to loved ones, and we make note of what they like to eat. We notice people's health, and force friends and family to go see the doctor. We listen to our partner's woes, forgive them the absences, the forgetfulness, the one-track mindedness while we're busy organizing a playdate for the kids. We applaud success when it comes: the grant that was received, the promotion. It was their doing, and ours in the background. Besides, if we work hard enough, we can succeed too: all we need to do is learn to lean in. But what if, much like childcare and house keeping, the sum of this ongoing emotional management is yet another form of unpaid labor? If you think this is pushing it, you would be wrong. The concept of emotional work and emotional labor – as repeated, taxing and underacknowledged acts of gendered performance – has been a field of serious inquiry in the social sciences for decades. It's just taken the rest of us a while to catch on.

Why do men do less housework than women?

- Deeply held cultural values about gender roles: what is masculine and what is feminine
- Doing gender – women do housework to confirm their feminine identities, men resist doing housework to confirm their masculine identities

PREFERENCE THEORY (HAKIM)

- Work-lifestyle preferences, motivations, aspirations
- Free choice
- No structural obstacles

UNSTABLE WORK/CARE REGIMES (POCOCK)

- Global market depends on paid work of women with families
- Trend situated within work/care regimes hostile to needs of those workers

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN FAMILY:

Friends as family = family

- Same-sex families:
- Intentional childbearing outside heterosexual unions most controversial change in family formation
- Lesbian baby boom
- Deficit models
- Child outcomes
- Blended families:
 - A substantial renegotiation of domestic life
 - Management of the household involves adapting and adapting to different rules, routines, expectations
- Separation and divorce:
 - Majority don't divorce - we should not overemphasise change
 - But institutional basis of marriage has changed
 - The snowball effect of divorce
 - Separation for de-facto couples treated like divorce

KEY ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY VIET NAM

- Family planning
- Divorce
- Normalisation of separation and relationship breakdown
- Blended families
- Gen X and Y likely to transit through more family structures than previous generations
- Cohabitation, marriage, divorce, remarriage
- Taking precautions against divorce- delaying/avoiding marriage and childbearing
- Paradox that reducing risk increases divorce but reduces damage
- According to "Gender Division of Household Labor in Vietnam" 2008:

- The report finds that Vietnamese wives still do the vast majority of housework. In this sense, government efforts to change gender roles apparently have had at most limited success.
- Vietnamese husbands in the most recent marriage cohort, however, are more involved in household budget management and childcare than those in the two earlier cohorts. Thus, contrary to claims of some observers, evidence does not suggest that gender equality in the Vietnamese household has been deteriorating after the market reform.
- The analyses present a situation in which Vietnamese wives continue to take much greater responsibility than husbands for unpaid domestic tasks during early years of marriage, despite their increased educational attainment and participation in the non-farm sector and government efforts to redefine gender relations in line with socialist ideology.
- Across the three marriage cohorts under investigation, wives are far more important than husbands in carrying out most of the routine household chores and childcare tasks for preschool children. More importantly, contrary to claims of earlier studies the study does not find adverse effects of Vietnam's major modification of the socialist system and the shift to a market economy on gender roles in the family.
- Vietnam's socialist transformation appears to have little impact on women's roles at home regardless of their region. Although the socialist policies were implemented first in the North and nearly three decades later in the South, wives in the North are overwhelmingly responsible for household tasks like their southern counterparts. The study finds very little differences among them.

EQUALITY IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY LIFE IN VIETNAM

- Viet Nam has an **extreme imbalance in the sex ratio at birth** due to son preference and sex-selective abortion. The Census (2019) reported the sex ratio at birth to be 111.5 boys born for every 100 girls. The country is among the five lowest-ranked countries globally. In 2020, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimated that 45,900 female births are missing every year in Viet Nam due its current high rates of sex-selective abortion.
- At 76.3 years, Vietnamese women live longer than the global average life expectancy for women at 74.3 years, and there is a 5-year gender gap with men who have a 71-year life expectancy. **Women face greater vulnerability and risk of poverty in old age** due to life cycle breaks in earnings and financial disadvantages. The latter includes the gender wage and earnings gap, and the 5-year gap in the retirement age between men and women, which is to be reduced to two years by 2035 with the passage of the revised *Labour Code 2019*.
- In 2019, the total fertility rate was 2.09 children per woman, with rural areas being higher at 2.26 children and urban settings at 1.83 children per woman – below

replacement level. A new Prime Ministerial Decision was issued in 2020 to promote the national birth rate, in regions where it is low. A range of **incentives were prescribed for men and women to marry before the age of 30 years and for women to have their second child before the age of 35 years.**^[2] These include income tax reductions, support for rent or the purchase of social housing, and children will be given priority in admission to public schools. This program would have a discriminatory impact on people who opted not to marry or marry young or have two children. With women's culturally ascribed caregiving role, the effect of this decision would also impact on their life choices and economic participation.

- The belief in women's 'heavenly duty' (*thiên chức*) to give birth and take care of children is widely held. **Unpaid care and domestic responsibilities underpin gender gaps** in areas such as career trajectory, lifetime earnings, and leadership roles.
- The abortion rate declined to 13.8 cases per 100 live births (2019 data), although this is considered to be an **underestimate since it does not capture the number of abortions performed in private medical clinics**. There is no data available on sex-selective abortions – which are illegal in Viet Nam – nor on the adolescent abortion rate.
- An understanding the priorities, preferences and life circumstances of people with disabilities, including across a diversity of impairments, is seriously limited in Viet Nam. This is due to a lack of co-conducted consultations and research among people with disabilities, limited disaggregation of administrative and survey data by disability, and few formal mechanisms for the engagement of representative organisations in policy forums. Where data does exist, it **highlights how women and girls with disabilities face multiple barriers**. This holds for educational and vocational training access, labour force participation and access to rehabilitation services (the latter being 5.9% for women, as compared to 8.19% for men) whereby women have consistently lower levels of access than men. Women with disabilities also experience higher levels of physical and sexual violence than women without disabilities, at 33% compared to 25.3%, respectively.
- While same-sex activity is not illegal, same-sex marriage is not recognised. There is **no legal recognition of sexual orientation and gender identity and gender equality is defined in binary terms** in the law and institutional framework.
- The second national prevalence study confirmed that **2 in 3 ever-married women (62.9%) experienced violence by their husbands/partners in their lifetime**, and nearly 1 in 3 have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months (31.6%). Around half of the women interviewed had not told anyone (49.6%), and the **majority did not seek support** (90.4%). Moreover, experience of physical or sexual

violence is higher among women with disabilities (33% compared to 25.3% of women without disabilities), and for certain groups of women living in remote areas. One in ten women (11%) had experienced non-partner violence since the age of 15, and **13.3% of women experienced lifetime sexual violence** - an increase on the rate at last measurement (9.9% in 2010). More than half of the women interviewed (51.8%) agreed with at least one situation in which partner violence was acceptable, and this was higher for women in rural areas, highlighting the extent of the normalisation of violence. Nearly 1 in 5 women had to leave home during their lifetime due to violence, and of those who returned, half of the women interviewed (50.4%) did so for their children.

- Although data sources vary, the incidence of **divorce cases is gradually rising**, with the GSO reporting an estimated 24,308 cases in 2016 (latest data) - an increase on the 2014 case number (19,960 divorces). Reports from the People's Court noted the settlement of 1.4 million divorce cases over the period 2008-18. The cultural pre-eminence of marriage means that divorced women risk stigma, and socio-economic hardship due to lower property ownership and customary inheritance practices, which favours sons.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Daily activity clock (24 – hour daily calendar)

The purpose of this gender analysis tool is to analyse the roles of women and men during 24 hour. It explains how women and men spend a typical day from the time they wake up until they go to bed. Daily activity clock is particularly useful for looking at relative work-loads between women and men. The clock shows who works the longest hours, who concentrates on a few activities and who does a number of tasks in a day, and who has the most leisure time and sleeping time.

Discussion: What are the main differences between pre-modern, modern and late-modern families and relationships?

Activity: In groups of 4, list the key social factors have most influenced change in relationships and families over the past 50 years. Compare rankings with the rest of the class. Which factors have brought the most profound social change to sexual relationships and to family formation?

Discussion: The ways in which men and women engage with unpaid or paid work is often framed as 'choices' or 'preferences'. What are some of the broader social, economic or cultural factors that influence the choices we make?

Activity: Should parents be encouraged to work part-time as a way of managing the demands of paid and unpaid labour? (Does part-time work offer the best of both worlds, or the worst?) Form two debate teams – One for the 'yes' case and one for 'no' – nominate three speakers from each.

Discussion: In your view what is the nature of care and support offered by friendships? Can we call this a new form of family? Or can the concept of family only be used to talk about those who are related to each other?

Activity: In groups, list the main social developments that might affect the incidence of divorce. Compare lists of social developments with the rest of the class. As a group, reflect on how these social developments affect different social groups in different ways.

MODULE 4

Feminist perspectives on work and migration

This module explores the differences between men and women's pay, and considers hours worked, type of employment, education levels, age and experience as well as explores the gendered aspects of migration.

In the battle for the parity of the sexes, some countries have made progress in reducing inequality—such as in access to health care, education, and financial services—but worldwide, men still have more economic opportunities than women. Viet Nam's economic transformation has led to a substantial labour market shift for women and men. *Đổi Mới* in the late 1980s largely replaced the former centrally planned system with market mechanisms, it promoted economic diversification and private sector development, and opened the economy to trade and international markets. This led to a rapid expansion of manufacturing and service industries, which quickly became the primary source of job creation. Paid employment and higher earnings attracted a large share of workers away from agriculture, in a shift that is on-going. Agriculture was the largest employer when the country introduced *Đổi Mới*. In the 10 years before the COVID-19 outbreak, Viet Nam witnessed an overall reduction in agricultural employment by 14 percentage points, accompanied by a corresponding increase in employment in industry and services. Figure 18 below illustrates this trend by showing the change in the distribution of female and male employment by broad economic sector. The shift from agriculture to industry and services, which began in the 1980s, has continued to transform the labour market over the past decade.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON WORK

BASIC CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES

Economic empowerment

Ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth.

Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information.

Women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development

Disparate treatment based on sex generally refers to the different or unjust treatment of an employee on the basis of their sex. Employees may experience this by way of discriminatory

hiring or firing practices, pay disparities, or restriction of benefits or promotions because of their sex.

Any unfavorable treatment that is motivated by an employee's sex or gender identity. For example, a company may not refuse to hire a woman who is equally skilled as the male applicants for a position, solely because she is a woman. Similarly, a supervisor may not refuse to promote a transgender person on the grounds that the person does not conform to expectations of what a woman should look like.

Employment policies that have a disparate impact look neutral on their face but wind up having an adverse effect on people of a particular protected group, even though the employer denies he or she intended to discriminate. In the case of sex discrimination, for example, a promotion system in which supervisors are asked to list employees who have vaguely defined "leadership qualities" may result in lists of only male employees. This policy, although neutral on its face, may have a disparate impact and thus be discriminatory. If an employee shows a disparate impact in a discrimination lawsuit, the employer can defeat the claim by showing that the policy or practice is job-related or based in business necessity.

Gendered workplace issues:

Gender inequality is directly linked to income inequality, which in turn can weaken the sustainability of growth in a country. Women getting paid less than men directly contribute to income inequality, and higher gaps in labor force participation rates between men and women result in inequality of earnings, unequal pensions and savings. Closing the gender wage gap can lead to greater equality in the overall income distribution. It measures the differences between men and women's pay, and considers hours worked, type of employment, education levels, age and experience. Our chart shows that developing and advanced countries alike are in the same predicament.

Glass ceiling:

The sometimes-invisible barrier to success that many women come up against in their careers, coined by Marilyn Loden in 1978. A way to describe women's treatment in the workplace meant to indicate a symbolic barrier in the corporate hierarchy where women are rarely allowed passing.

The report also revealed that women are more likely than men to be paid below the minimum wage in the garment sector in each of the countries. "This gender gap in compliance rates varies considerably between countries," the report noted.

In Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam, the difference between non-compliance rates for men and women is relatively small," the report assessed. Vietnam's non-compliance rate for women is 5.7 percentage points higher than for men and only higher than the gap in Cambodia and Indonesia, of 4.4 and 4.6 percentage points, respectively.

Appearance discrimination

- Workers (often female/ younger/Queer workers) are discriminated for their appearance, often through microaggression
- Continue to fulfill (gender) expectations and roles

In the workplace, the way you look can be more important than the merit of your work to some supervisors, while coworkers can treat you differently if you don't fit into their idea of professional appearances.

Appearance-based discrimination occurs when someone is treated differently based on how they look, creating an imbalance between someone being evaluated for their performance versus purely based on the way they present themselves.

Top held beliefs about an appearance by the employees:

- Appearance influences client perception and company image (90%)
- Appearance affects employee confidence (85%)
- Appearance affects employee competency (73%)

Example:

An article stated that a woman was fired because her male coworkers thought she was “too pretty”, causing a distraction in the office.

Another woman in Florida, Amy-Erin Blakely, was fired because her bust was too large. Her employees complained to their manager saying that they were having a hard time concentrating during meetings. Because of this she was told that she would not be able to advance in the company anymore.

Women deal with the consequences of this behaviour every day, resulting in the following admissions from the survey:

- 37% of women who report being told to smile say it happened most recently in the workplace
- Senior and executive-level position holders were most at risk for comments about smiling, with 36% reporting this experience
- Being told to smile had a direct impact on feeling underappreciated at work, especially when the advice comes from a female boss.

Workplace Harassment

Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, or pregnancy), national origin, older age (beginning at age 40), disability, or genetic information (including family medical history).

Harassment becomes unlawful where:

- enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or
- the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.

Examples of bullying or harassing behaviour include:

- spreading malicious rumours
- unfair treatment
- picking on or regularly undermining someone
- denying someone's training or promotion opportunities
- Bullying and harassment can happen:
 - face-to-face
 - by letter
 - by email
 - by phone

Family matters

In both high- and low- income countries, women still perform the majority of domestic labour and care work at home, even when they are also employed in full-time paid work.

Many businesses run on a culture of constant availability, where employees are expected to work overtime, take calls out of hours, and answer emails on days off as a matter of course. This makes it very difficult for women to effectively compete with male colleagues and rise through the ranks, as they continue to juggle family responsibilities with career priorities.

Women are working while having families. Instead of the stay at home mom life, now they are going out into the workforce to also support their family with or without a partner (Mandell, 2010).

Mothers are more likely to want more hours when they do have families at home (Mandell, 2010).

With or without these hours women are still getting paid less than their male co-workers which cause them to be more in dept, and have more family struggles (Mandell, 2010).

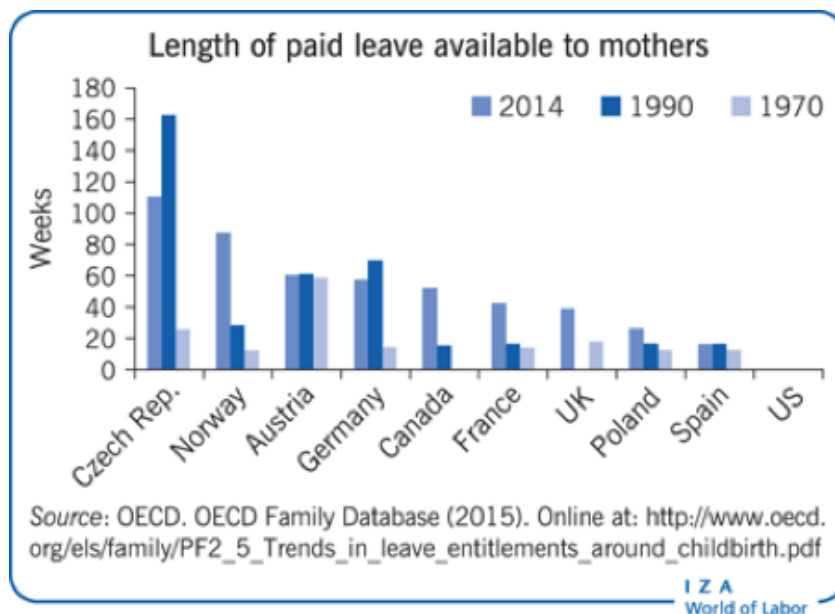
Some jobs even decline mothers from having jobs (Mandell, 2010).

Women who want to work but are pregnant or who also have smaller children are also discriminated against.

Example: A women who was pregnant worked at home as a sales women. She knew she could continue with work because she was already at home, so she called her supervisor and told them. A day after the call, she was fired. Many women are starting to work this way but more and more are reporting that they are getting fired because of discrimination against them (Geller, 2003).

Pregnancy discrimination

Pregnancy discrimination involves treating a woman (an applicant or employee) unfavorably because of pregnancy, childbirth, or a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth.



One of the arguments used to explain – and sometimes justify – this stubborn gap is the idea of choice. Women simply choose to study less lucrative subjects, enter lower-paying professions and stay towards the bottom rungs of the career ladder. While these choices might give them shorter working hours and greater flexibility, it also negatively affects their earnings.

The latest data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics does indeed show that women are under-represented in some of the highest-paying occupations.

It's not those women engineers are getting paid less than men doing the same job: it's that a childcare worker is getting paid less than an engineer, or so the argument goes. If that's the case, the answer is simple: women should start moving into those careers that do pay well. Instead of becoming a social worker, become a software developer.

But that's only part of the story. The fact is that even within those lucrative, male-dominated professions, the gender pay gap is still there. "There is a belief, which is just not true, that women are in bad occupations and if we just put them in better occupations, we would solve the gender gap problem," Claudia Goldin of Harvard University told the New York Times. As her research has shown, even when men and women do the same work, there's still a gender pay gap – particularly in higher-paying jobs.

Their findings suggest that women are not necessarily kept out of or choose not to enter high-paying and prestigious professions. Instead, when a job is dominated by women, it's just not seen as important, and therefore pays less, even if it requires the same skills and education. The *New York Times* uses the example of janitors versus maids, jobs that are identical in every aspect except gender composition – and pay.

The world of computer programming is the perfect example. Historically a female-dominated field, men started to take over in the 1980s. And as they did, things changed: "When male programmers began to outnumber female ones, the job began paying more and gained prestige," Claire Cain Miller of the *New York Times* writes.

Pay Secrecy Policies:

Like myself, most women are discouraged from talking about salary, despite it being illegal to prohibit private sector employees to discuss wages.

Stopping employees from discussing salary allows companies to continue pay discrepancies across the board.

(Under)representation of women in work sectors

Women are making the movement into jobs that have a more masculine background, jobs that we recognize as a male role doing it.

Women are getting good education and working hard at that education to get into these fields of choice not because they think they can do it better, but show that they genuinely want to do the job, and love hands on work.

As an example, women accelerate in an engineering job because they have great communication skills more than a man does. (CBC,2013).

In 1960, only about 15% of manager and administrators were women. Today that number has risen to 51%

Stated in a Washington Post article, " Companies that employ more women in upper level management are more profitable than those that rely heavily on male 'talent' to run their business."

" There is a clear relationship between women in senior management and corporate financial success."

Women in Business:

- Today women-owned businesses make up about 40% of all businesses.
- Women employ 27.5 million people and make more than \$3.6 trillion in sales.
- Women also make 95% of the family financial decisions.
- Women in the Medical Field

- Over 90% of registered nurses and 53% of medical scientists are women.

The proportion of women tends to decline as the level of management increases, meaning that men continue to dominate chief executive positions and boards. When women are not present in the highest positions in business, they lack the influence to alter the workplace culture and so the vicious cycle of male dominance continues.

As long as women are under-represented in decision-making roles, the pipeline will continue to leak. Companies with female CEOs are more likely to have women in strategic management roles.

The glass wall refers to the phenomenon of occupational segregation where female managers tend to be concentrated in business support functions, such as HR, finance and administration. In such roles, women have limited decision-making power or strategic input, and therefore limited opportunities to rise in the company.

By contrast, male managers are over-represented in research and development, profit and loss, and operations. These areas are typically viewed as more “strategic” and usually lead to decision-making roles at higher levels.

Informal sector:

- Women make up a disproportionate percentage of workers in the informal sector
- Informal economy leaves women often without any protection of labour laws, social benefits such as pension, health insurance or paid sick leave.
- They routinely work for lower wages and in unsafe conditions, including risk of sexual harassment.
- The lack of social protections has long-term impact on women.

From street vendors and domestic workers to subsistence farmers and seasonal agriculture workers, women make up a disproportionate percentage of workers in the informal sector. In South Asia, over 80 per cent of women in non-agricultural jobs are in informal employment; in sub-Saharan Africa, 74 per cent; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, 54 per cent [\[1\]](#).

Working in this informal, or grey economy, as it’s sometimes called, leaves women often without any protection of labour laws, social benefits such as pension, health insurance or paid sick leave. They routinely work for lower wages and in unsafe conditions, including risk of sexual harassment. The lack of social protections has long-term impact on women. For example, fewer women receive pensions globally, and as a result, more elderly women are now living in poverty. Even in developed economies, such as in France, Germany, Greece and Italy, women’s average pension is more than 30 per cent lower than men’s [\[2\]](#).

An estimated 40 – 50 per cent of migrants in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the two biggest cities in Viet Nam, are women, and they face distinct challenges. Low and unstable incomes and lack of social protection make them particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. But

migrant women workers of Viet Nam refuse to live on the fringes any longer. More than 10,000 migrant workers have learnt how to access social welfare benefits, legal protection and health care. They are advocating for their rights and helping one another.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF FEMINIST APPROACHES TO WORK

Different waves of feminist theory and practice have made incisive and lasting contributions to understanding the gendered construction of work. Discussion of feminist approaches to work is becoming a regular feature in textbooks and readers in economic geography,³ sociology, and development studies. Analyses have moved well beyond simply emphasizing women's (hitherto neglected) contributions to different forms of work toward expanding the definition of "work" and explaining the social, cultural, and economic trends that fuel the feminization of labor forces in many parts of the globe. Feminists have moved away from viewing gender as a fixed attribute of individuals and have identified the mechanisms, practices, and, increasingly, the performances that construct occupations as more or less appropriate for (typically very variable) characteristics of masculinities and femininities. Feminist geographers have made important contributions to these debates by demonstrating the geographically constituted gendering of work in different sites (household, factory, office, market) and at scales ranging from the body to international divisions of labor.⁴ More recent work on globalization demonstrates some of the complex links between women in different, yet connected, circuits of labor in the Global North and South.

In terms of its future contributions, feminist scholars will continue to explore the tensions between women's commonality of experiences of inequality and discrimination and the

³ Feminist economic geography emerged as an explicit and self-defined approach in the 1980s and 1990s and as a subdiscipline has evolved to challenge knowledge production about "the economy" in human geography. Inspired by the spread of feminist epistemologies more broadly, feminist economic geography is connected to feminist politics and centers the social construction of gender as a category of difference and the production of unequal power relations that subordinate and oppress women. Although still not central to "mainstream" economic geography, feminist approaches have gained in importance, including through contributions to understandings of economic restructuring, migration, and uneven development.

