NATIONAL REVIEW OF 20-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BPFA) IN VIET NAM AND THE OUTCOMES OF THE 23RD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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SESSION I
Currently, Vietnam's population is more than 89.71 million people, of whom female population represents 45.33 million, accounting for 50.53% of the total population of the nation. Women account for more than 48.5% of the labor force of Vietnam. After 20 years of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), Viet Nam has made great efforts to obtain the achievements in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.

1. Achievements in gender equality promotion and women’s empowerment

To date, the recognized outstanding achievements in gender equality and empowerment of women in Vietnam have been the reinforcement of the legal framework and policies on gender equality and empowerment of women; consolidation of the state management apparatus on gender equality; greater participation of women in leadership and management work; and gender equality in education and training. The key achievements will be mentioned and analyzed below, the specific and detailed contents will be presented in Part 2 of the Report.

a) Reinforcement of legal and policy framework on gender equality and women’s empowerment:

The gender equality goals were recognized in the Constitution of Vietnam since 1946 and were further amended and supplemented in 1959, 1980, 1992, and comprehensively revised in 2013 on the basis of building on and inheriting the previous good regulations as well as further refining and developing the regulations to ensure gender equality and human rights in practice. The 2013 Constitution stipulates that “Male and female citizens are equal in all respects. The State has policies to ensure equal rights and opportunities ... and strictly prohibits gender discrimination (Clause 1 and Clause 3, Article 26).

Accordingly, this viewpoint and advocate has been increasingly concretized and enforced during the course of finalizing legislation and policies as well as the exercise of gender equality on the principles of human right-based and gender equality approach. Specifically:

- Such specialized laws as the Gender Equality Law (2006), Domestic Violence Law (2007) are being implemented quite effectively. Besides, the process of formulating and amending other laws such as Law on Human Trafficking Prevention and Suppression (2011), the Labour Code (2012), Employment Law (2013), Marriage and Family Law (2014) and tens of other laws have been reviewed to ensure the inclusion of gender equality in the course of formulation and amendments of laws.

- The government has directed relevant ministries to formulate various directives, decrees and documents to concretize the contents of laws related to gender equality such as Directive No. 10/2007/CT-TTg dated 3 May 2007 on implementation of the GEL, Decree No. 70/2008/ND-CP dated 4 June 2008 detailing the implementation of a number of articles of the GEL; Decree No. 48/2009/ND-CP dated 19 May 2009 providing for measures to ensure gender equality; Decree No. 55/2009/ND-CP dated 10 June 2009 prescribing sanctions for administrative violations of gender equality. Directive No. 16/2008/CT-TTg

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1 2013 Report on Socio-economic Situation, GSO
dated 30 May 2008 on the implementation of the Law on domestic violence prevention and control; Decree No. 08/2009/ND-CP dated 04 February 2009 detailing the implementation of some articles of the Law on domestic violence prevention and control; Decree No. 110/2009/ND-CP dated 10 December 2009 defining sanctions for administrative violations in the field of domestic violence prevention and control.

- Shortly after the end of 10-year implementation of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam up to 2010, the Prime Minister approved the National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE) period 2011-2020\(^2\) comprising 7 goals and 22 specific targets in the fields of politics, economy, labor and employment, education and training, health, culture, information, family and enhancement of state management capacity on gender equality. With a view to supporting the implementation of the NSGE goals, the Prime Minister approved the National Programme on Gender Equality (NPGE) period 2011-2015\(^3\) including the five component projects: (i) awareness raising, behavior change on gender equality; (ii) strengthening capacity and efficiency of state management on gender equality; (iii) strengthening capacity for female National Assembly Deputies, female members of People's Councils at all levels, female managers, female leaders at all levels; female candidates to the National Assembly and People's Councils at all levels for the period 2016 - 2020, female employees under the category of human resource planning; (iv) supporting the exercise of gender equality in the domains, sectors, regions, localities where gender equality persists or there are high risks of gender inequality; (v) supporting the execution and examining the NSGE implementation; meanwhile, this is the first time the Vietnamese government has committed to allocate VND955 billion for the NPGE implementation, 85% of the funding was sourced from the State budget, 20% was the mobilized fund.

Under the requirements of this NSGE, various ministries, agencies and localities have promulgated and implemented the Plans of Action on Gender Equality period 2011-2015 of their respective sector/field and locality. The guarantee of gender equality in all aspects, the strengthening of gender mainstreaming into the socio-economic development plan period 2011-2015, the development plans of sectors/fields and localities as assigned to them have been focal tasks in formulation and implementation of these Plans of Action.