⁴ Globalization and International Division of Labor

Today, division of labor in practically every country is also greatly affected by the globalization of economic activities. The international division of labor has changed tremendously. A 'world economy' in which capital accumulation proceeded through the world has existed in the West at least since the sixteenth century. But, historically new, since the late twentieth century, is the emergence of a 'global economy.' This 'global economy' has the capacity to function as a unit in real time on a planetary scale. It is based on the new infrastructure provided by information and communication technologies.

A number of essential elements are present. First is that capital is now managed around the clock in globally integrated financial markets working in real time, which gives it a 'hypermobility.' Second, labor has become, in several respects, a global resource: firms may choose to locate in places worldwide to find the labor supply they need (be it in terms of skills, costs, or social control); firms almost everywhere may also solicit needed skilled labor from everywhere; and labor will enter any market on its own initiative, from wherever it originates. Third, markets for goods and services become increasingly globalized. Production processes incorporate components that are produced (or designed, or sold) in many different geographic locations by different firms (e.g., Castells, 2000; Vallas, 2012).

As a result, working conditions and the division of labor have changed massively. The opening up of markets has made it possible for large corporations to relocate substantial parts of their business operations overseas, with drastic reduction of work opportunities in the home countries. Even more pronounced have been the effects on working conditions in the developing world, where female and male workers seldom receive any labor protection at all (Vallas, 2012; Mies, 1999). In sum, the spatial division of labor quasi has exploded within a few decades.

importance of recognizing their different locations—in terms of age, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and so forth—in divisions of labor. Different feminisms will continue to broaden analyses of work, exploring the heterogeneity of women and their practices, paid and unpaid, which constitute their economies in diverse geographical, political, and cultural contexts. Yet, such sensitivity to heterogeneity will proceed alongside the political commitment to translate knowledge into political action. As feminists have long argued, any analysis of gender is also an analysis of power. In rapidly shifting increasingly international divisions of labor, women still perform the bulk of childcare and domestic labor in addition to their other waged and unwaged work. Feminist scholars and activists have important roles to play in the struggle for social justice and greater equality.

This section provides an overview of feminist perspectives on work, how these debates have developed over time and intersected with other theoretical approaches, and how considerations of class dynamics and intersectionality have shaped or challenged these debates.

Marxism, Work, and Human Nature

Marxism as a philosophy of human nature stresses the centrality of work in the creation of human nature itself and human self-understanding (see the entry on Marxism). Both the changing historical relations between human work and nature, and the relations of humans to each other in the production and distribution of goods to meet material needs construct human nature differently in different historical periods: nomadic humans are different than agrarian or industrial humans. Marxism as a philosophy of history and social change highlights the social relations of work in different economic modes of production in its analysis of social inequalities and exploitation, including relations of domination such as racism and sexism. (Marx 1844, 1950, 1906–9; Marx and Engels 1848, 1850; Engels 1942). Within capitalism, the system they most analyzed, the logic of profit drives the bourgeois class into developing the productive forces of land, labor and capital by expanding markets, turning land into a commodity and forcing the working classes from feudal and independent agrarian production into wage labor. Marx and Engels argue that turning all labor into a commodity to be bought and sold not only alienates workers by taking the power of production away from them, it also collectivizes workers into factories and mass assembly lines. This provides the opportunity for workers to unite against the capitalists and to demand the collectivization of property, i.e., socialism, or communism.

According to Engels's famous analysis of women's situation in the history of different economic modes production in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1942), women are originally equal to, if not more powerful than, men in communal forms of production with matrilineal family organizations. Women lose power when private property comes into existence as a mode of production. Men's control of private property, and the ability thereby to generate a surplus, changes the family form to a patriarchal one where women, and often slaves, become the property of the father and husband.

The rise of capitalism, in separating the family household from commodity production, further solidifies this control of men over women in the family when the latter become economic dependents of the former in the male breadwinner-female housewife nuclear family form. Importantly, capitalism also creates the possibility of women's liberation from family-based patriarchy by creating possibilities for women to work in wage labor and become economically independent of husbands and fathers. Engels stresses, however, that because of the problem of unpaid housework, a private task allocated to women in the sexual division of labor of capitalism, full women's liberation can only be achieved with the development of socialism and the socialization of housework and childrearing in social services provided by the state. For this reason, most contemporary Marxists have argued that women's liberation requires feminists to join the working-class struggle against capitalism (Cliff 1984).

Marxist-Feminist Analyses

Many Marxist-feminists thinkers, prominent among them sociologists and anthropologists, have done cross-cultural and historical studies of earlier forms of kinship and economy and the role of the sexual or gender division of labor in supporting or undermining women's social power (cf. Reed 1973, Leacock 1972, Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). They have also attempted to assess the world economic development of capitalism as a contradictory force for the liberation of women (Federici 2004; Mies 1986; Saffioti 1978) and to argue that universal women's liberation requires attention to the worse off: poor women workers in poor post-colonial countries (Sen & Grown 1987). Other feminist anthropologists have argued that other variables in addition to women's role in production are key to understanding women's social status and power (Sanday 1981; Leghorn and Parker 1981). Yet other feminist economic historians have done historical studies of the ways that race, class, and ethnicity have situated women differently in relation to production, for example in the history of the United States (Davis 1983; Amott and Matthaei 1991). Finally, some Marxist-feminists have argued that women's work in biological and social reproduction is a necessary element of all modes of production and one often ignored by Marxist economists (Benston 1969; Hennessy 2003; Vogel 1995).

First Wave Feminist Analyses of Women and Work

Those feminist analyses which have highlighted the role of women's work in the social construction of gender and the perpetuation of male dominance have been termed liberal, radical, Marxist, and socialist feminism by such influential categorizers as Jaggar and Rothenberg [Struhl] (1978), Tong (2000), Barrett (1980), Jaggar (1983) and Walby (1990). However, the pigeonhole categories of liberal, radical, Marxist, or socialist categories apply poorly to both to first wave women's movement feminist predecessors and contemporary deconstructionist, post-structuralist and post-colonialist perspectives.

A number of first wave feminists write about work and class as key issues for women's liberation, such as socialist-feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, heavily influenced by Darwinism and 19th century utopian modernism (Gilman 1898, 1910, 1979), anarchist Emma Goldman (1969), and existentialist, radical feminist and Marxist of sorts Simone de Beauvoir

(1952). This is because the debates that arose around the place of the women's movement in class politics were different in the early and mid-twentieth century than they were in the 1960s when many feminist theorists were trying to define themselves independently of the left anti-Vietnam war and civil rights movements of the time.

The debate about the economic and social function of housework and its relation to women's oppression is an old one that has been a feature of both the first and second wave women's movements in the US, Britain and Europe. In both eras, the underlying issue is how to handle the public/private split of capitalist societies in which women's reproductive functions have either limited their work to the home or created a "second shift" problem of unpaid housework and childcare as well as waged work. In the first wave, located as it was in the Victorian period where the dominant ideology for middle and upper class women was purity, piety and domesticity (also called the "cult of true womanhood"), the debate centered on whether to keep housework in the private sphere yet make it more scientific and efficient (Beecher 1841; Richards 1915), or whether to "socialize" it by bringing it into the public sphere, as socialist Charlotte Perkins Gilman advocated (1898).

In the US, the "public housekeeping" aspect of the Progressive movement of the 1890s through early 1900s advocated that women bring the positive values associated with motherhood into the public sphere — by obtaining the vote, cleaning out corruption in politics, creating settlement houses to educate and support immigrants, and forming the women's peace movement, etc. (cf. Jane Addams 1914). Disagreements about whether to downplay or valorize the distinctive function and skills in motherhood as work for which women are naturally superior, or to see motherhood as restricting women's chances for economic independence and equality with men in the public sphere, were also evident in debates between Ellen Keys (1909, 1914) and Gilman. Keys represented the difference side, that women are superior humans because of mothering; while Gilman and Goldman took the equality side of the debate, that is, that, women are restricted, and made socially unequal to men, by unpaid housework and mothering.

Second Wave Feminist Analyses of Housework

In the second wave movement, theorists can be grouped by their theory of how housework oppresses women. Typically, liberal feminists critique housework because it is unpaid. This makes women dependent on men and devalued, since their work is outside the meaningful sphere of public economic production (Friedan 1963). Marxist feminist theorists see this as part of the problem, but some go further to maintain that housework is part of a household feudal mode of production of goods for use that persists under capitalism and gives men feudal powers over women's work (Benston 1969, Fox 1980). Other Marxist feminists argue that women's housework is part of the social reproduction of capitalism (Federici 1975, 2004; Malos 1975; Vogel 1995). That the necessary work of reproducing the working class is unpaid allows more profits to capitalists. It is the sexual division of labor in productive and reproductive work that makes woman unequal to men and allows capitalists to exploit women's unpaid labor. Some even make this analysis the basis for a demand for wages for housework (Dalla Costa 1974; Federici 1975). More recently, Federici has done an analysis of

the transition to capitalism in Europe. She argues that it was the emerging capitalist class need to control working class reproduction, to eliminate working class women's control over biological reproduction, and to assure their unpaid reproductive work in the home by restricting abortions, that fueled the campaign against witches during this period (Federici 2004).

One of the philosophical problems raised by the housework debate is how to draw the line between work and play or leisure activity when the activity is not paid: is a mother playing with her baby working or engaged in play? If the former, then her hours in such activity may be compared with those of her husband or partner to see if there is an exploitation relation present, for example, if his total hours of productive and reproductive work for the family are less than hers (cf. Delphy 1984). But to the extent that childrearing counts as leisure activity, as play, as activity held to be intrinsically valuable (Ferguson 2004), no exploitation is involved. Perhaps childrearing and other caring activity is both work and play, but only that portion which is necessary for the psychological growth of the child and the worker(s) counts as work. If so, who determines when that line is crossed? Since non-market activity does not have a clear criterion to distinguish work from non-work, nor necessary from non-necessary social labor, an arbitrary element seems to creep in that makes standards of fairness difficult to apply to gendered household bargains between men and women dividing up waged and non-waged work. (Barrett 1980).

One solution to this problem is simply to take all household activity that could also be done by waged labor (nannies, domestic servants, gardeners, chauffeurs, etc.) as work and to figure its comparable worth by the waged labor necessary to replace it (Folbre 1982, 1983). Another is to reject altogether the attempts to base women's oppression on social relations of work, on the grounds that such theories are overly generalizing and ignore the discrete meanings that kinship activities have for women in different contexts (Nicholson 1991; Fraser and Nicholson 1991; Marchand 1995). Or, one can argue that although the line between work and leisure changes historically, those doing the activity should have the decisive say as to whether their activity counts as work, i.e., labor necessary to promote human welfare. The existence of second wave women's movements critiques of the "second shift" of unpaid household activity indicates that a growing number of women see most of it as work, not play (cf. Hochschild 1989). Finally, one can argue that since the human care involved in taking care of children and elders creates a public good, it should clearly be characterized as work, and those who are caretakers, primarily women, should be fairly compensated for it by society or the state (Ferguson and Folbre 2000: Folbre 2000, Ferguson 2004).

The Public/Private Split and Its Implications

Liberal, Marxist and radical feminists have all characterized women as doubly alienated in capitalism because of the public/private split that relegates their work as mothers and houseworkers to the home, and psychologically denies them full personhood, citizenship and human rights (Foreman 1974, Okin 1989, Pateman 1988, Goldman 1969). Noting that women workers on average only have about 70% of the average salary of men in the contemporary U.S., feminists have claimed this is because women's work, tied stereotypically to housework

and hence thought unskilled is undervalued, whether it is cleaning or rote service work, or nurturing work thought to be connected to natural maternal motivations and aptitudes. Hence some feminists have organized in campaigns for “comparable worth” to raise women’s wages to the same as men’s wages involving comparable skills (Brenner 2000; cf. also articles in Hansen and Philipson eds. 1990).

Many radical feminists maintain that women’s work is part of a separate patriarchal mode of reproduction that underlies all economic systems of production and in which men exploit women’s reproductive labor (Delphy 1984; O’Brien 1981; Leghorn and Parker 1981; Rich 1980; Mies 1986). Smith (1974), O’Brien (1981), Hartsock (1983 a,b), Haraway (1985) and Harding (1986) pioneered in combining this radical feminist assumption with a perspectival Marxist theory of knowledge to argue that one’s relation to the work of production and reproduction gave each gender and each social class a different way of knowing the social totality. Women’s work, they argued, ties them to nature and human needs in a different way than men’s work does, which creates the possibility of a less alienated and more comprehensive understanding of the workings of the social totality. Patricia Hill Collins argues further that the racial division of labor, institutional racism and different family structures put African American women in yet a different epistemic relation to society than white and other women (1990, 2000). Writing in a post-modernist re-articulation of this feminist standpoint theory, Donna Haraway argues that the breakdown of the nature/culture distinction because of scientific technology and its alteration of the human body makes us into “cyborgs”. Hence our perspectives are so intersectional that they cannot be unified simply by a common relation to work. What is required for a feminist politics is not a situated identity politics, whether of gender and/or race and/or class, but an affinity politics based on alliances and coalitions that combine epistemic perspectives (Haraway 1985).

Like these radical feminists, some socialist-feminists have tried to develop a “dual systems” theory (cf. Young 1981). This involves theorizing a separate system of work relations that organizes and directs human sexuality, nurturance, affection and biological reproduction. Rather than seeing this as an unchanging universal base for patriarchy, however, they have argued that this system, thought of as the “sex/gender system” (Rubin 1975; Hartmann 1978, 1981a,b), or as “sex/affective production” (Ferguson 1989, 1991; Ferguson and Folbre 1981) has different historical modes, just as Marx argued that economies do. Rubin argues that sex/gender systems have been based in different kinship arrangements, most of which have supported the exchange of women by men in marriage, and hence have supported male domination and compulsory heterosexuality. She is hopeful that since capitalism shifted the organization of the economy from kinship to commodity production, the power of fathers and husbands over daughters and wives, and the ability to enforce heterosexuality, will continue to decline, and women’s increasing ability to be economically independent will lead to women’s liberation and equality with men.

With a different historical twist, Hartmann argues that a historical bargain was cemented between capitalist and working class male patriarchs to shore up patriarchal privileges that were being weakened by the entrance of women into wage labor in the 19th century by the

creation of the “family wage” to allow men sufficient wages to support a non-wage-earning wife and children at home (1981a). While Ferguson and Folbre (1981) agree that there is no inevitable fit between capitalism and patriarchy, they argue that there are conflicts, and that the family wage bargain has broken down at present. Indeed, both Ferguson and Smart (1984) argue that welfare state capitalism and the persistent sexual division of wage labor in which work coded as women’s is paid less than men’s with less job security are ways that a “public patriarchy” has replaced different systems of family patriarchy that were operating in early and pre-capitalist societies. Walby (1990) has a similar analysis, but to her the connection between forms of capitalism and forms of patriarchy is more functional and less accidental than it appears to Ferguson and Smart.

Walby argues that there are two different basic forms of patriarchy which emerge in response to the tensions between capitalist economies and patriarchal household economies: private and public patriarchy. Private patriarchy as a form is marked by excluding women from economic and political power while public patriarchy works by segregating women. There is a semi-automatic re-adjustment of the dual systems when the older private father patriarchy based on the patriarchal family is broken down due to the pressures of early industrial capitalism. The family wage and women’s second class citizenship that marked that initial re-adjustment are then functionally replaced by a public form of patriarchy, the patriarchal welfare state, where women enter the wage labor force permanently but in segregated less well paid jobs. But Ferguson (1989,1991), Smart (1984) and Folbre (1994) suggest that although the patriarchal control of fathers and husbands over wife and children as economic assets has been diminished in advanced capitalism, there is always a dialectical and contradictory tension between patriarchy and capitalism in which both advances and retreats for women’s equality as citizens and in work relations are constantly occurring in the new form of public patriarchy. Thus, the new “marriage” of patriarchal capitalism operates to relegate women to unpaid or lesser paid caring labor, whether in the household or in wage labor, thus keeping women by and large unequal to men. This is especially notable in the rise of poor single-mother-headed families. However, as it forces more and more women into wage labor, women are given opportunities for some independence from men and the possibility to challenge male dominance and sex segregation in all spheres of social life. Examples are the rise of the first and second wave women’s movements and consequent gains in civil rights for women.

The work of feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith (1989) has been a notable intervention into the public-private split by bringing into view the institutions and power regimes that regulate the everyday world, their gender subtext, and basis in a gendered division of labor. Legal feminist critics expand on the biopolitics of the patriarchal welfare state, which psychiatrizes as it threatens mothers with the loss of child custody. This represents a new eugenics twist on the enduring mistrust of working-class mothers and casting those who are imprisoned as undeserving parent (Guggenheim 2007; Law 2012). African American mothers bear the brunt of punitive and racist family and criminal law (Thompson 2010; Solinger *et al.* 2010).

Modernist vs. Postmodernist Feminist Theory

Useful anthologies of the first stage of second wave socialist feminist writings which include discussions of women, class and work from psychological as well as sociological and economic perspectives are Eisenstein (1979), Hansen and Philipson (1990), Hennessy and Ingraham (1997), and Holmstrom (2002). Jaggar (1983) wrote perhaps the first philosophy text explaining the categories of liberal, radical, Marxist and socialist-feminist thought and defending a socialist-feminist theory of male domination based on the notion of women's alienated labor. Others such as Jaggar and Rothenberg (1978), Tuana and Tong (1995) and Herrmann and Stewart (1993) include classic socialist feminist analyses in their collections, inviting comparisons of the authors to others grouped under the categories of liberal, radical, psychoanalytic, Marxist, postmodern, postcolonial and multicultural feminisms.

Various post-modern critiques of these earlier feminist schools of thought such as post-colonialism as well as deconstruction and post-structuralism challenge the over-generalizations and economic reductionism of many of those constructing feminist theories that fall under the early categories of liberal, radical, Marxist or socialist feminism (cf. Grewal and Kaplan 1992; Kaplan *et al.* 1999; Nicholson 1991; Fraser and Nicholson 1991; hooks 1984, 2000; Anzaldúa and Moraga 1981; Sandoval 2000). Others argue that part of the problem is the master narratives of liberalism or Marxism, the first of which sees all domination relations due to traditional hierarchies and undermined by capitalism, thus ignoring the independent effectivity of racism (Josephs 1981); and the second of which ties all domination relations to the structure of contemporary capitalism and ignores the non-capitalist economics contexts in which many women work, even within so-called capitalist economies, such as housework and voluntary community work (Gibson-Graham 1996).

In spite of the “pomo” critiques, there are some powerful thinkers within this tendency who have not completely rejected a more general starting point of analysis based on women, class and work. For example, Spivak (1988), Mohanty (1997), Carby (1997), and Hennessy (1993, 2000) are creating and re-articulating forms of Marxist and socialist-feminism less susceptible to charges of over-generalization and reductionism, and more compatible with close contextual analysis of the power relations of gender and class as they relate to work. They can be grouped loosely with a tendency called materialist feminism that incorporates some of the methods of deconstruction and post-structuralism (Hennessy 1993; Landry and MacLean 1993).

KEY ISSUES OF WORK IN VIETNAM

WOMEN STATUS IN THE ECONOMY

A period of economic opportunity for women. Women's economic participation, when factoring in the sheer proportion of women in the labour force and the extent of women's engagement in management and business activity, is an area of distinction for Viet Nam. In 2020, MOLISA reported that from 2011-2019, women accounted for at least 47.3 per cent of the new jobs created over this period, across a widening range of sectors. With jobs created

for an estimated 1.51 million workers in 2019 alone, this amounts to new jobs for nearly 714,000 women.⁵ Additionally, with an estimate of 45 per cent of labour income accruing to women, the *Global Gender Gap Report 2020* noted that Viet Nam had ‘one of the largest shares’ globally.⁶ By 2021, the same report series placed Viet Nam 26th out of 156 countries on the Economic Opportunity and Participation Subindex.⁷ Based on the gender gap in labour participation, earnings, and advanced (defined as the ratio of women in senior, professional and technical roles), Viet Nam has continued to outperform the majority of countries, including high income peers.

Conducive domestic conditions. Women’s high labour force participation rate reflects the presence of enabling factors and attitudes for women to undertake paid work. Viet Nam ranked in the top 45 per cent of countries globally, and in the top 3 ASEAN countries, in the *Women, Business and the Law* report for 2021⁸ which measures gender-based discrimination in law affecting women’s participation in the economy. Viet Nam is noted for the absence of *de jure* restrictions on women’s freedom of movement, decision to work, starting and running a business, owning property and assets, and marriage related-bars (e.g. exclusions on women from certain work, once married).⁹ There is also sufficient societal endorsement for women to earn, with some caveats.

Looking behind participation rates. Despite the promising contextual factors, participation rates per se offer only a partial picture of women’s engagement in the economy. While the upsurge in women’s waged employment in the recent period is a clear positive, participation does not equate to empowerment. For instance, participation rates do not reveal whether women are in full or part time work, whether they are working by choice, poverty or economic crisis, nor the conditions, pay or future of their work.¹⁰ A similar lens can be applied to women’s entrepreneurial activity, and the reasons behind the clustering of women in micro, small and medium enterprises. The quality and security of current and future jobs, the drivers and prospects of business activity, and women’s leadership in the economy are better measures for understanding women’s economic progress in Viet Nam. This has only been magnified by the impact of COVID-19 which has altered long standing trends in both women and men’s labour force participation rate.¹¹

Gendered barriers exist. Despite advances for women in the legal framework for labour and enterprises over the past five years, in Viet Nam as elsewhere, the economy remains ‘a

⁵ MOLISA. 2019. *Performance Review Report and Ways Forward in 2020* cited in MOLISA. 2021. *Review Report on Implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE) Period 2011-2019*. Hanoi: MOLISA.

⁶ World Economic Forum (WEF). 2019. *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. Geneva: WEF.

⁷ “The participation gap is captured using the difference between women and men in labour force participation rates. The remuneration gap is captured through a hard data indicator (ratio of estimated female-to-male earned income)² and a qualitative indicator gathered through the World Economic Forum’s annual Executive Opinion Survey (wage equality for similar work).³ Finally, the gap between the advancement of women and men is captured through two hard data statistics (the ratio of women to men among legislators, senior officials and managers, and the ratio of women to men among technical and professional workers)

⁸ World Bank. 2021. *Women, Business and the Law 2021*. Washington DC: World Bank.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ World Bank. 2020. *Vibrant Vietnam: Forging the Foundation of a High-Income Economy*. Washington DC: World Bank.