In addition, the Prime Minister has enacted the Strategy on Vietnamese family development up to 2020 with a vision to 2030 (Decision 629/QD-TTg dated 29 May 2012), with the goal of building prosperous, progressive, happy Vietnamese families that are truly one’s sweet home or cozy nest, the healthy cells of the society and all families’ responsibility during the period of accelerating the country’s industrialization and modernization. Then, the National Action Programme on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control up to 2020 was approved with the goal of generating dramatic changes in raising awareness and enhancing responsibilities of all levels, sectors, families, communities and the entire society in domestic violence prevention and control work; step-by-step preventing and decreasing the number of domestic violence cases on a national scale\(^4\).

The above efforts have indicated the Vietnamese Government’s powerful determination in promoting gender equality and advancement of women in Viet Nam through a clear strategy, which has been receiving consent and support from all

\(^2\) Decision 2351/QD-TTg dated on 24\(^{th}\) December 2014
\(^3\) Decision No. 1241/QD-TTg dated on 22\(^{nd}\) July 2014
\(^4\) Decision 215/QD-TTg dated on 6 February 2014,
stakeholders. All activities, ranging from consolidation and completion of the legal and policy framework to the allocation of funds, aim at ensuring the effective exercise of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

b) Development of the national apparatus on gender equality, enhancement of operational quality of the inter-sectoral collaboration organization for the advancement of women

- In order to ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of gender equality and empowerment of women, since its establishment in 2008, the national apparatus on gender equality has been put into routine and disciplinary operation and strengthened step by step. The Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) is tasked to be a lead agency to help the Government in performing the function of state management on gender equality on a national scale; Ministries, ministerial-level agencies in coordination with MOLISA shall perform the function of state management on gender equality within their respective ministries and sectors; People's Committees at all levels shall perform the decentralized function of state management on gender equality. To perform this function, MOLISA has established the Gender Equality Department; other Ministries and sectors shall delegate focal points to provide advice on state management on gender equality (this can be done either through assigning the responsibility to one of the units under each Ministry or through the mechanism of CFAW); the localities are responsible for assigning this task to the provincial Department of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA) (establishment of the Gender Equality Division or assigning a focal person of DOLISA Office); The Unit of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs at the district level and the Socio-Cultural officer at the commune level are delegated to advise on the task performance. 13/63 provinces/cities have set up the Gender Equality Division and the remaining provinces/cities have assigned 01 focal point to be in charge of gender equality work. At the central level, aside from MOLISA, which is responsible for the direct implementation of state management function on gender equality, there have been some ministries and sectors assigning specific tasks to their Department/unit to perform gender equality function within the field managed by that ministry of sector, e.g. the General Affairs Department under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), Family Department under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MOCST), the Ethnic Minority Department under the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs. In particular, the Family Department has the responsibility to ensure gender equality within family setting, especially prevention and control of domestic violence against women.

- Consolidating and raising the operational quality of the inter-sectoral organization for the advancement of women continues: After 20 years of formation and development, the National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam (NCFAW) has been maintaining its effective operations since 1993 (on the basis of renaming the National Committee for the Decade of Women in Viet Nam, which was founded in 1985) and has embarked on the stage of promoting the institutionalization of the gender equality cause. This is the Government’s intersectoral collaboration organization, which is tasked to study and coordinate for resolving intersectoral issues related to the advancement of women on the nationwide scale. Currently, MOLISA is the Standing agency of the NCFAW and the title of NCFAW Chair is assigned to the Minister of MOLISA. Members of the Committee

5 Government Decree 70/2008/ND-CP dated 4 June 2008 detailing the implementation of the GEL.
comprise 18 Vice Ministers and equivalent leaders from various ministries, sectors and Central agencies. At the Central level, the system of Committee for the Advancement of Women (CFAW) has been established in 42 ministries, sectors, ministerial-level agencies and Government agencies as well as in the 63 provinces and cities directly under the Central Government. At the local level, CFAWs operate towards linking the activities for the advancement of women to gender equality work and this has been done effectively.

The establishment and maintenance of the apparatus on gender equality and for the advancement of women have contributed to ensuring the human resources for the implementation of guidelines, policies as well as the country’s commitments on promoting gender equality and women’s rights. This has played a role in attaining gender equality achievements in a number of fields such as politics, education and training, labour and employment and health care in Viet Nam.

c) Increasing women’s representation in leadership and management work

Along with the enforcement of legislative documents and policies on increasing women’s representation in leadership and management, a wide range of programs, projects and models in this domain have been designed and implemented. Meanwhile, for the last 5 years thanks to the close guidance from central and local leaders, women’s representation in leadership and management has tended to go up in both quantity and quality.

During the past nearly two decades, Vietnam has always had female Vice Presidents. Currently, there are two women in the Politburo (representing 12.5% in 2013, an increase of 6% compared with 2011) and one woman participating in the Secretariat of the Central Communist Party of Vietnam. The number of female National Assembly deputies and members of People's Councils at all levels accounted for about a quarter (¼) out of the total number for both males and females. During the period 2007-2011, the percentage of female National Assembly deputies was 25.8%, for the period 2011-2016, this percentage decreased to 24.4% but Vietnam is among the top 5 developing countries in Asia having the highest representation of female National Assembly deputies.

The percentage of women taking leadership positions in key ministries, ministerial-level agencies, government-attached agencies and provincial-level rise. Detailed description on women’s representation in leadership and management is specifically provided in Part 2 of this report.

d) Gender equality in education and training

The issue of gender equality in education and training has received great attention from authorities and the whole society through the implementation of the NSGE period 2011-2020, Strategy for Educational Development period 2011-2020, Plan of Action on Gender Equality period 2011-2015 of the education sector, Scheme on education development for ethnic minority peoples period 2010-2015, etc. the State Budget’s expenditure on education increased from 10.8% in 2005 to 16.85% of the total expenditure in 2012.

Accordingly, the ratios of school attendance at the right ages among boys and girls have risen in recent years and the school attendance gap has been narrowed with the ratio of school girl attendance being even higher than that of school boys. The ratio of right-age enrollment in primary education was 98% for boys and 97.7% for girls; at the secondary

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educational level, these ratios were 78.3% for boys and 83.9% for girls. The proportion of females with college and university degrees has increased and almost caught up with that of males. With the efforts and achievements in education and training, Vietnam is considered as having eliminated, even reversed the gender gap in primary, junior secondary and senior secondary education levels. Women have caught up and even surpassed men in terms of attaining college degrees.

The aforementioned achievements of gender equality are deemed important and prominent in the promotion of gender equality as well as the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Vietnam as this is the fundamental foundation to obtain gender equality results in other fields. The completion of legislation and policies to ensure gender equality is very meaningful and important as it has been creating legal frameworks for the cause of gender equality and contributing to raising awareness for officers and people on this issue. The development and maintenance of the organizational apparatus for gender equality have enabled the coordination of activities among various sectors, departments and localities in a more efficient and sustainable manner. Women’s greater participation in politics is an important factor to ensure real power of women. Ensuring gender equality in the field of education and training is a solid basis for raising qualifications of women, enabling them to realize their powers in all other areas of life.

2. Major challenges in exercising gender equality and empowerment of women

Although the Government of Vietnam has been making numerous efforts in implementing integrated solutions in order to promote gender equality gender equality and for the advancement of women in Vietnam, there are still a lot of difficulties and challenges during the implementation process. Specifically as follows:

- Currently, perception of a population group in the society of the importance of gender equality and women's human rights is still limited. Therefore, gender inequality still exists for women in many areas of social life: violence against women and girls persists; male preference mindset is still deeply rooted in the community; the gender gap in income has not been significantly improved; in some rural, mountainous, remote and isolated areas, women are bound by the customs and practices that are detrimental to substantive gender equality.

Although the Gender Equality Law (GEL) has been passed and implemented since 2007, this Law is a framework law in its nature, so the implementation of specific contents is encountering difficulties. The execution of the regulation on mainstreaming of gender equality in formulating legal documents still encounters numerous difficulties in practice, thus yet to obtain the expected effectiveness, the assessment of the impacts exerted by legal normative documents on men and women has not been given due attention to.

- The policy formulation on gender equality has not received effective support of evidence from scientific research. Gender disaggregated data is still inadequate and in shortage of legal effectiveness, which impedes the formulation, execution of policies and intervention programs meeting gender needs; There has been a shortage of national comprehensive and periodical surveys on gender equality in such key domains as labour-employment, education, health care.

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8 Results of the Assessment Survey on targets for women and children 2011 (MICS5), GSO.
The State management apparatus on gender equality has been newly established thus is still limited in personnel and resources for implementation of activities. In giving directions and execution, a number of local authorities have not really put a premium on this field of work, so they have not yet appointed the staff that have sufficient knowledge and specialized skills in this field and have not created favorable conditions for activities on gender equality and advancement of women. Awareness of staff at all levels on gender equality is still low. Oversight on gender equality exercise in localities, especially in far and remote areas has not been done properly.

Viet Nam is one of the five countries in the world that are most severely affected by climate change and sea level rise, which exerts adverse impacts on lives of both women and men, including the vulnerable groups of women and children, the elderly, the ethnic minority. In addition, due to effects of the 2008-2009 economic crisis, operations of numerous enterprises in Viet Nam has been stagnant, causing job loss to a great number of workers, especially female workers.

3. National budget invested in gender equality work

For the last many years, the Government has made great efforts to incorporate gender issues in the budgetary process to ensure funding for the activities on gender equality and advancement of women.