¹¹ <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/> Accessed 18 May 2021.

gendered structure.¹² Gender stereotypes affect women's economic participation, and women face formal and societal barriers for participating on a par with men. Factors such as care responsibilities and being disproportionately represented in more flexible but lower paid, 'lower skilled' segments of the labour market undermines women's position in the economy and resilience in the future. Lastly, data confirms that intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage compound the difficulties faced by certain groups of women, such as women living with disability, migrant women, ethnic minority women and those living in rural areas, single mothers, as well as older and elderly women. These groups of women typically face greater barriers to opportunities, and lower returns on their labour and market engagement.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Important social insurance and enterprise reforms passed. In recent years, key reforms towards equality have taken place in the sphere of employment. Several laws have included a gender mainstreaming assessment at the drafting stage and are now deemed in compliance with gender mainstreaming regulations. These include the *Employment Law (2015)*, *Law on Occupational Health and Safety (2015)*, *Law on Social Insurance (2016)*, *Labour Code (2019)* and the *Law on Vietnamese workers working overseas under contract amended in 2020*.¹³

Comprehensive maternity protections. The *Social Insurance Law (2016)* established that the principle of gender equality be applied to compulsory social insurance, maternity benefits, retirement benefits and unemployment insurance. The law includes comprehensive maternity protection for formal workers.¹⁴ It extended the paid maternity leave regime from four to six months, including for surrogate and adopting mothers.¹⁵ Short-term leave is also granted to women in formal employment in the case of miscarriage, abortion and stillbirth. Leave is to be paid at the average salary obtained in the prior 6 months.¹⁶ This is a generous entitlement, even when compared with high and middle-income countries. Indeed, Viet Nam ranks equal to Luxembourg, which was placed 21st of 41 OECD countries in a recent UNICEF study on family friendly provisions in that grouping.¹⁷ Significantly, however, the maternity benefit only applies to women in formal employment – an acknowledged minority of women workers in Viet Nam. This means that foreseeably most of the estimated 7.8 million (2016 data)¹⁸ women working in the informal economy are without health insurance and maternity protections, pitting the nature of paid work against the health and development outcomes for a woman and their child. According to the Law on Social Insurance, voluntary social insurance does not include maternity benefits/maternity protection, and so this represents a significant omission. Furthermore, the six-month entitlement is not able to be shared with spouses. Viet Nam is by no means unique here, but by only allowing women to take paid

¹² UN Women. 2016. *Towards Gender Equality in Viet Nam: Making Inclusive Growth Work for Women*. Hanoi: UN Women.

¹³ Gender Equality Department. 2018. Review Report on 30-Year implementation of the Platform for Building

¹⁴ This draws on analysis in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2019. *Social Institutions and Gender Index: Viet Nam*.

¹⁵ Article 33, paragraph 1

¹⁶ Article 39

¹⁷ Chzhen, Y., Gromada, A. and Rees, G. 2019. *Are the world's richest countries family friendly? Policy in the OECD and EU*: Florence, UNICEF Office of Research.

¹⁸ ILO. 2018. 2016 Report on Informal Employment in Viet Nam. Hanoi: Hong Duc Publishing House.

parental leave, infant care is once again reinforced as solely women's responsibility, thus limiting women's work and career options. Men who opt to engage in child rearing in the first six months of life, do so unpaid.

Specific support for women in SMEs. Regarding business, Viet Nam enacted special measures for women in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The *Law on Support to SMEs (2017)* introduced an official definition of women-owned SMEs into Viet Nam, namely, an enterprise where 'one or more women hold 51 per cent or more of the charter capital, and at least one of whom is its manager'.¹⁹ This law, for the first time, enabled a uniform measurement of women-owned SMEs, and for targeted outreach to follow. The law itself also provided preferential measures for women-owned SMEs, specifically, in cases where SMEs are eligible for state support (including credit), priority should be given to women-owned SMEs or SMEs employing more women.²⁰

Taxation impacts upon women in work and business vary. Viet Nam's *Personal Income Tax (PIT) Law (2014)* is regarded as an indirect contribution to gender equality since each income earner files their own tax returns and is assessed individually. This avoids the existing bias against women encountered in joint tax systems, whereby household incomes are consolidated, classifying and discouraging women to be 'secondary' earners. The PIT system in Viet Nam is also grounded in the ability to pay principle, with incremental tax thresholds that result in lower tax rates applied to lower income brackets. With women typically earning less than men, this mitigates their tax burden. However, the reverse is true for Enterprise Income Tax (EIT) Laws, with large corporations in 'encouraged sectors' subject to lower tax rates. Women's concentration in smaller scale businesses means they do not receive a tax benefit.²¹ Notably, although the *Enterprise Law (2014)*²² prohibits discrimination against employees in broad terms, it does not explicitly mention sex or gender-based discrimination. In terms of other legal measures to promote equality in business, Viet Nam has not enacted legislation or quotas with respect to women's representation in executive or board positions in companies, and there are currently no provisions for increasing the award of public procurement contracts to women.²³

Landmark labour reforms. Over the past five years, a major stride for gender equality was through the revision of the *2012 Labour Code*, passed by the National Assembly in October 2019 and effective from 1 January 2021. This was complemented by implementing Decree 145/2020/ND-CP on the Elaboration of Some Articles on the Labor Code on Working Conditions and Labor Relations, passed on 15 December 2020.²⁴ Labour law typically negotiates the overlap in productive and reproductive life stages, and it safeguards gender-specific biological functions including pregnancy, child-birth and breastfeeding.²⁵ The *Labour Code 2012* had a separate chapter of provisions concerning female employees (Chapter X).

¹⁹ Article 3

²⁰ Article 5

²¹ UN Women. 2016. *Gender Equality and Taxation in Viet Nam: Issues and Recommendations*. op.cit

²² Article 8

²³ MOLISA and UNFPA. 2020. op. cit.

²⁴ English version available at <https://vanbanphapluat.co/decrees/145-2020-nd-cp-elaboration-of-the-labor-code-on-working-conditions-and-labor-relations>

²⁵ International Labour Conference. 2009. *Report VI: Gender equality at the heart of decent work*. Geneva: ILO.

However, a number of gender disparities were enshrined in the Code that were not biologically determined, and discriminatory.²⁶ The law underwent a comprehensive policy impact assessment process, including three separate gender-related policy and mainstreaming assessments.²⁷ There was also a coordinated effort by international agencies and civil society to work with the government on pro-gender equality proposals, including by the UN Women/ILO, World Bank²⁸, Australia,²⁹ and NGOs such as CARE International and the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE).

Renewed retirement age debate. The principal focus of the debate was closing the existing gender gap in the mandatory retirement age from 55 years for women and 60 years for men. The retirement gap was tied to the question of raising the pension age, in the light of pressures on the liquidity of the social pension fund. With World Health Organization estimates of healthy years of life expectancy in Viet Nam being 73.8 years for men and 76.1 years for women, the World Bank highlighted the ‘significant’ scope for men and women to work beyond the age of 60 years. The World Bank undertook a cost-benefit analysis of scenarios to jointly increase the age and close the gender gap at retirement. Using demographic projections aligned with MOLISA’s incremental timetable for raising the retirement age, the analysis found that the benefits equated to a benefit of 1.51 per cent of GDP at the 33-year mark, if men retired at 62 and women at 60 years. The GDP gain was 1.89 per cent if both retired at 62 years.³⁰ Government and public debate has been long standing on this issue. However, public opinion was divided, in part due to the perspective that women should be entitled to retire and access their pension earlier, on account of their double reproductive and productive role. Enabling women to acquire skills suitable to their ‘physiological characteristic and their motherhood functions’³¹ was encoded in the 2012 law and reflects a strong public sentiment.

The Labour Code 2019 introduced several significant reforms favourable to equality at work. These included:

- a reduction in the retirement age gap between men and women from 5 to 2 years, albeit maintaining a gap and with a roadmap for women’s increased age not being reached until 2035;
- removal of the list of 77 heavy and hazardous occupations, 38 of which had been prohibited on the basis of sex and an additional 39 types of jobs were prohibited for pregnant women and women with children under 12 months;³²
- extending carer’s leave to all employees, not just female employees;

²⁶ UN CEDAW (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women). 2015. *Concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Viet Nam*. op. cit

²⁷ This included: 1) A gender impact assessment for the overall Policy Impact Assessment; 2) a subsequent gender-specific Policy Impact Assessment to analyse proposed revisions; and 3) A gender mainstreaming report. These were supported by Australia’s Investing in Women’s Initiative in partnership with UN Women Viet Nam.

²⁸ World Bank. 2019. *How to Design the Vietnam Labor Code to Improve Gender Equality*. Washington DC: World Bank.

²⁹ Urbano, M., Hodges J. & Than, TH. (2018). ‘Labouring under false assumptions? Exploring the rifts between international standards and cultural values in Vietnam’s Labour Code reform in ILO.’ in *Game changers: Women and the future of work in Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok: ILO.

³⁰ World Bank. 2019. op. cit.

³¹ Article 153 (5) of the Labour Code 2012

³² Article 160, Labour Code 2012; MOLISA. 18 October 2013. *Circular Promulgating the List of Jobs in which the Employment of Female Workers is Prohibited*. No. 26/2013/TT-BLDTBXH

- a more specific definition of sexual harassment, with wider application to any site of work (including events, field trips), and the specification of employer obligations; and
- explicit protection of an equal wage for work of equal value.³³

Workers ‘without labour contracts’ are covered by the new law, but provisions tailored to the circumstances and categories of informal workers, both women and men, are still needed. Regulation of home-based work, which is primarily performed by women, equivalent to the explicit and strong protections for part-time workers also remains to be done.³⁴

New rights embedded at implementation. Decree 145, passed in December 2020, added specific detail to a number of provisions in Chapter IX on Female Employees and Gender Equality in the amended Labour Code. Regarding day care centres and kindergartens, Decree 145 includes direction to Provincial Peoples’ Committees to facilitate the land, loans/investment and administrative procedures to construct kindergarten and day care centres in worker-populated areas, including industrial zones, with equivalence in benefits given to the centres, students and teachers as provided to independent or private centres. Employers are also required to plan for financial assistance for workers’ day care costs.³⁵ On anti-sexual harassment, Decree 145 expands upon the employer, employee and employee representatives’ obligations for preventing and combating sexual harassment. It provides a more detailed list of prohibited acts (including verbal and non-verbal), as well as the ‘locations’ covered as work-related sites, including conferences, training, meals and phone communications. The Decree also specifies reporting and disciplinary measures, and a provision for victim compensation and remedies.³⁶ With an ILO study from 2019 finding that nearly half (43 per cent) of the garment factory workers surveyed had experienced at least one act of violence or harassment in the previous year, this was a much needed area for reform.³⁷ In part, the improved sexual harassment provisions reflect the long-term joint work by UN Women, CARE International, GIZ and an NGO Nutrition Network (‘SUN’), which provided timely evidence and advice to build the political commitment of key government stakeholders.

Significantly, Decree 145 also includes extensive direction on protections and obligations of contracted domestic workers and their employers, clarifying conditions for an isolated and therefore more vulnerable group of women workers. It does not cover the especially precarious conditions of informally engaged/unregistered domestic workers, who have been estimated as representing close to 90 per cent of all domestic workers.³⁸

³³ This list and the text box also draws on a World Bank staff assessment of the *Labour Code (2019)*, and *World Bank Group. 2019 How to Design the Vietnam Labor Code to Improve Gender Equality*. Hanoi: World Bank.

³⁴ Article 32 of the Labour Code 2019. Reform proposed in World Bank. 2019. *How to Design the Vietnam Labor Code to Improve Gender Equality*. Washington DC: World Bank.

³⁵ Chapter IX, Section 2, Articles 81-83

³⁶ Chapter IX, Section 3, Articles 84-87

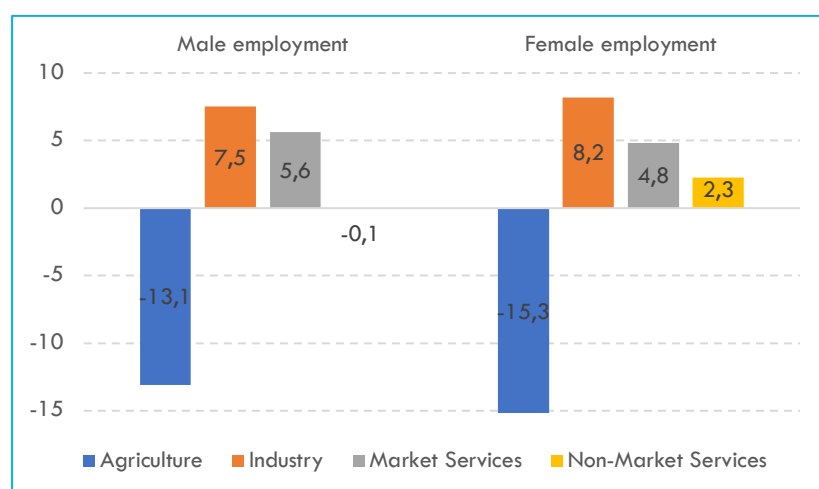
³⁷ ILO. 2018. Promoting Better Work for Women in Viet Nam’s Garment Sector cited in International Labour Organization (ILO) and Investing in Women. 2020. *Leading to Success: The business case for women in business and management in Viet Nam*. Hanoi: ILO.

³⁸ Based on a study undertaken in 2013, cited in UN Women. 2016. *Towards Gender Equality in Viet Nam: Making Inclusive Growth Work for Women*. Hanoi: UN Women.

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Viet Nam's economic transformation has led to a substantial labour market shift for women and men. *Đổi Mới* in the late 1980s largely replaced the former centrally planned system with market mechanisms, it promoted economic diversification and private sector development, and opened the economy to trade and international markets. This led to a rapid expansion of manufacturing and service industries, which quickly became the primary source of job creation. Paid employment and higher earnings attracted a large share of workers away from agriculture, in a shift that is on-going. Agriculture was the largest employer when the country introduced *Đổi Mới*. In the 10 years before the COVID-19 outbreak, Viet Nam witnessed an overall reduction in agricultural employment by 14 percentage points, accompanied by a corresponding increase in employment in industry and services. Figure 1 below illustrates this trend by showing the change in the distribution of female and male employment by broad economic sector. The shift from agriculture to industry and services, which began in the 1980s, has continued to transform the labour market over the past decade. Women experienced a more pronounced redistribution than men in this period, with a reduction in agricultural employment of 15.3 percentage points and increases in employment in industry and services of comparable magnitudes (8.2 and 7.1 percentage points, respectively). In addition, female employment in non-market services³⁹ increased by 2.3 percentage points, while the change in male employment appears negligible in this sector.

Figure 1: Change in employment distribution by economic sector, 2010-2019



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.⁴⁰

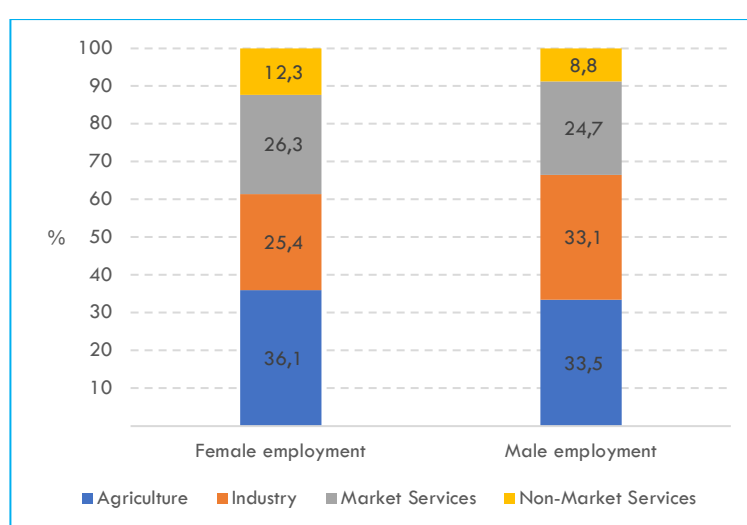
Today, women are more likely to be employed in subsistence agriculture than men. Only 10 years ago, agricultural employment accounted for more than one-half of working women in Viet Nam. Today this is no longer the case. In 2019, agriculture accounted for 36.1 per cent

³⁹ According to the International Standard Industrial Classification, Market Services include Trade, Transportation, Accommodation and food, and Business and administrative services, while non-Market Services include Public administration, Community, social and other services and activities.

⁴⁰ Based on the ISIC Rev. 4. Agriculture refers to ISIC Rev. 4 category A. Industry refers to ISIC Rev. 4 categories B to F. Market services refer to ISIC Rev. 4 categories G to N. Non-market services refer to ISIC Rev. 4 categories O to U.

of female employment. The services sector taken together (i.e. market and non-market) represented the largest sector of employment for women in relative terms (36.8 per cent), while roughly one quarter (25.4 per cent) worked in the industrial sector, almost all of them in manufacturing⁴¹. Male employment on the other hand was more evenly distributed, with each sector absorbing exactly one-third of the male labour force. This means that, despite the trends described above, employed women are only marginally more likely than men to be working in agriculture. There is however an important difference between the situation of men and women employed in this sector. The majority (85.9 per cent) of women in agricultural employment are primarily involved in *subsistence* agriculture. The corresponding share in male agricultural employment is 59.2 per cent.

Figure 2: Employment distribution by economic sector, 2019



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.⁴²

Labour market participation of women is remarkably high in Viet Nam compared to the global average. In 2019, 70.9 per cent of Viet Nam's working-age women were in the labour force. The corresponding rate at the global level was 47.2 per cent, and the rate for Asia and the Pacific even lower, at 43.9 per cent. In addition, not only is the participation of women in Viet Nam's labour market high in absolute terms, but it is also the case when compared to that of men. The participation gap between men and women in Viet Nam has averaged at 9.5 percentage points over the last decade. In the whole of Asia-Pacific region, the average in the same period has been over 32 percentage points.⁴³

However, while the gender gap in labour force participation is narrower in Viet Nam than the global and regional average, it does still exist. Women participate in the labour force at a lower rate than men, and the reason for this gap is likely to be the uneven gender division of labour in family responsibilities in Viet Nam society. The 2018 Labour Force Survey showed

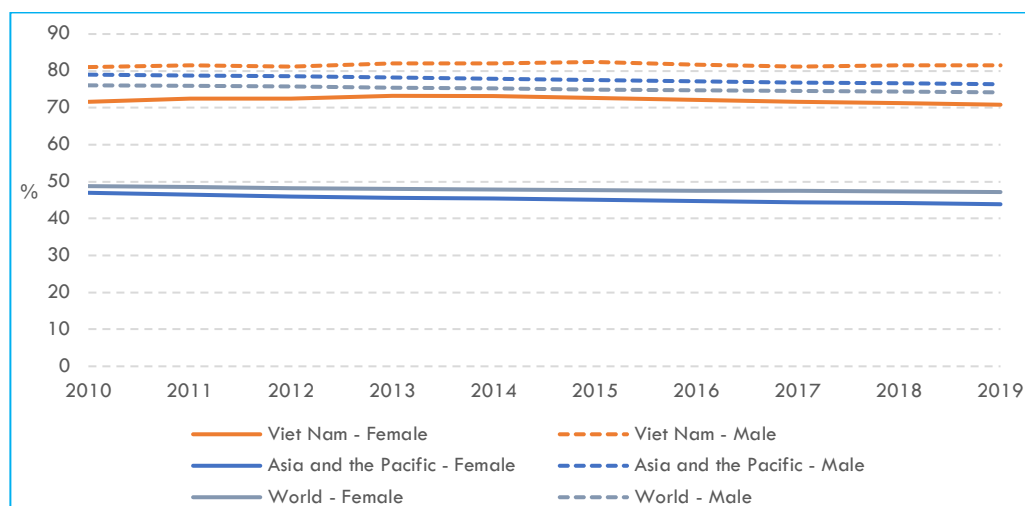
⁴¹ Almost all women (91.2 per cent) in the industrial sector worked in manufacturing, compared to just over one-half (54.5 per cent) of men. Women also represented 54.5 per cent of the sector's employment.

⁴² Based on the ISIC Rev. 4. Agriculture refers to ISIC Rev. 4 category A. Industry refers to ISIC Rev. 4 categories B to F. Market services refer to ISIC Rev. 4 categories G to N. Non-market services refer to ISIC Rev. 4 categories O to U.

⁴³ Statistics available at <https://ilostat ilo.org/>.

that 47.5 per cent of women who were not economically active had made this choice due to ‘personal or family-related reasons’ as opposed to 18.9 per cent of inactive men. Despite their high labour market participation overall, women in Viet Nam still face unequal opportunity to engage in economic activity compared to men.

Figure 3: Labour force participation rates by gender in Viet Nam, the region and globally, 2010-2019



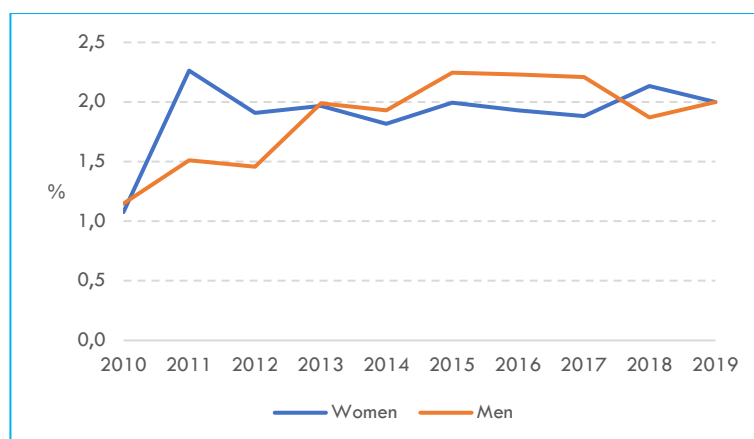
Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey and ILO modelled estimates, 2020

In Viet Nam's labour market before COVID-19, there was no significant gender-based difference in unemployment rates.⁴⁴ The labour force consists of two groups of working-age individuals: the employed and the unemployed. An analysis of unemployment rates by gender over the past 10 years show that until 2019, women faced low unemployment, and there was no evident gender pattern. The female unemployment rate was higher than the male rate in some years, and lower in others, but the difference was never substantially significant.

Figure 4. Unemployment rate by gender, 2010-2019⁴⁵

⁴⁴ This report uses Viet Nam's national definition of unemployment. The internationally agreed definition of unemployment (adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2013) classifies as unemployed all people of working age who are not in employment, who are carrying out activities to seek employment and are currently available to take up employment. Viet Nam's national definition of unemployment includes, in addition to all the groups mentioned above, people not in employment and available but not seeking employment due to the off season, bad weather, effects of the environment, family obligations, relaxing, temporary illness or injury, or other reasons.