Pursuant to Article 24 of the GEL stipulating the financial sources for gender equality activities, the Ministry of Finance issued Circular 191/2009/TT-BTC guiding the management and use of funds for the activities on gender equality and women's advancement. This has been considered an effective legal tool to help ministries, sectors and localities annually allocate, plan and manage the funds for implementation of gender equality and advancement of women in their respective units and localities. In addition, the fact that the GEL stipulates on the gender equality mainstreaming in legal normative documents also contributes to stimulating the implementation of gender budgeting in Vietnam in a more specific and efficient way than before.

When the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam up to 2010 was enacted in 2001, one of the solutions proposed in this Strategy was to “allocate funds for exercising the goals of the Strategy through relevant national targeted strategies and programs and the funds should be allocated in the annual budget expenditures of various Central ministries, sectors and localities”. Then, the advocate of gender budgeting was set forth in the NSGE period 2011-2020. Accordingly, MOF shall assume the leading role and coordinate with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), based on the capacity of annual state budget, to allocate budget for the implementation of programs and projects on gender equality after being approved; guide, inspect and supervise the use of funds for the implementation of the approved programs and projects on gender equality as specified in the State Budget Law and other pertinent statutory regulations.

As a result, the State has arranged a separate budget for the activities of NCFAW as well as CFAWs within various Ministries and localities with the average amount of VND90 million/year. Since 2007, MOLISA has been allocated with the budget to carry out the tasks of state management on gender equality on a national scale. In addition to funds sourced from the state budget, the funding for the activities on gender equality and for the advancement of women has also been mobilized from development partners’ funding sources.
Simultaneously, the NPGE period 2011 - 2015 with the aforementioned 5 component projects committed to allocate an implementation budget of VND 955 billion (equivalent to around USD50 million). After 3-year implementation of this Programme, the Vietnamese Government has allocated roughly 10.5% of the budget (about USD50 million) on a nationwide scale to implement the projects under this Program.

In addition, as reported by the MPI on mobilization of ODA, the fund for the projects on gender equality and women’s empowerment that Vietnam has been able to mobilize from development partners over the last 3 years (from 2009 to present) is around USD13.8 million.

4. Policy dialogue mechanism on gender equality

With the aim of mobilizing the participation of stakeholders in order to promote gender equality, the Government of Vietnam has always put a premium on and strengthened the close cooperation on gender equality between Government agencies and NGOs as well as and other stakeholders in Vietnam.

MOLISA, ministerial-level agencies, People's Committees at all levels have coordinated and created favorable conditions for the Vietnam Fatherland Front and its member organizations of the same level to take part in the implementation of state management activities on gender equality, including providing comments and feedback during the formulation, amendment and supplement to laws and policies on gender equality; communicating and mobilizing people to exercise gender equality; studying and proposing measures to promote gender equality, etc. Accordingly, 29/63 provinces and cities have enacted the coordination regulations between the provincial People's Committees and the Vietnam Women's Union to strengthen the participation of all levels of Women's Unions in the process of developing and perfecting local legal documents pertaining to women and gender equality.

The socio-political organizations and NGOs have been implementing their role of providing social feedback, conducting communications, advocacy, and supervision to ensure effective exercise of gender equality. In particular, VWU – the socio-political organization with more than 15 million members across the country has increasingly asserted its role as the organization representing the legitimate rights and interests of women in Vietnam, highlighted by the determination to incorporate women’s concerns in the process of policy formulation and enforcement in an effort to protect women’s rights and promote gender equality.

Furthermore, with the aim of highlighting the importance of gender equality for development and commending the achievements of gender equality and empowerment of women in recent years as well as reinforcing accountability of stakeholders, the Government of Vietnam has always taken the initiative in coordinating with UN agencies in Vietnam to sustain the organization of high-level policy dialogue forums on gender equality. Every year, the forums attract more than 200 participants representing Government agencies, international organizations, NGOs and activists on human rights of women in Vietnam in an effort to discuss and propose solutions and directions to remove the difficulties/setbacks and challenges in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in Vietnam.

10 Government Decree 56/2012/ND-CP dated 16 July 2012 specifying responsibilities ministries, sectors, People's Committees of all levels to ensure the participation of Women’s Union at all levels in state management.
Furthermore, the Gender Action Partnership (GAP) meetings with the participation of representatives from Government agencies, international organizations and civil society organizations in the field of gender equality have been periodically held, creating a multi-dimensional and effective forum to avoid duplications and overlaps in implementation as well as learning of the initiatives and models to promote gender equality from stakeholders in Vietnam.

5. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation at in-country, sub-regional and/or regional levels have stimulated the exercise of gender equality in Viet Nam

The Government of Vietnam has been more and more effectively participated in and made active contributions to the bilateral and multilateral forums at regional and global scale on gender equality and advancement of women.