⁴⁵ Sustainable Development Goal (SGD) indicator 8.5.2



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

An analysis of employment status reveals significant areas of female disadvantage. The country's sizeable informal economy plays an important role in creating easy access to income-generating opportunities for women and men, which contributes to a high level of economic activity and low unemployment. However, employment status has a strong impact on job quality and the economic risks faced by workers. For example, jobs in the informal economy are unprotected and informal workers can face significant poverty and occupational risk.⁴⁶ To address these issues, the 2019 Labour Code which entered into force in January 2021, lays the foundation for an expansion of labour protections beyond that of formal employees.

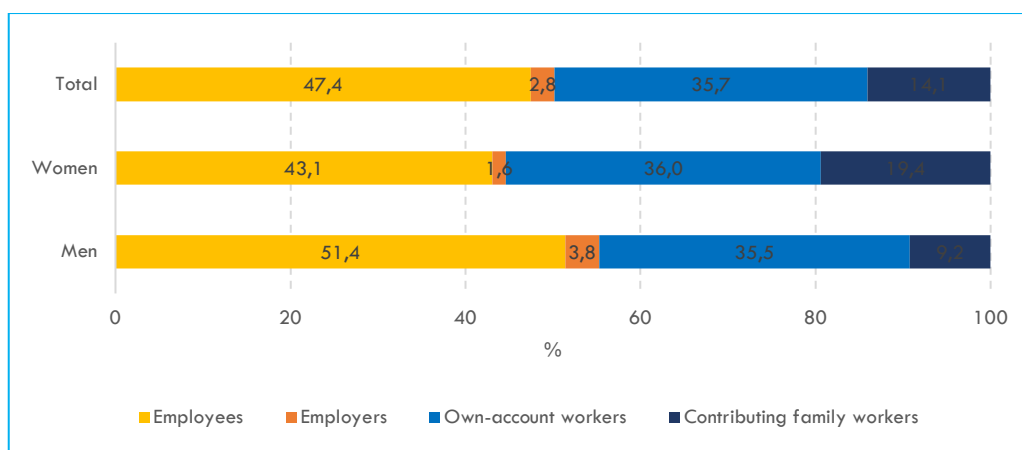
At present, men are more likely to be in informal employment than women (the informal employment rate in 2019 was 67.2 per cent among women, and 78.9 per cent among men).⁴⁷ However, women are overrepresented among an especially disadvantaged category of informal workers, that of contributing family workers that is associated with particularly high risks of intensive work hours and none or irregular remuneration.⁴⁸ In contrast, the status of *employee* is typically associated with a degree of job stability resulting from the attachment to an employer. This is also referred to as *paid employment* because employees may also count on a certain reliability of earnings, since their income usually does not depend entirely on the profit or loss of the organisation. As shown in Figure 5, 43.1 per cent of employed women are employees, compared to 51.4 per cent of employed men.

Figure 5: Employment distribution by employment status and gender, 2019

⁴⁶ OECD and ILO. 2019. *Tackling Vulnerability in the Informal Economy*. Paris: Development Centre Studies, OECD Publishing.

⁴⁷ This report is applying the international definition of informal employment. Viet Nam's definition does not include household-based agriculture employment.

⁴⁸ ILO. 2018. *20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Resolution concerning statistics on work relationships* Geneva: ILO https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_648693.pdf.



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.⁴⁹

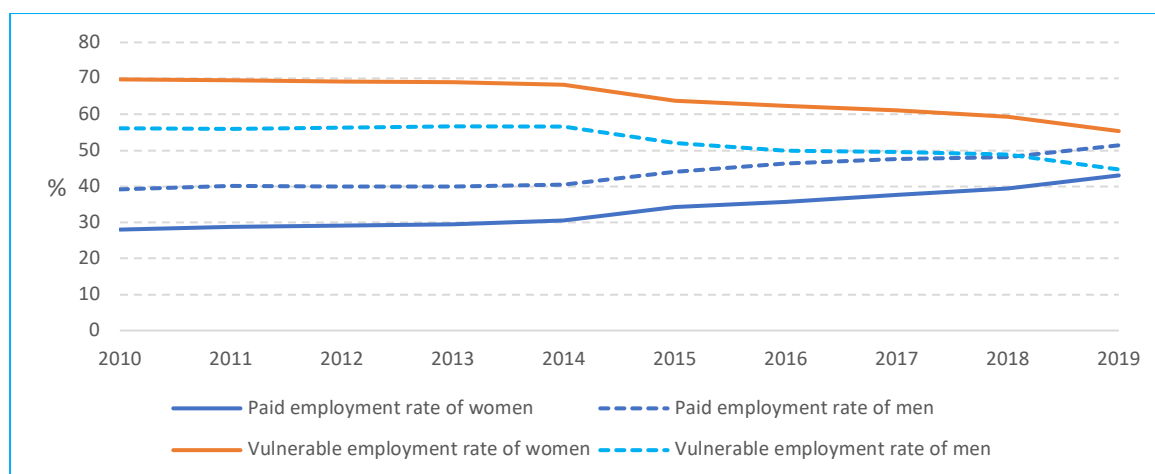
Own-account workers and contributing family workers face greater economic risks⁵⁰. Own-account workers are those in self-employment but without employees. Their income depends directly on the profits made by their own economic output. More than 92 per cent of own-account workers in Viet Nam have no access to social protection. Contributing family workers, on the other hand, assist a household member in a market-oriented establishment. They do not receive regular payments in return for the work performed and are, *by definition*, informal. Taken together, these two categories constitute *vulnerable employment*. Figure 6 shows vulnerable employment in shades of blue. It emerges clearly from the chart that women face a greater likelihood of being in vulnerable employment than men. If we analyse the two components of vulnerable employment, we observe that own-account work is directly comparable between women and men in Viet Nam. However, women are more than twice as likely to be contributing family workers. In 2019, 65.8 per cent of contributing family workers in Viet Nam were women. They represented almost one quarter (24.1 per cent) of rural female employment, as opposed to one-tenth (10.7 per cent) of male rural employment.

Gender gaps in vulnerable employment have been stable over time. As discussed, since *Đổi Mới*, Viet Nam's economic transformation led to an expanding share of employment in services and manufacturing. Paid employment has been steadily expanding, while vulnerable employment has experienced a downward trend. Noticeably, it is only over the last decade, that vulnerable employment, as a proportion of total employment, decreased by 13 per cent, while paid employment increased by 14 per cent. However, Figure 7 illustrates that these trends have not been matched by a corresponding reduction in gender inequality. Thus, unsurprisingly, since 2010 the overrepresentation of men in paid employment and that of women in vulnerable employment have remained remarkably stable.

Figure 6. Prevalence of paid employment and vulnerable employment, 2010-2019

⁴⁹ Note: Based on the ICSE-93. ICSE-93 category 4. Members of producers' cooperatives is not included in the chart since it represents less than 0.2 per cent of employment all years under review.

⁵⁰ Own-account workers hold a self-employment job without employees. Contributing family workers assist a household member in a market-oriented enterprise and do not receive regular payments in return for the work performed.



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.⁵¹

On average, women in Viet Nam earn less than men. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value is an important aspect of equality in the world of work, as emphasized by SDG 8.5. Viet Nam made a commitment to pursue this principle when it ratified ILO Convention No. 100, on Equal Remuneration. In 2019, the weighted gender pay gap⁵² based on monthly wages was 13.7 per cent. This is relatively low compared to the latest global figure (20.5 per cent)⁵³. However, three observations need to be made. First, Viet Nam's pay gap, after a decreasing trend until 2015, increased by an average of 1.2 percentage points each year between 2016 and 2018, before experiencing a moderate decrease in 2019. Second, a disaggregation of the overall gender pay gap based on monthly wages by occupation reveals areas of female disadvantage well beyond the scale of the national indicator. Figure 24 demonstrates that female employees in most occupations face pay gaps up to twice as great as the aggregate value.

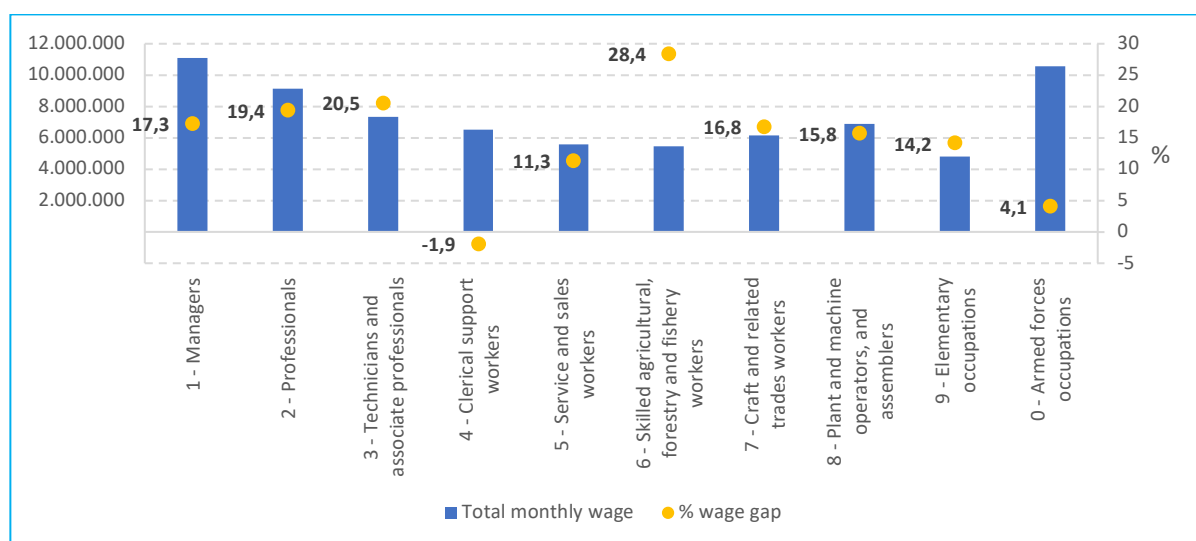
The third observation is that the category of employee, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is where economic risk is *relatively* lower, and earnings *relatively* stable, compared to other types of employment. To have a more comprehensive picture of pay gaps, it is necessary to also analyse the earnings of the self-employed. This group is far more heterogeneous, and it includes vulnerable workers. It therefore accounts for the majority of Viet Nam's labour force. The information in Figure 25 indicates that the difference in earnings between self-employed women and men in Viet Nam occurs especially in those occupations associated with lower levels of educational attainment. Interestingly, when women lead their own business as managers, the earnings, which in self-employment can be considered a reflection of business profits, suggest an economic advantage vis a vis men.

⁵¹ Based on the ICSE-93. Paid employment refers to ICSE-93 category 1. Employees. Vulnerable employment refers to ICSE-93 categories 3. Own-account workers and 5. Contributing family workers.

⁵² The raw gender pay gap refers to the difference in pay between women and men at a specific point in time. The *factor-weighted* gender pay gap methodology groups women and men into homogeneous subgroups, and then estimates the gender pay gap in each subgroup, to construct a weighted average of all the subgroups. This methodology reduces the impact of composition effect. The subgroups used in this case are education (four categories), age (four categories), working time arrangement (full-time or part time) and institutional sector of employment (public or private). Combining these gives 64 subgroups.

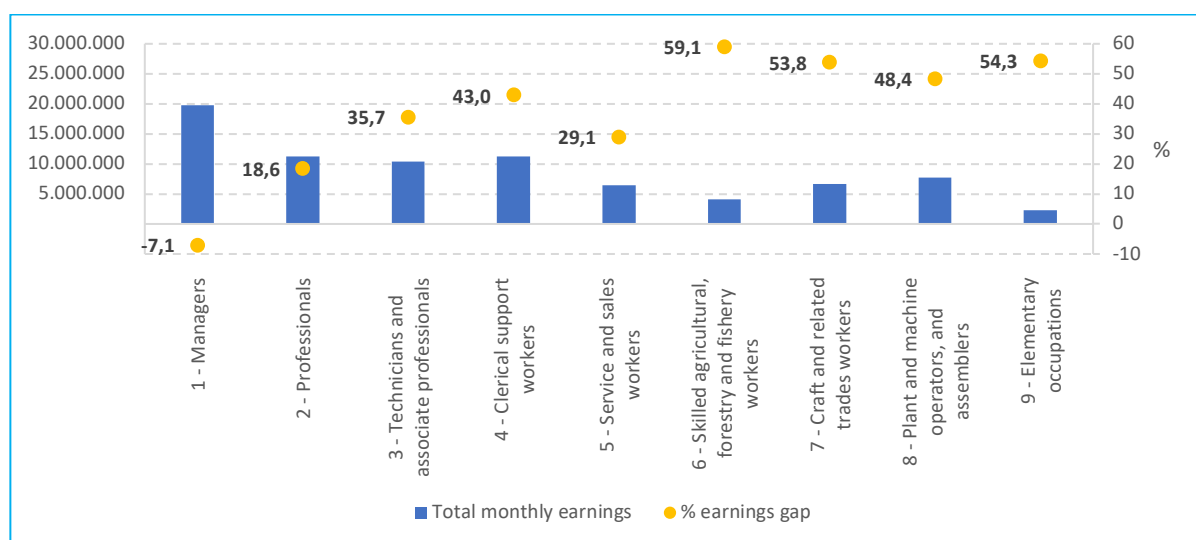
⁵³ ILO. 2018. *Global Wage Report 2018/19: What lies behind gender pay gaps*. Geneva: ILO

Figure 7. Average monthly wages of employees and pay gaps by occupation, 2019 (VND)



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

Figure 8. Average monthly earnings of self-employed and pay gaps by occupation, 2019 (VND)



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

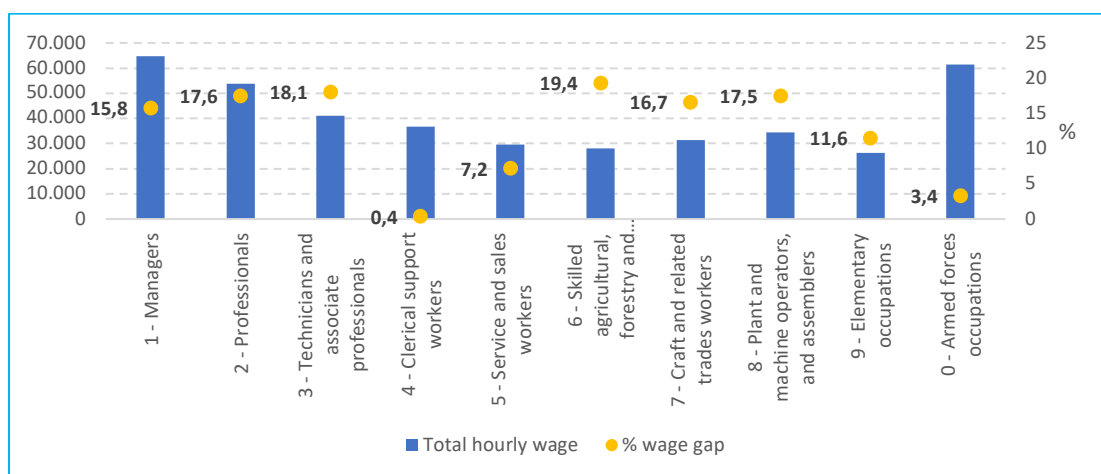
However, findings on the gender pay gap based on monthly earnings can arguably be deceiving, because they do not account for a difference in working hours. Globally, women tend to work shorter hours in their employment than men, due to their significantly higher engagement in unpaid productive work at home. To eliminate the effect of these differences in working hours, Figures 9 and 10 below offer a gender disaggregated diagram of hourly earnings⁵⁴, rather than monthly. The expected reduction in pay gaps is visible if we compare

⁵⁴ SDG Indicator 8.5.1

Figures 25 and 26, but rather moderate in most occupations. This suggests that working hours are not the principal reason behind the gender pay gap among employees.

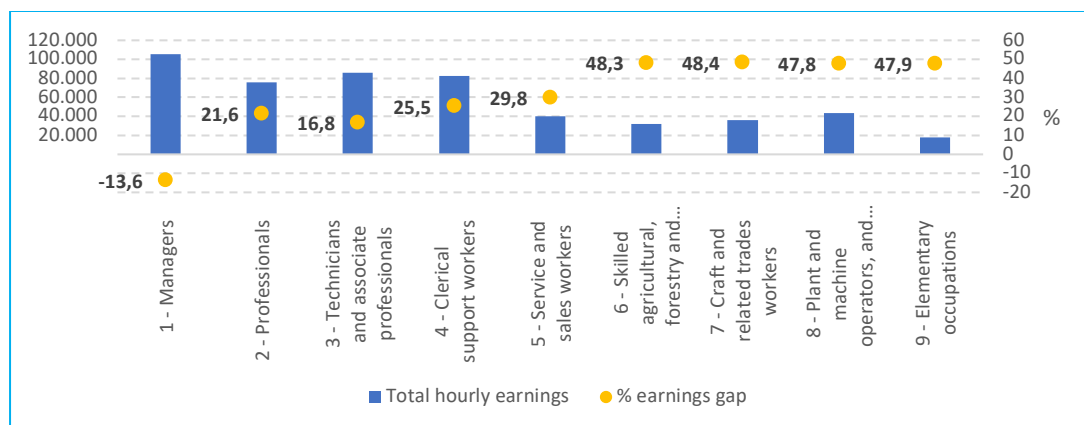
The difference between monthly and hourly gaps is more pronounced among the self-employed. The values are shown in Figure 26. This is not surprising, since we expect more diversity in 'hours worked' among workers in this group. Once we remove the effect of the number of hours worked, the pay gap results halved or nearly-halved in occupations where earnings are more directly proportional to number of hours worked (such as *technicians and associate professionals*, or *clerical and support workers*). Still, in four occupations men earn nearly twice the average hourly rate as women. Since the self-employed include vulnerable workers, the findings suggest that disadvantaged women face a higher pay gap than women who have less economically vulnerable jobs.

Figure 9. Average hourly wages of employees and pay gaps by occupation, 2019 (VND)



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

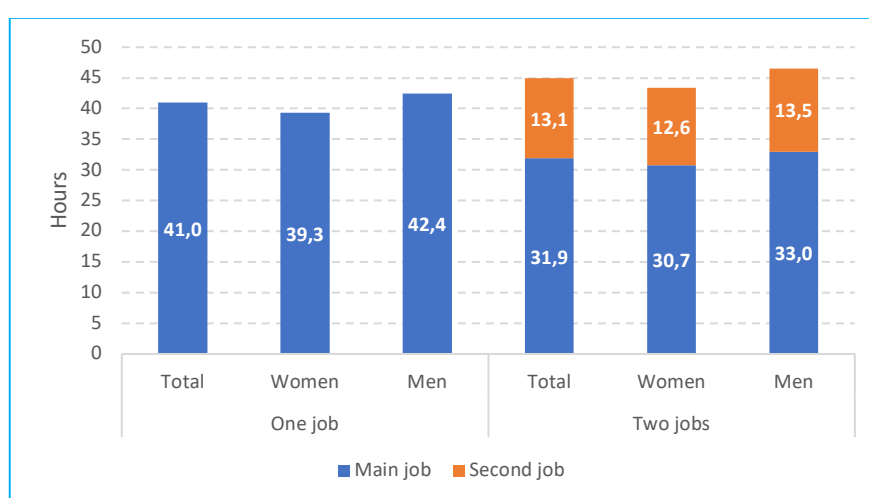
Figure 10. Average hourly earnings of self-employed and pay gaps by occupation, 2019 (VND)



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

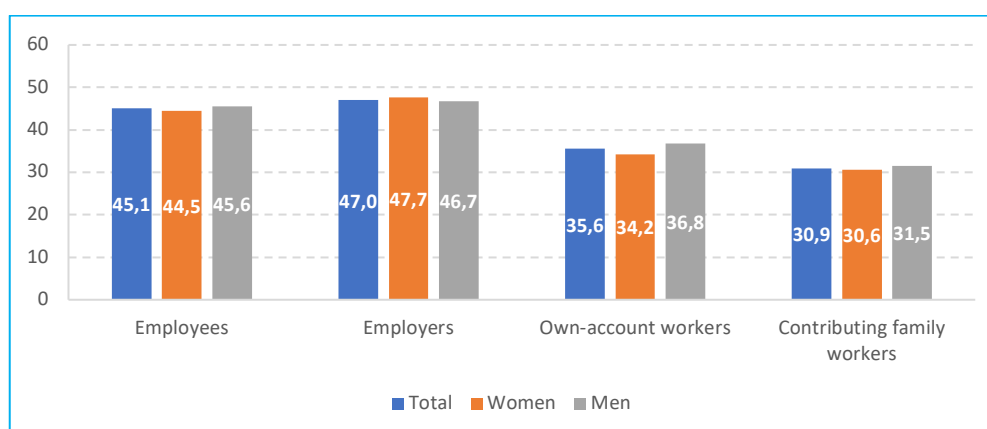
This analysis indicates that pay gaps in Viet Nam cannot be explained by a difference in the hours worked between women and men. In fact, further evidence in support of this statement comes from the observation that women's working hours are actually very similar to that of men. An analysis of hours spent in employment by gender reveals that they are remarkably similar. Figures 11 and 12 illustrate this. The first chart highlights workers who hold one job as opposed to two jobs, to reflect the reality of Viet Nam where individuals systematically resort to engaging in multiple jobs to reach a higher income level.⁵⁵ The second chart, on the other hand, focusses on the main job only, and provides a breakdown of average hours worked by employment status. Across all these indicators, the largest observable gap is 3.2 hours a week on average, and it is found among individuals working two jobs.

Figure 11. Average weekly hours actually worked in main job and second job, by number of jobs held, 2019



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

Figure 12. Average hours actually worked in main job by status in employment, 2019

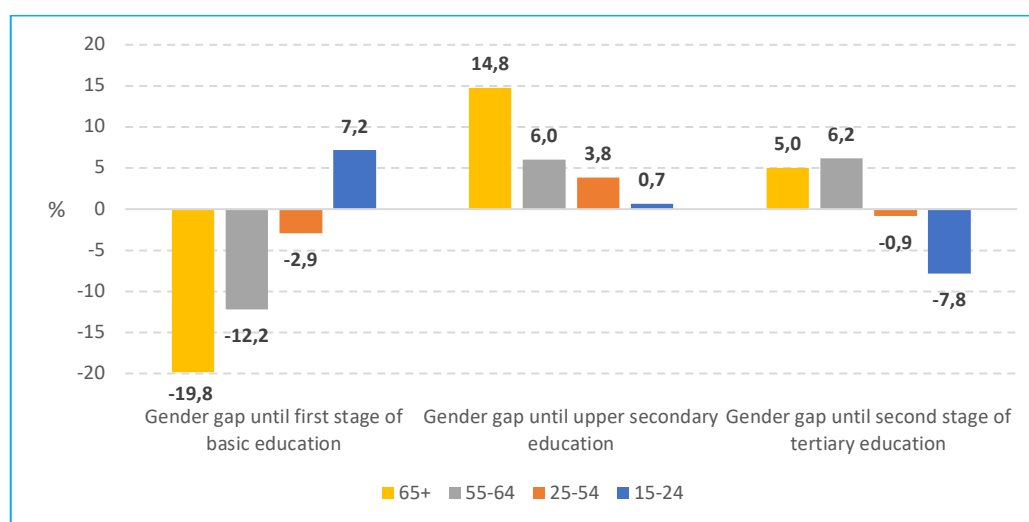


Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

⁵⁵ ILO. 2019. *Decent Work and the Sustainable Development Goals in Viet Nam*. Hanoi: ILO.