Within the operational framework of the UN, as an observer, Vietnam has always effectively participated in the annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women, fulfilled its member’s obligations to report on the implementation situation of the resolutions pertaining to women and gender equality, formulating and expediting national inter-sectoral action plan in an attempt to concretize the working contents of the regular sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

In the cooperation with ASEAN, Vietnam has actively collaborated with other member states to promote and accelerate the effective and on-track implementation of ASEAN's key priorities on the promotion and protection of women's rights.

Within the framework of APEC Women and the Economy Forum, Vietnam has taken the initiative in implementing the activities set for plan to promote the mechanism facilitating women's participation in the economic field and sustains its participation in this Forum.

Besides, the establishment, maintenance and development of partnership with multilateral organizations, bilateral cooperation, NGOs have been put a premium on. To date, Vietnam is jointly implementing the projects and programs on gender equality with such international organizations as UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, UNHCR, ILO, PyD, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion. With the aim of promoting substantive gender equality in Vietnam, these cooperation relationships have been built in many diverse and abundant forms from implementing programs and projects, piloting the models to promote gender equality to holding policy dialogues and seminars on gender equality in stakeholders’ areas of mutual concerns.

6. Contributions of MDG implementation to promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment

According to the latest assessment by the United Nations in Vietnam, remarkable progress has been made in the implementation of the MDGs in Vietnam, including the achievements on gender equality among these goals.

**Goal 1: Poverty reduction**

With the efforts to boost social development and poverty reduction, the poverty rate in Viet Nam has currently declined from 58.1% in 1993 to 14.5% in 2008.\(^1\) The proportion

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1\(^{1}\) Data on poverty line of GSO-WB estimated from the Household Living Standard Survey
of poor households in line with the poverty line set by the Government for 2011-2015 was 14.2% in 2010 and 11.1%\textsuperscript{12} in 2012. The proportion of hungry people also dropped significantly, during 2009-2012 the number of hungry people reduced by 1 million people. Vietnam had fulfilled the goal of “reducing the proportion of malnutrition among children under 5 years old” by 2010. The percentage of underweight children under 5 years old was 1.8% (weight-for-age), stunting (height-for-age) was 6% and wasting (weight-for-height) was 1.2% in 2011\textsuperscript{13}. However, the levels of poverty reduction varied among regions and social groups. Ethnic minority people accounted for 68.5% of the extreme poor in 2010\textsuperscript{14}. Elderly women in rural areas, widows represented a high proportion among the poorest.

\textit{Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women}

Encouraging results have been obtained in realizing the gender targets in MDG implementation, e.g. the ratio of female National Assembly Deputies reached 24.4%\textsuperscript{15} - among the group of countries having the high percentages of female National Assembly Deputies in the region and in the world; female workers accounted for 48.5%\textsuperscript{16} of the total workforce of the country in 2013. The ratios of labor force participation for men (82.5%) and women (73.5%) were maintained at a high level as compared with many countries in the region and in the world. The proportion of women as business owners and managers was at more than 20%; Women occupied 48% of the newly generated jobs. Vietnam has basically achieved universal primary education; the literacy rate among men and women aged 15 to 40 in the far, remote, ethnic minority areas, especially difficult areas has reached more than 80%. The literate ratio among women between 15-49 years old stood at 96.4%\textsuperscript{17} in 2011. With these achievements, Vietnam has completed the implementation of Goal 3 among the MDGs before the maturity date. This has contributed significantly to the implementation of the critical areas of concern set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

As a result, Vietnam has achieved encouraging index rankings related to gender equality developed by the UN. Gender Development Index (GDI) of Vietnam increased from the low average level in 1995 (at the value of 0.537) to the high average level in 2009 (at the value of 0.723)\textsuperscript{18}. In 2012, Vietnam ranked the 3rd in the ASEAN region and the 47\textsuperscript{th} out of the total 187 countries around the world in the index rankings on gender inequality\textsuperscript{19}.

However, gender inequalities still persist in the aspects of high-level education and access to decent work. Violence against women is still a critically severe phenomenon. According to data in 2012, 85.1%\textsuperscript{20} of the domestic violence victims were women. Women are still victims of sexual harassment at work.

\textit{Goal 5: Improve maternal health}

The ratio of pregnant women that had 3 prenatal visits was 86.5% in 2011, almost fulfilling the specified ratio of 87% by 2015. The proportion of births attended by health

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\textsuperscript{12}Results of the Household Living Standards Survey 2012, GSO
\textsuperscript{13}Results from the Survey to assess the targets on children and women 2011 (MICS4).
\textsuperscript{14}Report on striking achievements of Vietnam in poverty reduction and challenges (2012), WB
\textsuperscript{15}Report on MDG Implementation 2013.
\textsuperscript{16}Report on Socio-economic situation 2013, GSO.
\textsuperscript{17}Results of the Assessment Survey on targets for women and children 2011 (MICS4).
\textsuperscript{18}UN Human Development Report, in 2009.
\textsuperscript{19}2012 UN Human Development Report.
\end{footnotesize}
workers reached 96.7% in 2011, only 1.3% lower than the target set for 2015. However, the progress was still slow. The ratio of maternal mortality among ethnic minority mothers was 4 times higher than that of Kinh mother and 70% of ethnic minority mothers in some localities gave births at home21.

**Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases:**

The goal on combating malaria and TB was hit in 2011. A great deal of significant achievements was obtained in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention and control. In 2012, the number of new HIV infections dropped by roughly 22% against 2011 and 31.5% against 2001. The rate of HIV infected people that received ARV in 2011 was 22 times as high as in 2005 and 1.5 times as high as in 2009. The ratio of pregnant women that tested positive for HIV and were treated to prevent transmission to their fetuses increased by 20 times during 2003-2011.

However, numerous challenges still exist. The rate of HIV infection through sexual activities also rose, up to 45.3% during the first 6 months of 2013. HIV positive people’s accessibility to intervention programmes was still limited. The number of qualified HIV treatment centres was lower than 50%. Moreover, while there was a reduction of the new infections, the ratio of HIV infected women rose among the newly detected cases (31%)22.

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The activities to promote gender equality and empower women have been developed and sustained by the Government of Vietnam during the past 20 years. This reflects the political will of the Government of Vietnam in fulfilling international commitments on gender equality and the advancement of women. Based on that, the progress made in gender equality in Vietnam has been highly recognized by the international community. As assessed by the World Bank in 2011, Vietnam “obtained considerable progress and a lot of successes in narrowing the gender gap in comparison with neighboring countries”.

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SESSION II
20-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION OF BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION ON CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN AND INITIATIVES, ACTIONS IN THE 23RD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN VIETNAM

A. WOMEN AND POVERTY

Laws, policies, programmes, implemented activities and results

- The National Targeted Program on sustainable poverty reduction for the period of 2012-2015 under Decision 1489/QD-TTg with the total implementation expenditure of VND27,509 billion is being implemented on the basis of inheriting and promoting the obtained achievements of the Program for the period 2006-2010. The Program’s beneficiaries include the poor and poor households; priorities were given to ethnic minorities, the elderly, the disabled, women and children. Accordingly, the Project No.3 in the Program on poverty reduction model replication will lay its emphasis on the poor, poor households with priorities given to female household owners and ethnic minority households in the regions of poor communes, districts, villages and hamlets with special difficulties in an effort to obtain suitable and effective replication of poverty reduction models in order to raise production and business capacities, diversify income sources for the poor and poor households; enable the poor and poor households to access to policies, market resources (capital market, labor market, land, technology, technique and science, markets for inputs and outputs, etc.) aiming for production and service development, quickly increasing income, contributing to sustainable and rapid poverty reduction.

- Objectives on gender quality have been instructed in the process of developing policies on vocational training such as Decree No 43/2008/ND-CP dated on 08 April 2008 detailing the implementation of Article 62 and Article 72 of Law on Vocational Training to ensure equality between men and women in the age of participating in vocational training; selecting jobs, equal access and enjoyment to supportive policies on vocational and diploma training.

- Period 2012-2013, Vietnam Bank for Social Policies (VBSP) was responsible for fund mobilization to invest in 7 key credit programs of the Government: Poor household lending program (including loans to poor households as prescribed in Resolution No. 30a; Lending Program for pupils and students with difficult circumstances; Lending Program for business and production households in disadvantaged areas; Deferred payment lending program for the households residing in Mekong River Delta and
Central Highlands; Lending program for clean water and rural environment sanitation; Employment Placement Lending Program; Home loan support program for poor households. Accordingly, various preferential credit policies, entrusted funds from VBSP, and Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development through unions and organizations (for instance, Women’s Union, Farmers’ Union, etc.) were conducted in the form of unsecured loans to help women get out of poverty and develop business, etc.

- The preferential credit policy for poor households received special attention from the State. According to the State Bank of Vietnam’s report, Bank branches in this system was well performing the poor household credit including lending to female household owners. With lending under the poverty reduction program at preferential interest rates for poor households and social policy beneficiaries, VBSP embarked on installment trust fund for 04 social and political organizations including Vietnam Women’s Union, Farmers’ Association, Association of the Blind, Association of Veterans and Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union. In addition to loans from VBSP, poor households were also eligible for loans from other sources (such as Agriculture and Rural Development Bank, Employment Support Fund, other banks, credit institutions, social and political institutions, etc.). In particular, the most notable one was supportive activities for female in poverty reduction and hunger eradication offered by Vietnam Women’s Association and Vietnam Farmers’ Association. To date, 100% of poor female household owners were entitled to VBSP loans. Particularly in 2013, 96,526 women obtained loans from the Trust Fund, making the total outstanding of VND752 billion.