The gender pay gaps in Viet Nam cannot be explained by any visible difference in educational attainment either. An analysis of the labour force by education and age reveals two positive trends towards gender equality: on the one hand, the female labour force is increasingly well-educated. On the other, gender gaps in educational attainment have been narrowing. Figure 13 reveals the difference in educational achievement between men and women in the labour force, by age. Positive values indicate that men are more likely than women to have completed a specified level of education at most. The opposite applies to negative values. It emerges that among older workers, there is a visible education gap revealing male advantage. Women are significantly more likely to have completed primary education at most. At the same time, among older workers, men are more likely to have completed secondary education and above. This picture changes rapidly when we analyse younger cohorts. The education gap is narrow among prime-age workers (25-54) and it reverses among youth. The average probability that a young woman between 15 and 24 years of age has completed higher education is greater than that of her male counterparts. On the other hand, young men have a higher probability to have primary education as the highest level reached. Virtually no gender discrepancy is visible on secondary education in this cohort.

Figure 13. Gender disparities in educational attainment in the labour force, by age, 2019



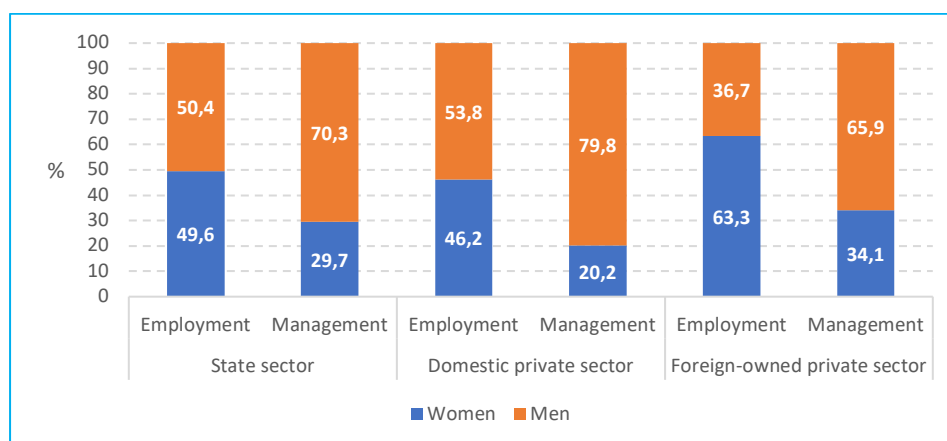
Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey
Note: Based on the ISCED-97⁵⁶

The elimination of gender gaps in education has not translated into a comparable narrowing of gender gaps in employment quality, earnings, or decision-making jobs. Especially striking in Viet Nam is the imbalance between women's level of engagement in the labour market and the share of leadership positions that they occupy. In 2019, women accounted for almost one-half (47.7 per cent) of the labour force, but less than one quarter (24.7 per cent) of overall management roles. While this is an average figure overall, it is interesting to investigate if the share of women in management varies with the characteristics of enterprises. Figure 14

⁵⁶ International Standard Classification of Education

illustrates this indicator⁵⁷ with a breakdown by ownership of economic units, and it shows visible differences between state, domestic and foreign-owned private units. The domestic private sector has the lowest average share of female managers. The foreign-owned private sector has the largest, but it is still far from offering a balanced context. Employment in this sector is predominantly female (63.3 per cent of workers in foreign-owned companies are women), but the share of female managers is just over one-third (34.1 per cent).

Figure 14. Female share in total employment and management, by ownership of units, 2019



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

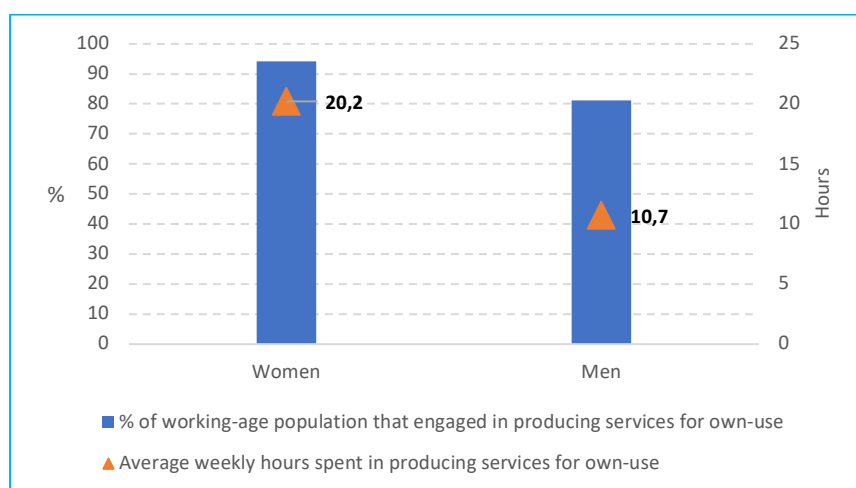
The gap women face in employment quality and career development stems from the double burden they carry. As discussed above, such a gap is not due to women having lower qualifications, or a lower level of engagement in the labour market or working significantly less hours. Rather, it is unrealistic for women to pursue stable jobs, career opportunities or skills upgrading with any degree of continuity, while they shoulder a disproportionate amount of household responsibilities. This double burden is apparent from an analysis of weekly hours spent by individuals in household-related work, as opposed, or we should say in addition to the hours spent in paid employment. This information was available in Viet Nam from 2019, when the General Statistics Office integrated specific questions to understand how women and men use their time into its Labour Force Survey.

Women on average spend twice as many hours as men working to produce 'services for own/family use'. These include activities such as cleaning the house, washing clothes, cooking and shopping, family care, and childcare. In addition, almost all women spend at least some time in these activities on a weekly basis, while a much lower proportion of men do, and close to 20 per cent of men reported they do not spend any time in these activities at all. Among those individuals who engaged in such activities, women spent an average of 20.2 hours a week on them, and men an average of 10.7 hours. Figure 15 illustrates these results, while Figure 16 shows a breakdown by type of service. The bulk of working hours required by each of these activities falls systematically and almost exclusively on women. With the only

⁵⁷ SDG indicator 5.5.2

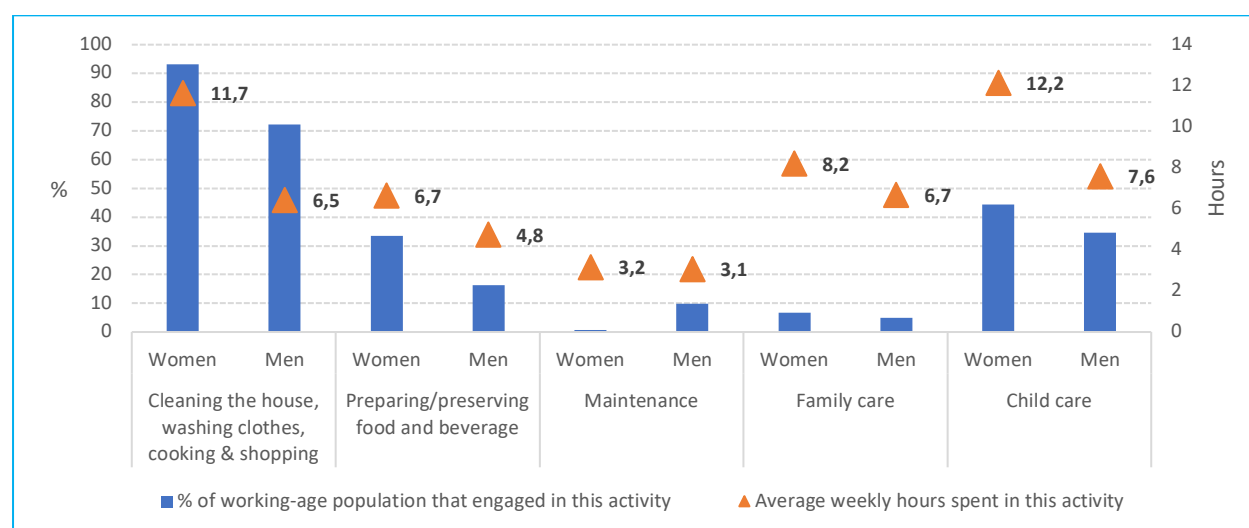
exception being household maintenance, they are also more likely to take up these activities in the first place.

Figure 15. Share of working-age population who spent time producing services for own-use, and average weekly hours spent, 2019



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

Figure 16. Share of working-age population who spent time producing services for own-use, by specific service and average weekly hours spent, 2019



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

Pre-COVID-19 conditions. What has been described in this section so far refers to Viet Nam's labour market before the COVID-19 crisis hit the country. The pandemic has had a devastating impact on economies and labour markets globally, through both direct and indirect channels. *Direct channels* include the introduction of policy that governments have had to make in order to limit the spread of the virus. Examples of these policy decisions in Viet Nam include, among others, the temporary closure of all non-essential businesses across the country between

March and early April, which made it impossible to work for all those employed in these establishments. *Indirect channels*, on the other hand, are the result of similar policy decisions made by other countries. These decisions have an impact on Viet Nam's economic output as well as on the Vietnamese labour market. For example, most of Viet Nam's top export partners have had to impose social distancing and workplace closures throughout this year to contain infection levels. This has led to a reduction in the demand for Vietnamese products, having a negative impact on economic performance and jobs in key export sectors.

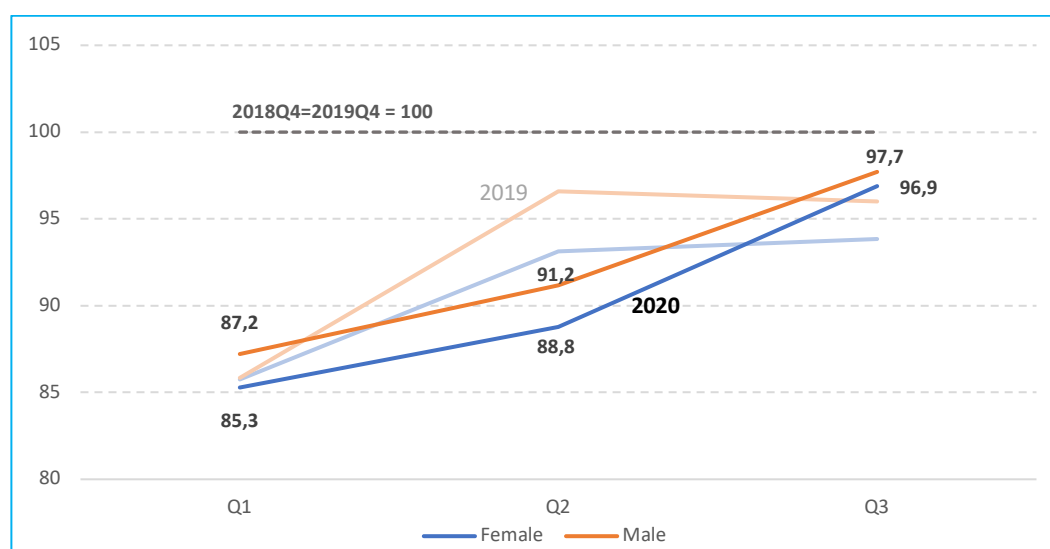
One of the most visible effects of the pandemic on labour markets across the world, including Viet Nam, has been a reduction in working hours. Due to COVID-19, workers have faced a range of challenges affecting their ability to work, including the forced reduction of daily hours of paid work, job rotations, furlough and ultimately, job losses. An analysis of total hours worked before and after the COVID-19 crisis will help us quantify the disruptive effect of COVID-19 on the ability of women and men to work. The ILO has been monitoring global working hour losses since the first quarter of 2020. In the third quarter of 2020 alone, the world lost an estimated 12.1 per cent of working hours compared to the fourth quarter of 2019. This is equivalent to the total hours worked in 345 million full-time jobs.⁵⁸

Viet Nam's workers faced a severe reduction in working hours during the second quarter of this year, especially women. Figure 17 illustrates the trends in total hours worked in the first three quarters of 2019 and 2020 compared to the fourth quarters of 2018 and 2019, respectively. Total hours worked in Viet Nam are usually highest in the fourth quarter of any year, due to increased economic activity in the lead up to Tet. They typically drop off in the first quarter when families are celebrating Tet. Working hours indeed dropped throughout 2019 compared to the more dynamic, last quarter of 2018. The 2020 data displayed in the chart, on the other hand, shows the impact of the pandemic. Working hours in the second quarter of 2020 were much lower than seasonality might account for. This corresponds with Viet Nam's closure of non-essential businesses between March and April, school closures, and severe lockdowns in countries that serve as Viet Nam's export partners.⁵⁹ During that period, for millions of workers in Viet Nam, men and women alike, it became impossible to work. However, the impact of the restrictions was not evenly distributed by gender. Total weekly hours worked by women were 88.8 per cent of the total for the fourth quarter of 2019. Men, on the other hand, worked 91.2 per cent of the total weekly hours worked in the fourth quarter of 2019. Interestingly, though, in the third quarter women's working hours recovered faster than those of men. The following paragraphs will analyze these findings in more detail and provide an analysis of the labour market dynamics behind them.

⁵⁸ This calculation is based on a 48-hour working week.

⁵⁹ ILO. April 2020. *COVID-19 and the labour market in Viet Nam*. Available at: https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-hanoi/documents/briefingnote/wcms_742134.pdf

Figure 17. Proportion of total hours worked compared to the fourth quarter of the previous year, 2019 and 2020

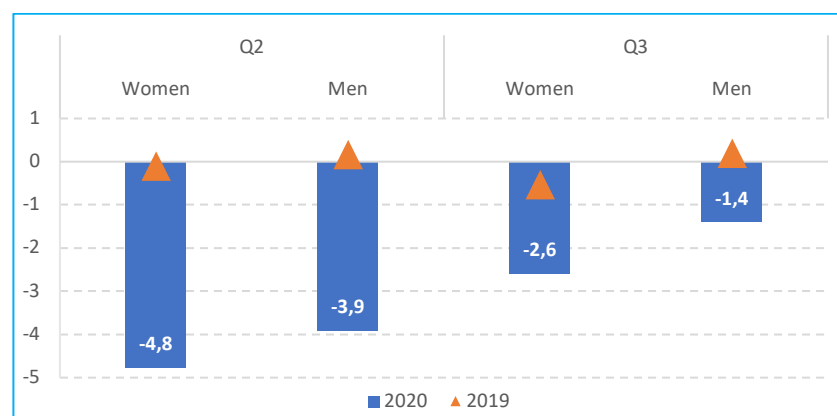


Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

Lower labour force participation was a determinant of the reduction in working hours in the second quarter, with larger numbers of women than men leaving the labour force, increasing Viet Nam's gender participation gap. The first part of this chapter discussed the respective levels of labour force participation of women and men until 2019. Although women were relatively active in the labour market compared to other countries in the region, or those at the same income level as Viet Nam, a gender gap was still visible. Since the advent of COVID-19, labour force participation fell sharply for both women and men, but women experienced the greater fall. The bars in Figure 18 show the changes in participation rates in 2020 compared to the last quarter of 2019. Women's participation dropped by 4.8 percentage points in the second quarter, down to 66.2 per cent, while men's fell 3.9 percentage points to 77.4 per cent. Therefore, women worked fewer hours in the second quarter because more than one million women became 'inactive'. This means that they either stopped working, did not look for new employment or were not available to work, or both.

The recovery in working hours in the third quarter coincided with workers coming back to the labour force. However, participation levels remained lower than in 2019, and the gender-based participation gap was the most significant in a decade. The participation rate of women increased to 68.3 per cent and for men it increased to 80.0 per cent. However, the gap at the end of the third quarter stood at 11.6 percentage points in favour of men, up from an average of 9.5 over the past decade. By way of comparison, the triangle marker in Figure 35 reveals the change in labour force participation rates in the second and third quarter of 2019, compared to the end of 2018. The seasonal variations, whether positive or negative, were minimal, and well below one percentage point.

Figure 18. Change in the labour force participation rate compared to the fourth quarter of the previous year, 2019 and 2020



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

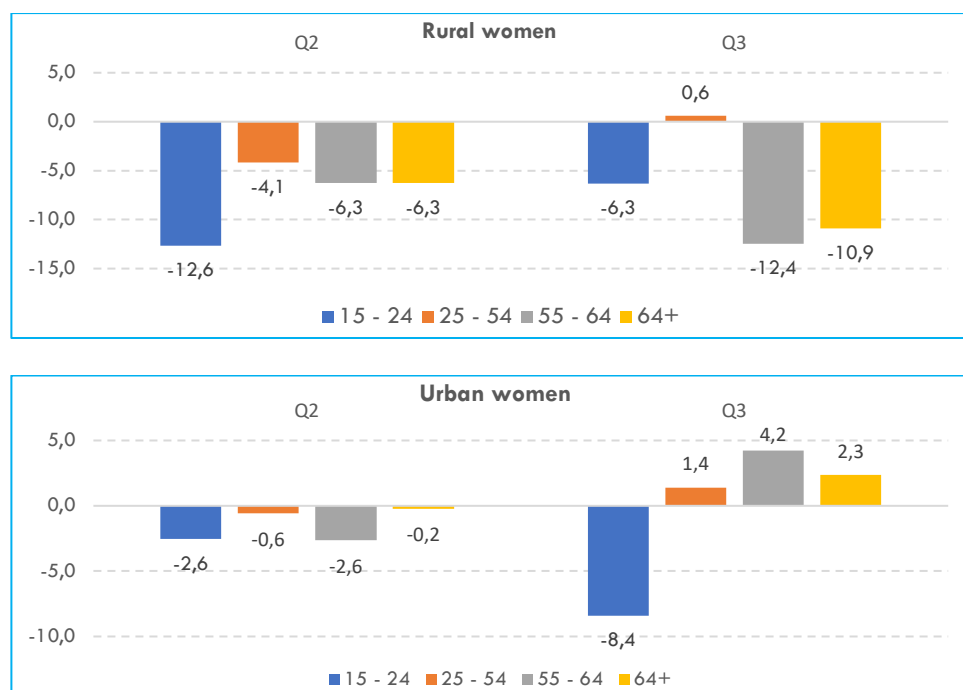
Younger and older women account for the bulk of those who left the labour force during the second and third quarters of 2020. Those women between 15 and 24 years of age, as well as those from 55 years of age, now account for 24.7 per cent of the labour force, whereas in 2019 they accounted for 28 per cent. Figure 19 investigates the change in female participation by age and geographic location. Older women are especially likely to have left the labour force in rural areas. This trend started in the second quarter and continued through the third quarter. Younger women, on the other hand, have been especially affected by the COVID-19 crisis in urban areas, with an increased impact noticeable in the third quarter.

These findings are likely to be the result of the multiple vulnerabilities women faced before the pandemic. Younger and older women often hold the least stable types of employment, compared to women in the prime age (25-54) group. In Viet Nam before the pandemic, women aged between 15-24 were 5 per cent more likely to be in informal employment than prime-age women, additionally younger women who are employees were 20 per cent less likely to have a permanent contract of employment. Virtually all women above 55 years of age were employed informally, since this coincides with the statutory retirement age. When decreased exports and workplace closures dramatically reduced economic output in key employment sectors, including in services and agriculture, these age groups were more exposed to the risk of losing their jobs. An analysis of sectors of employment and the employment status of women between the last quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2020 confirms this. The bulk of young urban women who left employment during this period were in unstable jobs in the services sector, while most of the older women in rural areas who stopped working were own-account workers and contributing family workers in agriculture.

In addition, women in these age brackets typically work less hours and earn less. As employees, women aged between 15 and 24 earned 11.7 per cent less than the average for all women, and 50.6 per cent less if they were self-employed. Women aged over 55 earned 32.4 per cent less as employees and 21.4 per cent less if they were self-employed. During the months of the school closures, it is reasonable to imagine that households facing heightened

childcare needs would assign these responsibilities to the low-income earners, to have a reduced effect on family finances.

Figure 19. Change in female labour force participation rate compared to the fourth quarter of 2019, rural and urban, 2020



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey

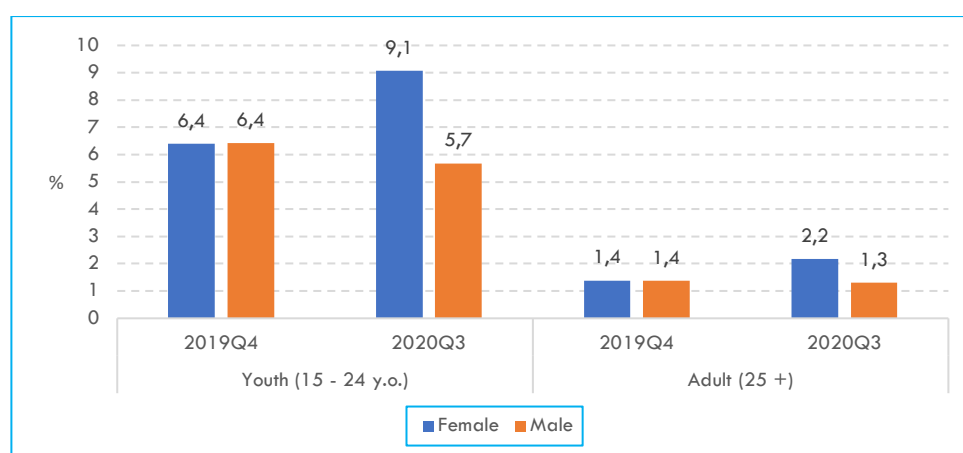
Another reason behind the reduction in working hours is an increase in female unemployment, while male unemployment remained stable. It is important to emphasise that the scale of the increase was moderate, compared to the increase in female inactivity. In the second quarter of 2020, Viet Nam had 120 thousand more unemployed women than in the last quarter of 2019, while 1.8 million more women were 'inactive'. This shows that the increase in joblessness generated by the COVID-19 crisis was mostly due to women leaving the labour force, and to a much lesser extent, to women becoming unemployed. The same scenario applied to men. This is an unsurprising consequence of the nature of the COVID-19 crisis. Countries across the world, and to a lesser extent Viet Nam, have had to reduce their economic activity to ensure social distancing. Under these circumstances, for most affected workers, it became impossible to work outside of the home⁶⁰, and looking for new employment when lockdown or workplace closure measures are imposed becomes pointless.

Although levels of female unemployment remained relatively moderate, the COVID-19 crisis has generated a gap in unemployment to the disadvantage of women, which was not there before the pandemic. In the last quarter of 2019, there was no visible difference between male and female unemployment rates. This applied to both youth and adult unemployment. As the pandemic hit Viet Nam's labour market, its impact on unemployment was clearly uneven across the labour force. Figure 20 shows that women's unemployment rate increased

⁶⁰ ILO. 2020. *Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work*. Second edition. Geneva: ILO.

in the third quarter of 2020 compared to the fourth quarter of 2019. This means that of the reduced number of women in the labour force in the third quarter of 2020, a higher proportion do not have a job despite being available and actively job seeking.⁶¹ Young women faced the most pronounced increase (2.7 percentage points). Almost one in ten women aged between 15 and 24 who are seeking work and available to start work are unable to find a job. The unemployment rate of adult women increased moderately (less than one percentage point). The male unemployment rate, on the other hand, did not increase. Indeed, the male youth unemployment rate decreased, while for adult males it remained virtually unchanged. A comparison of unemployment rates in the third quarter with those of the same period in 2019, which eliminates the effect of seasonality, leads to remarkably similar results.

Figure 20. Unemployment rate by age (Q3 2020 versus Q4 2019)



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

An analysis of working hours lost by the economic sector in the second quarter of 2020, when the impact of restrictions was felt most acutely, reveals that the consequences of COVID-19 fell most heavily on sectors employing a large proportion of women. Figure 38 reveals the share of total working hours lost in Viet Nam's economic sectors, by the number of women employed in them. The chart focuses on paid employment because, as already mentioned, the fall in hours worked among women in vulnerable employment was largely attributable to a reduction in labour force participation in agriculture in rural areas. The X-axis indicates the share of working hours lost in the second quarter of 2020 (when working hours experienced the largest drop) compared to the same period of 2019. The Y-axis measures the share of women employed in each sector. The size of the bubble represents the total number of men and women employed in each sector. An association between concentration of female workers and working hours lost emerges clearly from the chart. Economic sectors with relatively higher shares of female employment have experienced an equally high loss of working hours due to the COVID-19 crisis.

It is important to remember that working hours fell in the second quarter for a variety of reasons. Workers faced a compulsory reduction in the duration of their shifts, job rotations,

⁶¹ As was mentioned above, Viet Nam's national definition of unemployment (used in this report) also includes those not seeking employment due to the off season, bad weather, effects of the environment, family obligations, relaxing, temporary illness or injury, and some other reasons.

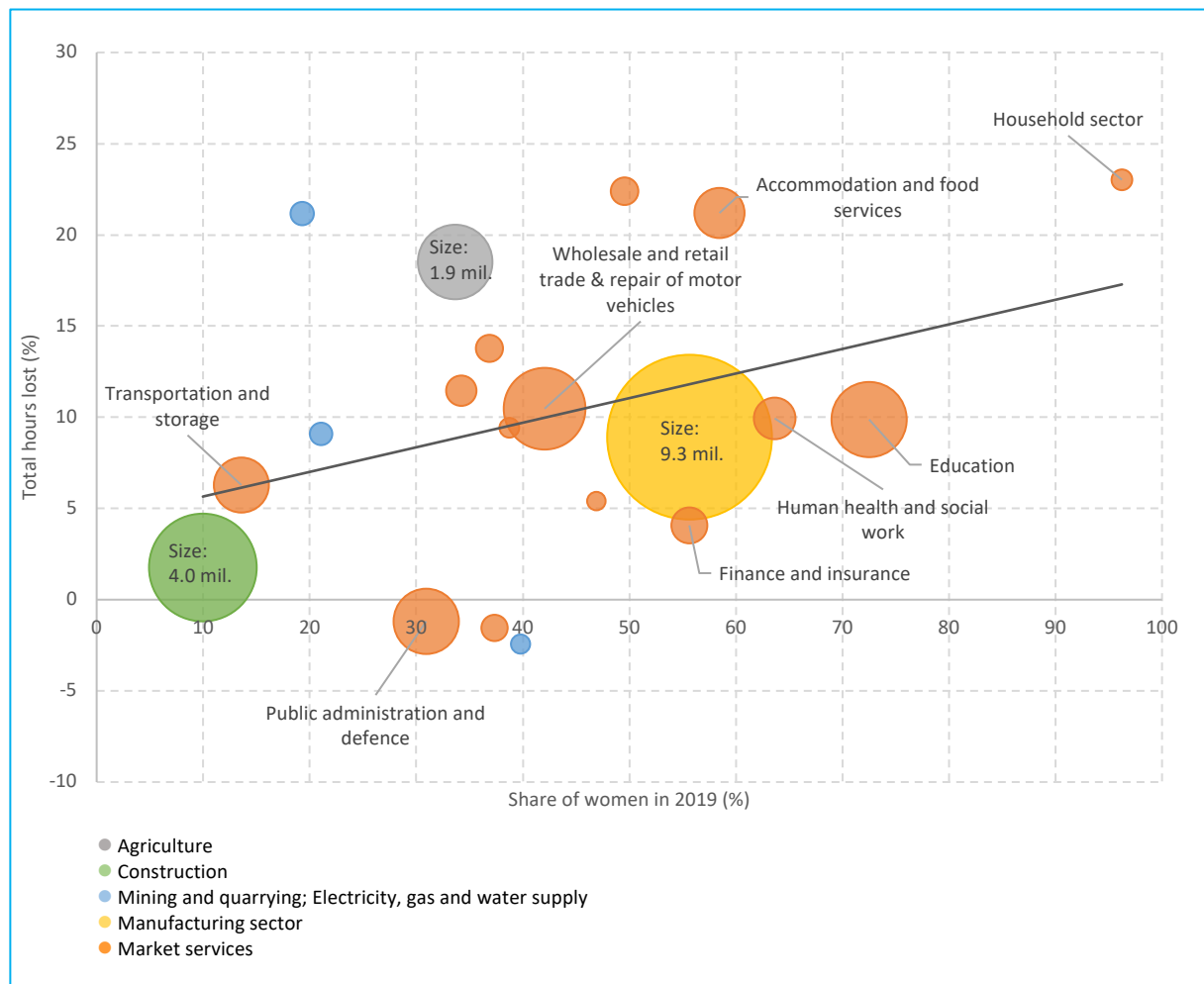
temporary contract suspension, temporary workplace closure, and ultimately, job losses. Through this chapter, we have identified several reasons for these outcomes, including the closure of non-essential businesses during the short national lockdown, the challenges faced by manufacturing enterprises due to lower international demand and order cancellation, and, possibly, the need to give up employment in order to look after children during school closures. Figure 21 below shows the combined result of all these factors.

There was a pronounced reduction in total hours worked by women in paid employment.

As explained above these jobs are associated with a degree of job stability, so this finding is concerning. It is clear from Figure 38 that women in paid employment were more negatively affected than men, as industries with a greater share of women workers saw large percentage reduction in hours worked. Moreover, this impacted on a significant *number* of women, given that the sectors worst affected employ a high proportion of women. In the third quarter our analysis revealed a slight improvement, but it remained the case that men and women in paid employment worked fewer total hours than in the third quarter of 2019. It also remained the case that the sectors employing the largest share and number of women were most negatively affected. An improvement in these sectors in the long term will be critical to future access to decent jobs for women.

The manufacturing and service sectors, in particular, experienced significant working hour losses in the second quarter. For women in paid employment, jobs in hospitality, household and other service sectors were particularly negatively impacted by the crisis. More importantly for women total hours in the manufacturing sector fell by 9 per cent, affecting approximately 5.1 million women that were in paid employment in this sector in 2019. Within this sector clothing manufacture was particularly badly hit; whereby the total hours worked by women in this industry fell by 14.1 per cent compared to the second quarter of 2019. Women in these sectors are likely to have been exposed to job rotation, temporary contract suspensions, and other arrangements adopted by enterprises to cope with the drop in international and, to a lesser extent, domestic demand. Among women in vulnerable employment, on the other hand, most hours lost were in the agricultural sector in rural areas. This is driven by the fall in female labour force participation mentioned above. By contrast, in the sectors which employ a high proportion of men, especially construction, transportation and storage and public administration and defense, total hours worked either fell slightly, or even increased.

Figure 21. Paid employment: percentage of total hours lost (between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020) by share of women in each economic sector, 2019



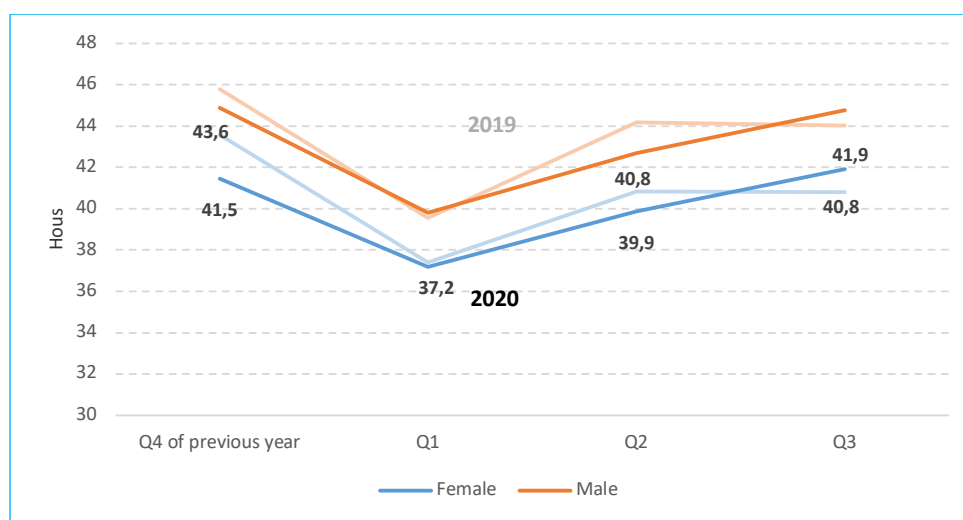
Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey⁶²

In the third quarter of this year, those women who were employed worked longer hours than usual, possibly to make up for income losses incurred in the second quarter. Figure 38 shows that women who were employed in the third quarter of 2020 worked more hours per week on average than in either the third or fourth quarter of 2019. In fact, they worked on average one hour and 8 minutes longer per week in the third quarter of 2020 than in the same period last year. The pattern for men was similar but moderate. They worked on average 44 minutes longer per week in the third quarter of 2020. Figure 22 below shows that the hours worked by all employed women taken together were significantly higher in the third quarter of 2020 than would have been expected from looking at the evolution of total hours worked in 2019. This indicates that women in employment sought to work more hours as schools and businesses were allowed to reopen.⁶³

⁶² Based on the ISIC Rev. 4. Agriculture refers to ISIC Rev. 4 category A. Manufacturing refers to ISIC Rev. 4 category C. Construction refers to ISIC Rev. 4 category F. Mining and quarrying; Electricity, gas and water supply refers to ISIC Rev. 4 categories B, D & E. Services refer to ISIC Rev. 4 categories G to U.

⁶³ Another factor partially contributed to the increase in average hours for those in employment. The shares of young urban women and older women living in rural areas who left employment were likely to be working relatively less hours than the average. Their leaving employment also contributed to the overall increase in average working hours of women.

Figure 22. Average hours actually worked per week in first three quarters of 2019 and 2020 compared to the fourth quarter of the previous year, 2019 and 2020



Sources: Viet Nam's Labour Force Survey.

In conclusion, the impact of COVID-19 on Viet Nam's labour market has not only exacerbated existing inequalities, but also created new ones. Although women before the pandemic were more economically active than the regional average or the average of lower middle-income countries, a gap still existed. The consequences of the pandemic have widened that gap. In 2019, there was virtually no difference between male and female unemployment rates in the country. By the end of the third quarter of 2020, a gap was apparent, to the disadvantage of women, especially young women. Before COVID-19, women carried a measurable double burden, consisting of several working hours comparable to that of men, plus the hours in household work that were more than double that of men. In the third quarter of this year, with economic activity starting up again and schools reopening, women and men increased their working hours, possibly to make up for lost income. Women on average added more hours than men, making the double burden even more onerous.

At the root of labour market inequalities there is the traditional role that women are expected to play, perpetuated by both socio-cultural norms as well as by the country's legislation. The fact that women have a double burden to carry is not only well known in Viet Nam, but also traditionally encouraged. A Vietnamese saying reminds women to be "good at national tasks (i.e. work outside the household) and good at housework". The response at policy and societal level has been an acknowledgment of such traditional roles as a given, and a tendency to 'protect' women in them. Hence the lower mandatory retirement age for women than men, or the exclusion of female workers from certain jobs. These choices have perpetuated a traditional gender division of labour which underpins the inequalities described in this chapter.

Equality in Viet Nam's world of work can only be built through a shift in approach, from protecting women, to providing equal opportunity to all workers, irrespective of their gender.

At the policy level, the Labour Code adopted by Viet Nam in 2019 opens opportunities to close gender gaps in employment. For example, the Code introduces a reduction in the retirement age gap, which will be gradually implemented as of January 2021. In addition, under the new Code female workers will no longer be excluded by law from certain occupations considered as harmful for child-bearing and parenting functions. Rather, they will have a right to choose whether to engage in such occupations, after being fully informed of the possible risks involved. Signs of progress show a willingness to improve equal opportunity in the world of work. However, the Labour Code still frames provisions towards gender equality as pertaining to ‘female workers’. Traditional gender roles are still entrenched in the mind sets of individuals and influence their socio-economic behaviour. Viet Nam’s *Socio-Economic Development Strategy for 2021-2030* is expected to call for gender gaps to be reduced across several areas of the political, economic, and social lives of citizens. If this goal is to be achieved, a genuine process of challenging and eradicating traditional gender inequality needs to begin.

UNPAID CARE WORK

The significance of unpaid care work from an economic perspective.

Different terms are used in international literature to describe and analyse unpaid care work. This paper uses the ILO definition of “unpaid care work” as caring for persons or undertaking housework without any explicit monetary compensation.⁶⁴ A common alternative formulation is ‘unpaid care and domestic work’. The definition used by the CGEP is understood to encompass these elements.

Globally, and without exception, women perform the majority of unpaid care work. The ILO estimates that, worldwide, women perform three quarters (76.2 per cent) of unpaid care work. This equates to 3 hours more than men, daily.⁶⁵ Despite the hours and skills involved, and the fact that equivalent services in the public domain such as health care and catering command fees, care work remains invisible in policies and budgets because few countries count them as part of the conventional definition of economic activity in their System of National Accounts.⁶⁶ Unpaid care work is regarded as underpinning the gender inequalities in economic participation and leadership, and reflective of the lower esteem and undervaluing of the work that women primarily undertake.

In Viet Nam, the perception that women and girls should be responsible for unpaid care work is deeply embedded in society. In Viet Nam, the term, “unpaid care work” is not used in the official documents. Instead, the term “housework” (*việc nhà*) or “family work” (*công việc gia đình*) has been used widely in documents including the *Marriage and Family Law (2015)*, the *Gender Equality Law (2006)* and the *National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020*. By using

⁶⁴ ILO. 2018. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. Geneva: ILO.

⁶⁵ This is distinct from ‘paid’ care work which encompasses a wide range of services including doctors, nurses, teacher and formal sector care workers. International Labour Organization (ILO). 2018. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. Geneva: ILO.

⁶⁶ Sharp, R. 2003. *Budgeting for Equity: Gender Budget Initiatives within a Framework of Performance Oriented Budgeting*. New York: UN Women.

this term, it is understood as “small chores” which diminishes the socio-economic value of the work and the people who perform it. The extent of women’s unpaid care work is generating debate in Viet Nam. The two successive NSGEs have set a target to reduce the proportion of women’s time spent on housework and unpaid family care work relative to men. The new target in the NSGE 2021-30 is to shorten the time women spend on these two tasks by 1.4 times, by 2030⁶⁷. However, the nature of unpaid care work is not well understood, and the topic has not featured in economic development discourse in Viet Nam, to date. A proper understanding of the nature and extent of unpaid care work is essential to promote actions for a change in policy design.

Women’s disproportionate share of unpaid care work. In 2016, a study was undertaken for the first time to estimate time spent on unpaid care work by women and men. It found that Vietnamese women spent around 270 - 300 minutes per day on unpaid care work, as compared to 140 - 170 minutes per day for men.⁶⁸ The 2019 Labour Force Survey, included a question on time spent on housework (*việc nhà*)⁶⁹, also for the first time. The data showed that women and men spent 18.84 hours and 8.93 hours, respectively per week on housework. The time spent by women on unpaid care work (items no. 1-4 in Table 1 below) is more than double that of men.

Table 1: Average number of hours for unpaid domestic/family work per week spent, by sex (hours)

	Tasks	Total	Men	Women
1	Household cleaning, laundry, cooking & shopping	7.75	4.69	10.73
2	Prepare food and beverages (e.g. flour grinding, making jam, drying fish, etc.)	1.49	0.78	2.18
3	Taking care of children under 18 years of age	3.97	2.63	5.28
4	Care, assistance or support for household members (aged 18 and over) including family with disabilities, sick or elderly	0.44	0.33	0.54
5	Making products for household consumption (furniture, pottery, clothes, weaving carpets, etc.)	0.08	0.09	0.07
6	Self-repairing or maintaining household items (repairing broken objects or equipment, repainting walls, etc.)	0.16	0.30	0.02
7	Self-construction, expansion or upgrading of a house, or other construction	0.07	0.11	0.02
		17.93	8.93	18.84

Source: Calculated from GSO. 2019. *Labour Force Survey*.

The value of unpaid care work can be quantified. The economic value of unpaid care work can be measured by the time spent performing the work. The ILO estimates unpaid care work to be around 9 percent of global GDP or USD 11 trillion, in which the value of women’s unpaid care work accounts for 6.6 percent of global GDP or USD 8 trillion. Ahead of a nationally representative time use study, Action Aid’s study conducted in 9 provinces of Viet Nam calculated that unpaid care work equated to around 20 percent of the total GDP of Viet Nam.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Objective 3, Target 1.

⁶⁸ Action Aid, 2016. *Make a House Become a Home*; Action Aid. 2017. *Unpaid Care Work: Redistribution for Sustainable Development*.

⁶⁹ In Vietnamese language, referring to housework includes both unpaid care work and some types of unpaid work for the household’s consumption.

⁷⁰ Action Aid. 2016. *op.cit*

Based on the hours, women would make a contribution of 1.1 trillion VND to the economy each year if they spent their time in paid work in the care economy, rather than in unpaid care work. At the same time, this could raise household incomes by 920,972 VND per month.⁷¹

The burden of unpaid care work hinders girls' and women's education and further training.

The burden of unpaid care work has negative impacts on a range of domains. School attendance by girls and further education and training opportunities for women are one example. Gender inequality in education, particularly in graduate and vocational education levels, is partly attributable to the gendered caregiver role. As indicated in a large-scale study on the determinants of gender equality in Viet Nam, 20 per cent of the women surveyed and around 7 per cent of men reported having to help with household chores as one of the three top reasons for discontinuing education.⁷² Regarding the proportion of trained employees, this rate has increased for both women and men over the period 2015 – 2018, at 18 to 19 per cent of women and 23 to 24 percent of men, respectively. However, the rate for men has always been higher than for women. The rate of trained workers is especially low among female workers in rural areas (11.8 per cent), female workers in the agriculture, forestry and fishery sector (3 per cent) and female workers working in non-state sector (11.1 per cent).⁷³ Moreover, as reported in the education section of the CGEP, the enrolment rate for girls in upper secondary schooling in Viet Nam is higher than for boys. However, it is likely to be more challenging for girls to continue further (post-school) learning and training due to their gender roles which prioritises unpaid care work. This hinders their opportunities for stable employment, a secure job and a good wage.

The burden of unpaid care work as a barrier for women's participation in the labour market.

Time constraints are a definitive barrier for women to participate in economic activities. The higher the gender gaps in the distribution of care responsibilities, the higher the gender gaps in labour force participation.⁷⁴ There is a correlation between the female labour force participation rate and time spent on unpaid care work. The OECD notes that, "in countries where women spend an average of five hours on unpaid care activities, 50 per cent of women in the working age-population are active in the labour force, while in countries where women spend three hours on unpaid care work, 60 per cent of women are active."⁷⁵ A similar finding has been highlighted by the ILO that a more equal sharing of unpaid care between women and men is associated with higher levels of women's participation in the labour market.⁷⁶

Figure 23: Distribution of paid work, unpaid care work and total work among working age respondents: global average, by gender, latest year

⁷¹ Action Aid. 2017. op.cit

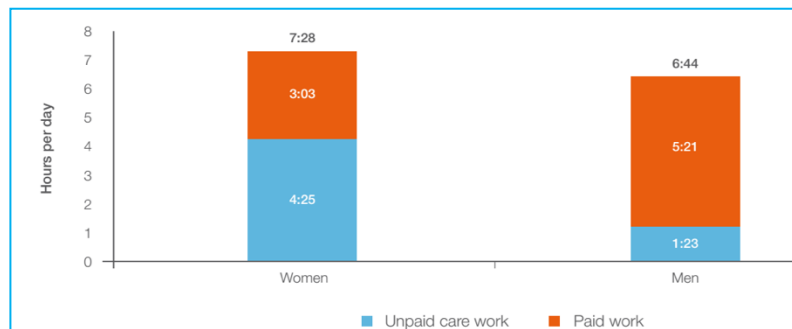
⁷² ISDS. 2015. *Women, Land and Law in Vietnam. Vietnam Land Access for Women (LAW) Program*. Hanoi: ICRW & ISDS.

⁷³ GSO. 2019. *Gender Statistics in Viet Nam in 2018*

⁷⁴ ILO.2009. *The Unpaid Care Work –Paid Work Connection*. Working Paper No.86 by Rania Antonopoulos

⁷⁵ OECD. 2014. *Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps in Labor Outcomes*.

⁷⁶ ILO. 2018. Op.cit



Source: ILO. 2018. *Care work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*.

Although the rate of female labour force participation in Viet Nam has remained high, around 72 per cent as compared with 82 per cent for men over the period 2015-2019,⁷⁷ the gender gap has been static at 10 percentage points for close to a decade. Clearly, unpaid care work is a critical factor influencing women's employment. As indicated by a recent ISDS study, more than 20 per cent of women did not work due to childcare responsibilities, as compared to 2 per cent of men.⁷⁸ McKinsey & Company (2018) has estimated that closing the gender gaps in labour force participation, increasing women's hours in paid work, especially in high productivity sectors, could contribute an estimated 10 per cent of Viet Nam's GDP by 2025, equivalent to US\$40 billion.⁷⁹ This argument and calculation is evidence that when women are relieved of their unpaid domestic responsibilities, they would make a significant contribution to the country's economic growth.

Burden of unpaid care work limits women's choices of decent work.