- As of early 2012, total outstanding balance of policy credit programs amounted to VND103.7 trillion, including VND61 trillion of the credit balance for poor female customers in rural and ethnic minority areas, accounting for 58.9%. Thanks to the loans, poor rural and ethnic minority women enjoyed more opportunities for production, business, investment into plants, livestock breeds, rising out of poverty and overcoming the difficulties they were encountering in their lives.

- The Prime Minister enacted Scheme 295 on supporting women in vocational training and job creation period 2010-2015\(^{23}\) with the goal of strengthening vocational training for women, ensuring the women’s right to vocational training and employment as stipulated in the Gender Equality Law; increasing the proportion of vocationally trained female workers, improving quality, efficiency and competitiveness of female workers; offering opportunities for women to be able to find the jobs with stable incomes, contributing to poverty reduction and hunger eradication, as well as boosting women’s status; meeting the requirements of industrialization and modernization, along with international economic integration. Accordingly, the Vietnam Women’s Union (VWU) was in charge of taking the leading role, coordinating with relevant ministries, industries and localities to organize and execute the Scheme. The VWU has been coordinated with MOLISA and functional ministries and sector to implement the contents set out in this Scheme.

- During the last 20 years, Women’s Union has constantly initiated the implementation of the thrift practicing movement among its members and all strata of women. Since 2012, this movement has been carried out increasingly aggressively with the aim of reaching a balance of VND5 trillion by the end of the tenure for the Savings Fund with the lowest contribution rate of VND5,000/member nationwide in an attempt to enable its members.

\(^{23}\) Decision No. 295/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister dated February 26, 2010
at all levels with opportunities to have access to economic development supporting capital from their own-contributed capital. As of June 2014, according to statistics of 46/63 provinces/cities, more than 8.2 million members had participated in the movement, attaining the balance of more than VND3,499 billion.

- The aforementioned policy programs have contributed to poverty reduction rate in Vietnam. As a result, the poverty rate fell from 58.1% in 1993 to 10.7% in 2010. Given the Government’s new poverty line period 2011-2015, the poverty rate significantly dropped from 14.2% in 2010 to 11.1% in 2012. The policy impacts on poor women were quite apparent. Comparing between female household heads and male household heads, it can be usually seen that the female headed households often had higher average income. Meanwhile, female headed households have been better improved regarding the house or the use of clean water.

- From a poor country, Vietnam has become a country with low-medium income. GDP per capita in practice in 2013 reached USD1,910.5, an increase of 1.5 times compared with 2005. These achievements have contributed to improving the economical lives of Vietnamese people in general and women in particular.

**Difficulties and Challenges**

- In recent years, the global economic recession accompanied by natural disasters and epidemics have caused severe damage to business and production. Quite serious shortage of jobs, increasing volumes of inventories, high risks of unemployment and falling back into poverty have been exerting negative impacts on women’s life.

- The majority of poor female household heads has low qualifications and is doing unskilled jobs (65%), which have hindered their accessibility to supporting sources. Although the poverty rate is lower among female household heads than it is among the male household heads, comparing with the period from 2002 to 2012, the level of poverty reduction was higher for male household heads than for female ones. In rural areas, the proportion of poor female household heads tended to increase, from 16.3% in 2002 to 22% in 2012.

- Ethnic minority women and women with disabilities suffer more than other groups of women. In general, people with disabilities live in the families with partially worse living conditions than people without a disability.

- The preferential credit policies are still overlapping and complicated, yet to be synchronously combined with policies on vocational training, production support and product consumption. Regulations on loan limits, loan tenors and conditions are not consistent with women’s actual needs of production and business in each specific area. It is still hard for a number of migrant women to have access to the preferential lending channel.

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24 Results of the Household Living Standard Survey 2012, GSO
26 WB data at website http://data.worldbank.org/country/vietnam
28 2009 Population and Housing Census funded by UNFPA
Lessons learnt

- The synchronized and effective implementation of poverty reduction policies, including credit and vocational training support to women to improve the poor women’s living conditions has contributed to sustainable poverty reduction.

- The determination to implement the Government’s sustainable poverty reduction strategy in each period coupled with the participation of the socio-political organizations, non-governmental organizations in the credit support and job creation programs and projects for women have been significant elements to empower women to get out of poverty.

B. EDUCATION & TRAINING OF WOMEN

Laws, policies, programmes, implemented activities and results

- Ensuring social equity in education, increasing opportunities to education and opportunities to enjoy quality education for poor children, girls, and ethnic minority children are one of the focal tasks of the “Education Development Strategy period 2011-2020.

- The Prime Minister approved the Education Development Scheme for ethnic minorities during the period of 2010-2015, which put forward priority solutions for supporting ethnic minority women in obtaining access to education opportunities.