Types of employment. Despite Viet Nam's comparatively higher female labour force participation than their global peers,⁸⁰ many Vietnamese women are in precarious employment situations. The data suggests that women aged 25 and above tend to choose employment that is close to home and gives them more time for family.⁸¹ Flexibility in working conditions to accommodate care responsibilities rates highly for women in Viet Nam. However, it means that women remain over-represented in low paying jobs and insecure work as a result.

Wage gap. Persistent gender inequalities in income are found in almost all labour markets. Vietnamese women face a significant gendered income gap. Men's income is higher than that of women in all economic sectors, areas and professions. In 2018, the average salary of women workers was 5.38 million VND/month while that of men was 6.07 million VND/month. The gender pay gap index⁸² was 0.89, reducing slowly over the period of 2011-2020.⁸³ Looking at the workers' income by occupational groups, the unskilled/low-skilled labor (where women are over-represented) received the lowest income (3.7 million and 4.4 million VND for women and men respectively) and the group of leaders (where men predominate) had the highest

⁷⁷ GSO. Labor Force Survey, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019

⁷⁸ ISDS (Institute for Social Development Studies). 2015. Social Determinants of Gender Inequality in Vietnam. Hong Duc Publisher.

⁷⁹ McKinsey. 2018. Cited in WB & IFC. 2020. Tackling Childcare: The Business Case for Employer-Supported Childcare in Vietnam

⁸⁰ World Bank. 2019. How to Design the Viet Nam Labor Code to Improve Gender Equality.

⁸¹ ISDS. 2015. op.cit

⁸² The gender pay gap index is the ratio calculated by dividing average salary per month of women workers by that of men workers.

⁸³ ILSSA (2019). Report on Tendency of Labour and Social Affairs in Viet Nam.

income (8.6 and 10.1 million VND for women and men, respectively).⁸⁴ Gender gaps in income are a result of a range of gender differences. These include differences in the type and level of education and professional training, and types of employment, which are shaped by women's need to accommodate unpaid care work and stereotypes that cluster them into undervalued occupations⁸⁵ or in part-time or informal employment because they need to balance work and family. These time and opportunity costs contribute substantively to income gaps between women and men, and they can restrict women's access to decent work.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Above ASEAN average performance. Private sector leadership is a domain where Viet Nam is recognised as a good performer. Increasing the proportion of women in business ownership has been a government target in the two successive versions of the *National Strategy on Gender Equality (2011-20, 2021-30)*, demonstrating a consistent political commitment to this outcome. According to IFC data, Viet Nam has the highest rate of women on the boards of publicly listed companies for the ASEAN region at 15.4 per cent (after Thailand at 20.4 per cent). Viet Nam is also second highest in terms of women in the role of Chair of the board, in 7.8 per cent of companies (ranked after Indonesia with 11.7 per cent). While the ASEAN averages are admittedly low overall, Viet Nam's higher ranking suggests the presence of factors that are comparatively more supportive of women's corporate leadership than its regional peers. This warrants further analysis. Women are at the helm of some of Viet Nam's largest corporations such as Vinamilk, BRG, Vietjet, and VinFast, as well as multinational companies such as IBM Viet Nam. However, these numbers still fall short of the 30 per cent management or boardroom target which is a threshold for women to impact company culture, dynamics and decisions.⁸⁶

Lonely at the top. Barriers exist to women's efforts to rise to the most senior positions. The IFC report noted that 47 per cent of listed companies in Viet Nam have no women on their boards, at all.⁸⁷ An ILO study further found that of the 70 per cent of enterprises in Viet Nam that have a board of directors, only 5 per cent had a gender balanced board.⁸⁸ Only 22 per cent of senior management positions of listed companies are held by women,⁸⁹ with data suggesting one third of these women are in companies within the information and communications sector in Viet Nam.⁹⁰ An ILO enterprise survey in Viet Nam also found that of middle and senior management positions held by women, they are clustered in support functions such as human resources (65 per cent), finance and administration (52 per cent) and marketing and sales (43 per cent). Even where qualifications are equivalent, women also

⁸⁴ GSO. Labor Force Survey 2018

⁸⁵ UN Women. 2015. Progress of World's Women 2015 -2016

⁸⁶ International Labour Organization (ILO) and Investing in Women. 2020. *Leading to Success: The business case for women in business and management in Viet Nam*. Hanoi: ILO.

⁸⁷ International Finance Organisation (IFC). 2019. *Board Gender Diversity in ASEAN*. Washington DC: IFC.

⁸⁸ ILO. 2019. *Women in Business and Management: The business case for change*. Geneva: ILO

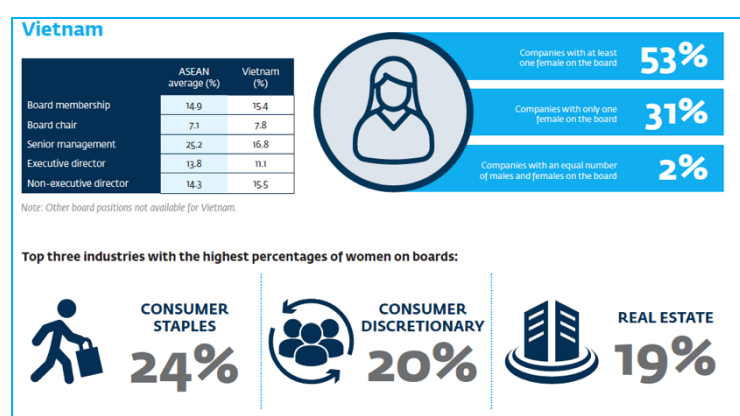
⁸⁹ Boston Consulting Group. 2017. *Moving Towards Gender Diversity in South East Asia*. Singapore: BCG.

⁹⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO) and Investing in Women. 2020. op.cit

tend to manage smaller teams than their male peers.⁹¹ This occupational segregation and narrower experience base restricts their rise to leadership positions.⁹²

Barriers are also present for women in smaller scale firms, as highlighted by Viet Nam not meeting its *NSGE 2011-2020* target that 35 per cent of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) would be owned by women by 2020.⁹³ In some cases, this may relate to the intent of the enterprise. Sometimes women's business ownership, especially SME ownership, represents a 'necessity' rather than 'growth-oriented' enterprise which offers a way for women to earn income flexibly, around their other responsibilities, with little start-up capital. In Viet Nam, shares may be issued to family members for estate and tax purposes, and so some women's ownership may be in name only.⁹⁴ Structural and attitudinal barriers faced by women in business are discussed further below.

Figure23: Overview of the gender diversity of publicly listed companies in Viet Nam.



Source: International Finance Organisation (IFC). 2019⁹⁵

Women's business ownership is increasing, but slowly According to a study by the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2019) of 10,000 enterprises from the Provincial Competitiveness Index Survey, data from the Department of Business Registration Management under MPI reported a total of 285,689 women-owned enterprises, accounting for 24 per cent of the total. With around one in five businesses owned by a woman in 2011 (21 per cent), according to the same dataset, the past decade has seen only a three per cent increase in ownership. Data from the GSO Enterprise Surveys differ slightly, reporting that 22.4 per cent of enterprises in 2015 were women-owned, and that figure increased to 27.8 per cent by 2017.⁹⁶ By either source, the increase in women's business ownership has been slow.

⁹¹ Institute of Social Development Studies (ISDS). 2015. *Social Determinants of Gender Inequality in Vietnam*. Hanoi: ISDS.

⁹² ILO. 2019. *Women in Business and Management: The business case for change*. Geneva: ILO cited in International Labour Organization (ILO) and Investing in Women. 2020. *Leading to Success: The business case for women in business and management in Viet Nam*. Hanoi: ILO.

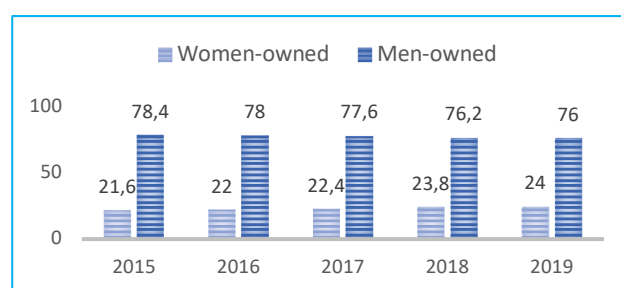
⁹³ Government of Viet Nam. 2020. *op.cit.*

⁹⁴ UN Women. 2016. *Gender Equality and Taxation in Viet Nam: Issues and Recommendations*. *op.cit.*

⁹⁵ International Finance Organisation (IFC). 2019. *Board Gender Diversity in ASEAN*. Washington DC: IFC.

⁹⁶ Government of Viet Nam. 2020. *op. cit*

Figure 24: Proportion of business ownership, by gender, 2015-2019



Source: Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI). 2019.⁹⁷

According to the VCCI report, three quarters of women-owned businesses were registered in the Trade and Services sector, underlining their particular exposure to COVID-19-related closures of borders and social distancing requirements which greatly reduced shop, restaurant and hotel business hours and foot traffic. Women own a minor share of businesses across all four sectors measured, accounting for 28 per cent in trade and services, 23 per cent in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, 18 per cent in manufacturing, and 13 per cent in construction. The top five cities with the highest share of women-owned enterprises are Hồ Chí Minh (28 per cent), Hà Nội (27 per cent), Hải Phòng (27 per cent), Khánh Hòa (26 per cent) and Lào Cai (26 per cent). Da Nang was ranked eighth. As employers, in a separate report, UN Women noted that one third of full-time employees within corporate firms are women.⁹⁸ In the VCCI survey, 17.8 per cent of all women-owned businesses were joint stock. Only 0.4 per cent of women-owned enterprises are currently listed on the Hanoi or HCMC Stock Exchange. This exceptionally low rate merits further examination.⁹⁹

Concentration in SME ownership. It is generally acknowledged that women tend to be clustered in Small and Medium Enterprise ownership, with the majority having fewer than 50 employees. Only 17 per cent of large enterprises surveyed were run by women. Around two thirds of the businesses surveyed by the VCCI (69 per cent) had less than VND 5 billion in business capital. However, this differs only slightly from the 64 per cent of male-owned enterprises.¹⁰⁰

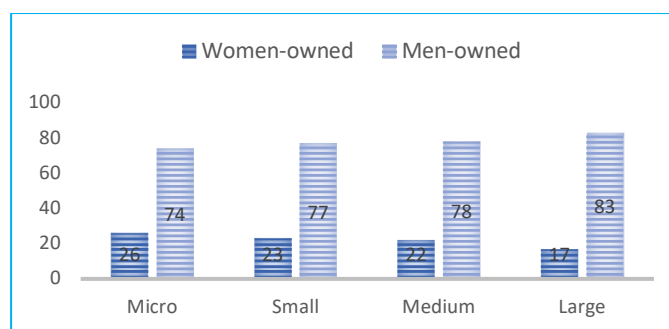
Figure 25: Proportion of male and female business ownership, by firm size, 2018

⁹⁷ Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI). 2019. *Doing Business in Viet Nam: An assessment from women-owned enterprises' perspective*. Hanoi: VCCI.

⁹⁸ Data from GSO Enterprise Survey 2015 cited in UN Women. 2016. *Gender Equality and Taxation in Viet Nam: Issues and Recommendations*. op.cit

⁹⁹ Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI). 2019. *Doing Business in Viet Nam: An assessment from women-owned enterprises' perspective*. Hanoi: VCCI.

¹⁰⁰ Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI). 2019. *Doing Business in Viet Nam: An assessment from women-owned enterprises' perspective*. Hanoi: VCCI.



Source: Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI). 2019.¹⁰¹

Equivalence in education, and employers of other women. The women business owners surveyed by VCCI were as qualified as their male peers. An estimated 68.6 per cent of women business owners possessed a Bachelor or Masters level qualification, as compared with 71.9 per cent of men. Notably, women-owned enterprises performed on par with men in terms of loss, breaking even, and profit reported for the previous year. An estimated 64 per cent of women-owned enterprises reported a profit, compared with 63 per cent of those owned by men.¹⁰² A different government dataset from 2018 estimated that of the total number of SMEs, women-owned enterprises accounted for 31.6 per cent of the total in urban areas and 18.7 per cent in rural areas.¹⁰³ The report noted that women-led SMEs account for the employment of more than one million women workers.¹⁰⁴ Another report in 2018 underlined the link between women's business ownership and women's employment in Viet Nam, finding that women-owned SMEs employed a higher percentage of women workers in Viet Nam than men-owned, at 43.4 per cent versus 36 per cent, respectively.¹⁰⁵

Gender barriers facing women in business. Several recent studies have highlighted the practical and attitudinal barriers faced by women in business. A UN Women study (2020) on the topic found that although the education level of women in business is on a par with men (63 and 65 per cent, respectively), women's lower level of STEM qualifications (32.8 and 54.1 per cent, respectively in their study cohort) results in the under-representation of women in the ICT sector and business requiring innovation. The small size of women's enterprises also hampers their ability to secure official financial assistance or competitive funds.¹⁰⁶ A needs assessment of 394 men and women-owned businesses conducted in 2016-17, in parallel with the drafting of the SME Support Law, highlighted differences in the challenges that women reported relative to their male counterparts.¹⁰⁷ These included access to financial resources (including in relation to collateral, loan terms, priority products and interest rates), with two thirds (66 per cent) of women-owned enterprises reporting limited information on access to

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Government of Viet Nam. 2019. *National Review Report on 25-Year Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action*. Accessed 6 October 2020. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/64/national-reviews/vietnam.pdf?la=en&vs=114>

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Viet Nam Women Entrepreneurs Council (VWEC), The Asia Foundation and Mekong Business Initiative. 2018. *Needs Assessment of Women-Owned Small and Medium Enterprises in Viet Nam*. Hanoi: VWEC.

¹⁰⁶ UN Women. 2020. *Review of the implementation of small and medium enterprises (SMES) support legislation and the capacity building needs and training services for women-owned SMES and women entrepreneurs in Viet Nam - Study report*. Hanoi: UN Women.

¹⁰⁷ Viet Nam Women Entrepreneurs Council (VWEC), The Asia Foundation and Mekong Business Initiative. 2018. *Needs Assessment of Women-Owned Small and Medium Enterprises in Viet Nam*. Hanoi: VWEC.

capital, lacking relationships to help access capital, lacking negotiation skills when borrowing, and limited support from spouse and family. Women appeared to be more disadvantaged than men in a number of business fundamentals, including: information on markets, business linkages and new clients; access to legal consultancy services which may be in-house in larger corporations; information on marketing, sales and corporate governance; and support in trade promotion as well. Women also reported that these difficulties posed challenges to balancing work and family responsibilities.

Prevailing prejudice. The VCCI study highlighted the ‘social prejudice’ reported by the women it surveyed. These prejudices ranged from: the perception of women’s natural competency with housework but not with management and business; that women should assume ‘second place’ rather than top leadership in a company, which should be occupied by a man; that women cannot concentrate due to their ‘primary’ focus on caring for their children and family; and that women are risk averse and not as equipped as men to make bold decisions.¹⁰⁸ The report noted that women identified ‘mountainous obstacles’ with the combination of business environment challenges and social prejudice. In practical terms, women also reported that the top obstacles faced were: finding customers (63 per cent), market instability (34 per cent), and access to credit and finance (30 per cent). Women reported loan terms being an average of 13.7 months for women, as compared with 16 months for men, and almost half (40 per cent) of the women surveyed found loan procedures difficult. Access to available information on policies and the business support remained elusive for women, with information on land use, public investment plans, local industry and infrastructure plans being the most difficult to source. This is despite requirements for this information to be publicly available.¹⁰⁹

Biases and expectations can also be internalised. A 2020 study of social norms affecting women’s economic participation in Viet Nam found that the ‘caregiving norm’ – whereby women should be primarily responsible for child and family caretaking – was a meta-norm. In other words, it elicited strong adherence by women due to their belief that violating this norm would bring repercussions, and it is a major influence on behaviours and choices in relation to women’s work. The study found that certain industries (IT and the garment sector) and certain demographics (women under 25 years of age) showed more potential to challenge the norm and ignore the reference group (eg. husbands and partners). However, caregiving expectations of women continue to firmly dictate work patterns.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI). 2019. *Doing Business in Viet Nam: An assessment from women-owned enterprises’ perspective*. Hanoi: VCCI.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Nguyen, ML., Le, THG. et al. 2020. *Investigating Gendered Social Norms Affecting Women’s Economic Empowerment Related to Recruitment and Promotion in Vietnam*. Investing in Women and CARE International Vietnam.

FEMINIST APPROACH TO MIGRATION

MIGRATION IS A FEMINIST ISSUE

Women comprise slightly less than half of the total population of immigrants across the world. As advocacy and fight for equal rights, opportunities, and identity for women continue, migration opens doors to global education for immigrant women to obtain personal autonomy, independence, empowerment, and a chance of earning higher wages than what they would have earned in their home countries. On the opposite end, women may also face oppression, gender inequality, and discrimination based on their ethnicity, class, and race through migration. This section highlights the rewards and drawbacks experienced by migrant women and feminist theory approaches to global migration. Examining the experience of migrant women using feminist theory underpinnings could potentially lead to deeper understanding and recommendations for international policies as well as evidence-based, culturally competent interventions to assist women migrants.

Feminists pay close attention to migration because:

1) Almost half of migrants are women and girls. And women are increasingly migrating alone or as heads of their households.

Some 250 million people are international migrants – people who leave their home countries for opportunity or safety. Of these, nearly half are women and girls.

Some of this movement is driven by conflict. Today, a record-high number of people have been forcibly displaced from their homes. It is estimated that about half of all refugees are female.

Women and girls are also a significant proportion of economic migrants. They are the vast majority of all migrant domestic workers, for example.

And women are increasingly migrating on their own, or as the heads of their households. This trend represents a key opportunity for their economic independence and empowerment.

2) Female migrants face major risks, including sexual exploitation, trafficking and violence.

All migrants are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, but female migrants are particularly at risk. Women and girls account for 71 per cent of all human trafficking victims, according to a 2016 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Women and girls also face additional vulnerabilities when they are displaced by conflict or natural disaster.

Chaos and the breakdown of protection systems mean perpetrators can abuse with impunity. Lack of shelter, overcrowding in camps and poorly lit public toilets all increase the risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

Families under extreme hardship may also adopt coping mechanisms that jeopardize women's and girls' welfare. A UNFPA-supported study, for instance, found alarming rates of child marriage among some vulnerable Syrian refugee populations.

And when abuses occur, many migrant women and girls lack the resources, support systems and knowledge to seek help.

3) Migrant women face double discrimination – as women and as migrants.

Racism and xenophobia are serious concerns wherever large-scale migration takes place, and anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise in many countries.

Negative depictions of migrants and refugees often appear in the media, for instance, while the benefits migrants bring – such as their economic contributions – rarely make the news.

Women and girls can suffer doubly from these attitudes, experiencing not only discrimination based on their migrant status but also based on their gender.

This can take the form of discrimination and mistreatment – including sexual harassment – in the workplace, while seeking housing, while using public transportation, and while accessing education and health services.

4) Women do not stop getting pregnant when they are on the move.

Significant numbers of female migrants are likely to be pregnant or to become pregnant. While travelling – or in the chaos of displacement – women may lose access to sexual and reproductive health care, including family planning, antenatal services and safe childbirth care.

Lack of these services can be deadly. In fact, it is considered one of the leading causes of death, disease and disability among displaced women and girls of childbearing age. Even so, migration may be a pregnant woman's best option in a crisis setting, especially if insecurity or collapsing health systems threaten her life at home.

UNFPA works with governments and other partners to uphold migrants' right to access sexual and reproductive health care, including deploying mobile health clinics to displacement camps and refugee communities. But much more must be done to increase access to these services.

5) Women and girl migrants are more likely to face health problems – both in transit and at their destinations.

Even after female migrants reach their intended destinations, they continue to face barriers to health care, especially sexual and reproductive health services. Foreign-born migrants can face significantly higher risks of maternal injury and death than native-born women, for example, and higher risks of HIV infection, trauma and violence.

A majority of international migrants end up in cities, where they may face barriers to sexual and reproductive health care, including cost, overcrowding, transport challenges and insecure housing.

Yet evidence shows that there are major returns on investing in the health of migrant populations, particularly reproductive health care, such as family planning and prenatal care.

International migration

The migration of women has always been an important component of international migration. As of 2000, the United Nations Population Division estimates that 49 per cent of all international migrants were women or girls, and that the proportion of women among international migrants had reached 51 per cent in more developed regions.

Women often migrate officially as dependent family members of other migrants or to marry someone in another country. Female migrants are, however, increasingly part of flows of migrant workers, moving on their own to become the principal wage earners for their families. Most migrant women move voluntarily, but women and girls are also forced migrants leaving their countries in order to flee conflict, persecution, environmental degradation, natural disasters or other situations that affect their security, livelihood or habitat.

As a key organizing principle of society, gender is central to any discussion of the causes and consequences of international migration, including the process of decision-making involved and the mechanisms leading to migration. Previous approaches to documenting and understanding international migration have often disregarded the migration of women. Analytical frameworks either ignored the participation of women in international migration and their contributions or assumed that the causes and consequences of international migration were similar for migrant women and migrant men, thus avoiding an investigation of how migration and its outcomes differ by sex. It is important to understand the causes and consequences of international migration from a gender perspective because hierarchical social relations related to gender shape the migration experiences of migrants, whether male or female. Understanding whether migration occurs because of gender inequality or whether migration itself helps to perpetuate gender disparities is important to guide the formulation of policy and measures to address the specific needs of women who migrate.

The incorporation of a gender perspective in the analysis of migration demands considering four questions. First, how do the expectations, relationships and hierarchies associated with being female or male affect the potential for international migration and process of migration itself? Second, how do gender inequalities in the societies of destination affect the experiences of migrant women and migrant men? Third, to what extent and in what ways does migration benefit or disadvantage women and men? Fourth, what steps should be taken to ensure equal opportunities and outcomes for migrant women and migrant men?

The participation of women in migration depends on the social roles of women, their autonomy and capacity to make decisions, their access to resources, and the existing gender stratification in countries of origin and destination. Gender inequality can be a powerful factor leading to migration when women have economic, political and social expectations that cannot be realized in the country of origin. As with any migrant, the migration outcomes for women vary depending on whether their movement is voluntary or forced, and on whether their presence in the receiving country is legal or not. The findings of the World Survey permit certain generalizations regarding the causes and consequences of migration for women.

For both women and men, the economic and political context of the country of origin conditions how migration decisions are made and how migration occurs. When practices or policies in the country of origin discriminate against women by, for instance, limiting their access to resources or educational opportunities, or by hindering their political participation, the capacity of women to participate fully in society and contribute to it is reduced. These limitations also affect the potential of women to migrate and determine whether women can migrate autonomously or not. Gender relations within the family determine who migrates on their own, women or men. Gender norms about the inappropriateness of women migrating autonomously, the constraining effects of their traditional family roles, women's lack of social and economic independence, all hinder women's participation in international migration. The migration of women is also limited by their lack of connections to social networks in the country of destination that could provide information and resources to make the move possible. Women migrate to work abroad in response to gender-specific labour demand in countries of destination that reflects existing values, norms, stereotypes and hierarchies based on gender. Thus, although laws regarding the admission of migrant workers are generally gender neutral, the demand for domestic workers, nurses, and entertainers focuses on the recruitment of migrant women. Moreover, in countries of origin as well, female labour supply is the result of gender norms and stereotypes that gear women to certain traditionally female occupations. Recruitment intermediaries, whether private or official, also contribute to reinforce gender segregation in the labour market. In addition, expectations about reciprocity within the family in countries of origin may favour the migration of women if daughters are seen as more likely to remit consistently and to undertake the responsibility of helping the family left behind.

Migration is related to the level of empowerment of women, with migration levels among women being higher when female earning potential is more highly valued in the country of origin and women have access to local employment and income-generating opportunities. However, access to such opportunities may dampen the need or desire for migration. Migration affects not only the migrants themselves but also their family members even if they remain in the country of origin. Gender relations and gender hierarchies in both sending and receiving countries determine the gender-specific impact of migration. Women remaining behind when their male relatives (husbands or parents) migrate may find themselves co-residing with other male relatives who may restrict their activities outside the home. In many instances, women left behind in the country of origin must undertake income-generating activities to compensate for the income lost by the departure of their male relatives if the

latter do not send remittances on a regular basis. Adding financial responsibilities to the other responsibilities that women have, such as child-rearing, can lead to stress but can also provide women the opportunity of gaining autonomy and experience in decision-making. In the societies of destination, gender relations and hierarchies as well as policies or practices leading to gender inequities condition the effects of migration for migrant women.

The legal status of migrant women, the gender norms implicit in admission regulations and general attitudes to migrants are also important factors influencing the subsequent experiences of migrant women and the impact of their migration on countries of destination. Conventions, laws and practices governing the rights of women and migrants in receiving countries affect migrant women. Women who are recruited as domestic workers or those who are unauthorized workers in the country of destination are particularly vulnerable. Depending on the receiving country, they may have no protection or recourse in case of abuse. Migrant women are also affected by gender inequality in the society of destination. Labour market segmentation based on gender and the segregation of women in traditionally female occupations (nursing, secretarial work, garment industry work, etc.) mean that migrant women are often paid less than migrant men who are concentrated in higher-paying occupations. Thus earning inequality between migrant women and migrant men persists in countries of destination. When migrants start small businesses in the country of destination, female family members may work without remuneration in response to norms and practices that undervalue their contributions. Nonetheless, when women become migrant workers or participate in the labour market of the receiving society, they tend to gain independence and autonomy, leading to a change in gender relations within their families. Gains of that nature at the household level may, however, do not necessarily extend to other spheres of a woman's life, such as the place of employment or within her ethnic community at large.

Migrant women display considerable agency. They contribute to the economic development of their countries of destination through their competencies and skills, and to that of their countries of origin through their remittances and their increased experience when they return to those countries. Often, migrant women help other family members to migrate by paying for the costs of the move. As migrants, women are sources of remittances that may be used to improve the well being of other family members and foster economic growth. In countries of destination, migrant women work to improve their own and their family's standards of living, and they often press for changed gender relations within their families.

KEY ISSUES IN VIETNAM

Women account for a third of regular labour migration. Before COVID-19, in 2019, an estimated 152,530 workers migrated from Viet Nam through regular channels to work overseas, of whom approximately 35 per cent (54,700) were women. Data for 2020 from the Department of Overseas Labour (DOLAB) within MOLISA revealed that 78,641 Vietnamese migrant workers went abroad, of whom 36 per cent (28,786) were women. Women have accounted for around one third of Viet Nam's labour migration for the past decade, a lower level than several countries in the region, including Indonesia, Lao PDR, Cambodia and the

Philippines.¹¹¹ The top two destinations for both men and women regular migrant workers in 2019 were Japan and then Taiwan, China. Out of the Vietnamese migrant workers travelling to the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Romania most were men, while most of the workers sent to Saudi Arabia were women, almost entirely for domestic work. According to a 2019 ILO report, the highest average monthly salaries for women migrant workers were earned in Japan (VND21,000,000), ROK (VND 19,500,000) and then Taiwan, China (VND13,500,000). Women migrant workers from Viet Nam can earn as much as five times more than their pre-departure income whilst working abroad.¹¹²

Women in regular migrant work jobs are concentrated in manufacturing in Japan and Taiwan, China (73 per cent and 71 per cent, respectively), as well as agriculture, fishing and care work (in Japan) and care work (in Taiwan, China). Regular women migrant workers in ROK mostly divided between agriculture (50 per cent) and manufacturing (46 per cent). Migration from Viet Nam to Saudi Arabia by women is almost exclusively for domestic work (97 per cent), with the majority of workers originating from Thanh Hóa province. Remittances sent by Vietnamese migrant workers working abroad (as opposed to Vietnamese nationals living overseas) were estimated by MOLISA to amount to US\$3-4 billion annually, in recent years.¹¹³

Still quantifying the impact of COVID-19. At the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, there were an estimated 560,000 Vietnamese workers recorded across 40 countries.¹¹⁴ The sudden onset of COVID-19 and its concomitant border closures and workplace shutdowns have resulted in hardship for migrant workers – those poised for departure and already abroad. In Viet Nam, travel and migration restrictions have seen migrant workers unable to take up job placements despite many having already paid high recruitment fees and related costs to do so. The number of outbound workers, including women, reduced by 50 per cent in 2020, as compared to the previous year. For those who were able to get jobs overseas during this time, the additional costs of covering the quarantine period, testing and vaccination added to the already high recruitment fees and related costs paid by migrant workers. The ILO estimated that by mid-2020, thousands of the 10 million intra-ASEAN migrant workers had returned to their homes (sex-disaggregated data is not available).¹¹⁵ DOLAB reported that as of September 2020, 25,000 workers had registered for return from Taipei, China and approximately 13,000 migrant workers had registered for return from Japan (data not sex-disaggregated).¹¹⁶ Given the substantial number of irregular migrant workers, it is likely that registration numbers under-represent the population of migrant workers facing difficulties remaining abroad or seeking to return. A global study by ILO early in the onset of the pandemic (June 2020) found that nearly one half of women domestic workers in the Asia Pacific region were ‘significantly’

¹¹¹ It rose to a high point of 35% in 2018, as cited in Spotlight Initiative. 2020. *Listening to the voices of women migrant workers: Gender Mainstreaming in the draft Law on Vietnamese Workers Working Abroad under Contract (Amended)*. Hanoi: ILO; United Nations (UN). 2016. Viet Nam Gender Briefing Kit. op.cit Also see ILO ASEAN TRIANGLE Briefing Notes for Lao PDR and Cambodia at: https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS_735106/lang-en/index.htm and https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS_735105/lang-en/index.htm

¹¹² ILO. 2019. *More choices, more power: Opportunities for women's empowerment in labour migration from Viet Nam*. Bangkok: ILO.

¹¹³ Spotlight Initiative. 2020. *Listening to the voices of women migrant workers: Gender Mainstreaming in the draft Law on Vietnamese Workers Working Abroad under Contract (Amended)*. Op.cit.

¹¹⁴ ILO. Department of Overseas Labour, *Labour Migration Data 2019*.

¹¹⁵ ILO. "Supporting Migrant Workers during the Pandemic for a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community - 13th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour." Accessed 10 May 2021. https://www.ilo.org/asia/events/WCMS_755357/lang-en/index.htm

¹¹⁶ DOLAB data provided by ILO.

negatively impacted by COVID-19. This included job loss, salary loss, increases in working hours, and tasks without concomitant salary increase.¹¹⁷

A separate ASEAN-regional rapid assessment by the ILO (2020) of 304 migrant workers (men and women) identified a range of hardships faced by workers, including: workplace closures, loss of income and knock-on effects for rent and food security, visa expiry and a lack of access to services and social protection, particularly unemployment benefits. Almost one third had experienced violence and harassment.¹¹⁸ Inadequate infection control protections in high density workplaces was also a risk. Both the pre-departure and overseas situations increase the likelihood that migrant workers will turn to informal, riskier livelihood strategies carrying a higher risk of exploitation and harm. It can be presumed that this would include gendered forms of exploitation for women, including sexual harassment, abuse and violence – in the workplace and public settings. Viet Nam hosted the 13th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML) in 2020, focused on the pandemic response. The AFML adopted 12 recommendations including the need for gender-responsive policies tailored to the ‘needs and realities’ of women migrant workers, with protection from gender-based violence and access to essential services.¹¹⁹

New legislation with protections and improvements for women migrant workers. In December 2020, the Vietnamese President’s Office announced the new *Law on Contract-Based Vietnamese Overseas Workers 69/2020/QH14 (Law 69)* as adopted by the 14th National Assembly of Viet Nam, which will come into effect in January 2022. It includes several enhanced protections for migrant workers, including women. Significantly, the law has tightened the regulations governing recruitment agencies, including prohibiting brokerage commissions being passed on to migrant workers and setting a general ceiling on fees that can be charged.¹²⁰ This is beneficial to both men and women seeking to work abroad, and reduces the risk of labour exploitation, including forced labour and human trafficking, associated with workers in high debt to recruitment agencies and employers.¹²¹ However, with women typically earning less, lower recruitment fees may allow more Vietnamese women to consider regular overseas labour migration as an option. It may also reduce the number of men and women resorting to irregular channels to work abroad on account of the prohibitive recruitment fees and related costs associated with regular migration.

Law 69, for the first time, specifies that the government policy is to ensure gender equality in labour migration, free of discrimination including discrimination on the basis of gender in recruitment and to develop gender-responsive measures to protect Vietnamese migrant workers. The new Law has strengthened worker protections against discrimination and abuse, including the right of a worker to unilaterally terminate a contract in situations of

¹¹⁷ ILO. June 2020. Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on loss of jobs and hours among domestic workers. Geneva: ILO.

¹¹⁸ ILO. 3 June 2020. Experiences of ASEAN migrant workers during COVID-19: Rights at work, migration and quarantine during the pandemic, and re-migration plans. ILO Brief. Bangkok: ILO.

¹¹⁹ ILO. "Supporting Migrant Workers during the Pandemic for a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community - 13th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour." Accessed 10 May 2021. https://www.ilo.org/asia/events/WCMS_755357/lang-en/index.htm

¹²⁰ Further ceilings for recruitment fees and related costs will be included in forthcoming subordinate legislation. A Decree with a ceiling for deposits and a Circular with ceilings for service fees that are specific to different destinations and industries are being drafted in 2021.

¹²¹ ILO. 2020. "Revision of the Law on Contract-Based Vietnamese Overseas Workers 69/2020/QH14." Accessed 8 May 2021. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmain.showPractice?p_lang=en&p_practice_id=208

threats, sexual harassment, maltreatment or forced labour – a protection that should be especially beneficial to women migrating for work. The new Law removed the requirement for the gender of workers to be specified in labour supply contracts which helps to prevent the unintended consequence of requiring a specific gender for specific work (for example, men for construction). Experience has shown that recruitment agencies respond to requirements demanded (or perceived as demanded) from employers on the specific gender for a specific job, and the inclusion of this clause allows room for recruitment agencies to offer either men or women for positions. The new Law also provides for legal aid for workers experiencing abuse, violence or discrimination whilst working abroad, though there is currently no mechanism for operation of this provision. Furthermore, recruitment agencies are obliged to provide pre-departure training that must include information on forced labour, trafficking in person prevention, gender equality, sexual abuse, and gender-based violence prevention skills.¹²² While the power differential faced by women migrant workers against recruitment agencies and employers is considerable, on account of their combined gender and migration status, these explicit provisions in law are a positive step towards labour migration being safer and more profitable for women. The Law provides that workers are entitled to social insurance entitlements while abroad, however maternity related provisions are not explicit.

Recommendations proposed that would have further strengthened the gender-responsiveness of the Law, as recommended by the CEDAW Committee, ILO¹²³ and other policy briefs¹²⁴, include: a requirement that employment agencies demonstrate the capacity to address gender-based needs and discrimination, including harassment and violence, in order to obtain a recruitment license; ensure the non-punishment and non-stigmatisation of trafficking victims; and to ensure an equitable provision of employment assistance upon return. It has also been recommended that the Fund for Overseas Employment Assistance is able to be used for gender-based welfare needs, including in response to experience of violence and harassment.

During 2021, DOLAB with MOLISA will work to revise five pieces of subordinate legislation to give more detail and enable the legal enforcement of the new law, which will have the capacity to further enhance protections for women migrant workers.¹²⁵ These sub laws will be adopted in 2021, and come into force in January 2022.

Factors shaping the migration experience for women. Labour migration is a social as well as economic process, and an experience where gender roles and inequalities can be magnified on account of an individual's migrant worker status and isolation from home networks. Men's

¹²² ILO. 18 December 2020. "ILO commits to supporting Viet Nam to enforce new law on Vietnamese migrant workers." Accessed 12 March 2021. https://www.ilo.org/hanoi/Informationresources/Publicinformation/Pressreleases/WCMS_764704/lang-en/index.htm

¹²³ Spotlight Initiative. 2020. *Listening to the voices of women migrant workers: Gender Mainstreaming in the draft Law on Vietnamese Workers Working Abroad under Contract (Amended)*. op. cit

¹²⁴ McAdam, M. 2020. Briefing Note on the Draft Law on Vietnamese Workers Working Abroad under Contract of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (Draft Law 72): Implications for Trafficking in Persons. Bangkok: ASEAN Australia Counter-Trafficking (ASEAN-ACT).

¹²⁵ Decree detailing and guiding the implementation of a number of articles of the *Law on Vietnamese workers working abroad under contract*, Prime Minister's Decision on the Overseas Employment Support Fund, Circular regulating the preparation of labour resources, contractual conditions and form of contracts, registration documents, orientation education, Circular regulating e-reporting, and Decree 28 on *Administrative Penalties for Violations Arising from Labour, Social Insurance and Sending Vietnamese Workers Abroad under Contract*.

and women's needs and risks differ through the migration process, as well as reintegration and outcomes upon return.

Consultation with women migrant workers conducted by the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour with the support from the ILO in 2017, show that systemic discrimination against women and preference towards men reduced the benefits of labour migration for women. For example, many women could not afford the high costs involved in getting a well-paid job abroad, as they did not have land or house certificates from their family or husband's family, to get a loan from the bank. They instead had to choose lower paid jobs with poorer rights protection, such as domestic work or jobs through irregular channels. Some married women said that as they do not have property, they have limited autonomy regarding their migration and the use of remittances. For example, one woman shared that she lost everything after she returned and divorced, because all the remittances she sent back were used to build a house on her parents in law's land, of which she did not have any ownership.

Marriage breakdown has been highlighted as both a trigger and consequence of labour migration. One divorced woman shared that she was felt pressure to migrate after her marriage broke down, not only because she had to earn money to support her children, but also to escape from the discrimination and prejudice from the community against divorced women. Other migrant workers said they felt guilty for not fulfilling their obligations of taking care of their children and husbands while working abroad. Some participants also blamed themselves, and in turn were blamed by their family and community, for the breakdown of their marriage, or for any negative things which happened to their children and their family. Many returned women migrant workers continue to face difficulties in reintegration within their families and communities. Most women said that they felt there was an emotional distance with their children and their husband, even three years after returning. Women migrant workers do face 'dishonour' related to gender norms with respect to women who have left their communities, given that migration is often considered a derogation of traditional gender roles. Often this stigma is articulated through community rumours suggesting that women migrant workers engaged in sexual relationships while abroad, or even worked within the sex industry, regardless of the veracity of these claims. Overall, women suggested that more information relating to the living and working conditions of migrant workers abroad should be provided to people and communities at home, so that they can understand more about the actual situation faced abroad and be better supported.

An ILO 2019 study examined the empowering and disempowering effects of migration for women from Viet Nam to offer recommendations for improving the migration experience and its net social and economic benefits for women. Comparing the responses of 323 returned migrant women with a sample of non-migrant women from the same province, recalling the situation in 2012 and then in 2018, the study findings are summarised below. Notably, women migrant workers in the study were aged 35 years on average, 88 per cent were married, and almost all had children (93 per cent), on average two.

- Prior to departure, women migrant workers earned around 17 per cent less than non-migrant women, experienced higher unemployment (one third versus one fifth,

respectively), and had lower post-secondary educational attainment, clearly demonstrating the ‘push’ factors for migration.

- Women had gained in economic power through labour migration, compared with non-migrants, and had been able to invest in assets such as land, motorbikes and housing upgrades, exemplifying the ‘pull’ factors of migration.
- Women migrant workers experienced larger increases than non-migrant women in decision making power in their families, especially regarding marriage, housing and family planning. However, the time spent on family care tasks, cleaning and village connections increased upon return. Women from rural areas, reported less change in family social power, with fewer rural women reporting control over how remittances were spent.
- The migration destination was more predictive of social outcomes than origins, across all empowerment metrics reported by women. Labour migration to East Asia had the most reported favourable impacts on women migrant workers, followed by South East Asia and then Saudi Arabia. Notably, irregular migration to Thailand generated less economic benefit for women, but it yielded some of the most positive social benefits such as lower reports of workplace abuse, and increased sharing of household tasks with spouses and management skills. This was likely associated with the freedom to change jobs and the option of irregular cross-border migration as a family.¹²⁶

CASES STUDIES

The Energy Sector Championing Women’s Leadership

Viet Nam has made striking progress on gender equality, especially in female labour force participation. On female leadership, however, Vietnam has an unfinished agenda, especially in the public and infrastructure spheres. In the energy sector, men dominate technical and leadership positions and women are underrepresented across the total workforce. In Viet Nam, Electricity (EVN), the national utility and third largest enterprise in the country with over 93,000 employees, women tend to be concentrated in administrative, financial and customer service positions rather than in leadership and technical roles. Women represent under 13 per cent of management.

Having more women in leadership in business, government and politics benefits Viet Nam’s development and is a win-win for business. Real change is driven by inclusiveness at the top – including by promoting women to leadership positions. Such leaders not only serve as role models, but they can also help create an environment for women to enter, stay, and progress successfully in the workforce. There are also positive economic returns. Studies of the private sector show that adding one more woman to a firm’s senior management or corporate board is associated with an 8 to 13 basis point higher return on assets. This does not require major capital investments or large costly restructuring. It just requires one more woman.

EVN is working on promoting women’s employment and leadership in the energy sector. As part of a longer-term partnership, the World Bank is supporting EVN since 2017 in its goal to increase the share of women in management, including senior management. This has included engagement in dialogue about how to reach its goals related to promoting women’s employment and leadership within the sector, and the development of an implementation roadmap together, endorsed by EVN’s senior management. EVN with World Bank support has gone on to implement a Women in Leadership (WIL) training program for employees, as well as a training-of-

¹²⁶ ILO. 2019. *More choices, more power: Opportunities for women’s empowerment in labour migration from Viet Nam*. op.cit

trainers package; a mentoring program; a plan of action to obtain EDGE (The Economic Dividends for Gender Equality) certification; and a learning exchange with Électricité de France.

Social norms and gender stereotypes are major barriers to women's leadership. A recent World Bank report finds that young women and men in Vietnam have internalized negative attitudes toward women leaders (Buchhave, Cunningham, Nguyen, Weimann-Sandig, 2020). To address these challenges and to build a talent pool, EVN and the World Bank developed a pilot WIL program comprised of a four-day leadership training course and a six-month mentoring program to build skills and confidence among select female staff to take up leadership positions within the organization. A training-of-trainers program for EVN human resource (HR) specialists and trainers was provided to build internal capacity for implementing the WIL Program. Since 2019, EVN has turned the WIL program into a regular training program which has been offered by HR staff to over 700 staff across EVN.

EVN further signalled its commitment to promoting gender equality and the development of women's leadership by engaging as a founding member of the Vietnam Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment (VBCWE) and pursuing EDGE certification, the leading global third party, independently verified assessment methodology for certifying a corporate commitment to gender equality. In November 2018, EVN's Ho Chi Minh City Power Corporation was awarded EDGE certification ('Assess level) in recognition of its efforts to implement workplace policies and practices supporting gender equality, making it the first enterprise in Viet Nam to receive the certification. In August 2020, EVN GENCO 3 also received EDGE Certificate ('Assess' level). EVN continues to pursue additional utilities to become EDGE certified at Assess and higher levels, including EVN HQ. EDGE measures the following dimensions: representation; pay equity; effectiveness of policies and practices to ensure equitable career flows; and employee experiences of a culture of inclusiveness.

A learning exchange conducted between EVN management and Électricité de France (EDF) enabled EVN to learn from other successful corporate efforts to promote women's leadership. The initiative provided capacity building to EVN HR managers on best practices and policies for gender equality in the workplace to bring their implementation capability up to international standards. Lessons learned from the EDF experience is helping to shape the refinement and expansion of the WIL program, building upon EDF's experience partnering with NGOs and secondary schools to increase women's participation in STEM fields. The exchange visit has also led to the formation of a WIL alumni network modelled upon EDF's women's network.

As a result of these efforts, EVN has increased the number and share of women in EVN's management from 1,272 women (12.7%) in 2015 to 1,636 (12.92%) women by end of 2020. In other words, 364 more women took up leadership positions in EVN – a significant number in absolute terms. This progress has been achieved amid a reduction in staffing numbers and a hiring freeze. This also includes notable progress at the top management level. For the first time, EVN now has one woman on the Board of Directors and one female General Director of a primarily technical corporation (GENCO3). It also has four chief accountants that are women (equivalent to Deputy General Directors) and one woman as Deputy Director of a subsidiary company. This is a quantitative and a culture change in progress

EVN has shown that opening leadership to more women widens the potential talent pool and ensures decisions are informed by a more diverse range of viewpoints and understanding of different issues. EVN is continuing to collaborate with the World Bank to champion gender equality and is inspiring other state-owned utilities in the region and across the world to promote women's leadership, with power companies across the South Asia Region learning from EVN's success through the WEPower group established in February 2019 by the World Bank.

Buchhave, H, Cunningham, W, Nguyen, GT. & Weimann-Sandig, N. 2020. *Perceptions of Gender Disparities in Vietnam's Labor Market*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What are the primary issues regarding work and migration in Viet Nam?
- Discuss the rationale, pros and cons of having gender quotas and gender targets at the workplace?
- Discuss: whether (unpaid) care work should be and can be paid for in Viet Nam?
- Discuss: give an example of glass ceiling in your workplace. How do we break the glass ceiling, especially in the context of Viet Nam?
- How cultural and systemic factors in Vietnam contribute to reinforce gender inequality in work and economic power?
- How internalized misogynies contribute to gender disparity at the work place?
- How and why are women disproportionately affected in the migration process comparing to men?

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