- The NSGE period 2011-2020 defined Goal No.3 on the quality improvement of female human resource, gradually ensuring the equal participation between men and women in education and training reflected by two indicators i.e. increasing the literacy rate of both male and female ranging from 15 to 40 years old and the rate of doctor and master degree holders. Accordingly, a group of solutions to attain Objective No.3 was put forth with the integration of gender equality contents into teaching in the national education system; offering specific policies for the eligible group for example, the scholarship programs supporting the participation of girls and female into qualifications improvement education, especially introducing promotion policies towards rural and ethnic minority girls and female; designating particular policies for early childhood education in remote and disadvantaged areas; adopting policies to attract male teachers in primary and pre-school education; reviewing to remove gender-stereotyped messages and images from current textbooks; implementing gender mainstreaming in education policies, programs and plans; developing gender disaggregated database.

- The Plan of Action on Gender Equality period 2011-2015 of the education sector was also issued and implemented by Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) to achieve Objective No.3 set out in the aforementioned Strategy, as well as to serve the work for the advancement of women in the education and training sector. MOET issued Circular No. 67/2011/TT-BGDDT dated 30 December 2011 defining evaluation standards for primary schools, including the standard of “no gender discrimination and violations or violence within the school setting”. Accordingly, specific activities were executed by MOET, e.g. implementation of the illiteracy eradication program for women aged 35-40
in ethnic minority areas and areas having socio-economic difficulties; mainstreaming gender equality issues in all textbooks in general; reviewing and removing the elements and images that are likely to cause gender stereotypes in textbook in particular; incorporating gender education into teaching at schools.\textsuperscript{29}

- The State budget expenditure on education and training increased to 10% of the total budget in 2008 and 16.85% in 2012.
- A number of results have so far been obtained in the field of education and training as follows:
  - Vietnam has achieved universal primary education. The enrollment rate at the right age range for primary education reached 97.9\% in 2011, a rise compared with 2006 (95.4\%)\textsuperscript{30}.
  - The literacy rate among the population aged from 10 years was quite high. The literacy gap between males and females during the last 3 decades has been narrowed. In 1989, the general literacy rate was 88.2\%, of which males and females accounted for 92.8\% and 84.4\% respectively. This ratio has gradually gone up in the population and the gap between males and females has been gradually shrunk to the general rate of 91.1\% with 94.3\% for males and 88.2\% for females in 1999. Similarly, the ratios were 94\% and 96\% for males, 92\% for females in 2009\textsuperscript{31}.
  - The ratios of males holding college and university degrees in 2008 were 5.7\% and 7.5\% in 2012, post-graduate degrees were 0.2\% and 0.4\%. The corresponding ratios for females increased from 4.5\% to 6.7\% with regard to college and university degrees and from 0.1\% to 0.2\% with regard to post-graduate degrees\textsuperscript{32}.
  - The general rates of school attendance for females in 2012 were 100\% for primary education; 92.8\% for junior secondary education and 75.3\% for senior secondary education. Generally speaking, females’ overall enrollment rate did not change compared with 2006. However, males’ enrollment rate for senior secondary education somewhat dropped with 72.6\% in 2006 and 68.7\%\textsuperscript{33} in 2011.
  - Basically, equality between females and males in secondary and tertiary education was realized (period from 2007 to 2011): ECCD education (boys and girls accounted for 53.8\% and 46.2\% respectively); secondary education (males and females accounted for 51.4\% and 48.6\% respectively); tertiary education (males and females accounted for 51.7\% and 48.3\% respectively).

As the results, Vietnam has fundamentally closed the gender gap in primary, junior and senior secondary education. Females have come closer to males in terms of obtaining college and university degrees.

**Difficulties and Challenges**

- Women have fewer opportunities to access education than men in some areas, especially ethnic minority women and women in areas with economic difficulties.


\textsuperscript{30} Results of the Assessment Survey on Targets for Women and Children 2006, 2011 (MICS3, MICS4), GSO.

\textsuperscript{31} Vietnam Population and Housing Census over different periods.

\textsuperscript{32} Household Living Standard Survey 2012.

\textsuperscript{33} As per results of the Household Living Standard Survey in 2012, GSO.
• The existing large segregation between men and women in fields of study in Vietnam is impeding women’s opportunities to education and employment in the future.

• The shortfalls in providing training and refresher training on occupational skills have only been partially addressed in recent years. The majority of training and refresher training programs for women are short-term courses and focus on women's traditional occupations such as tailoring, hairdressing, etc. These occupations often offer low income, which has made women still more vulnerable than men in their opportunities to have access to the labour market. Differences between men and women regarding accessibility to training and technical expertise at work are still remarkable.

• The gender gap in the field of education and training has been more evident in some specific groups, for example, the group of people with disabilities. If the literacy ratio between women and men aged 15-24 was 1, that ratio would be 0.8 for youth with disabilities and 0.6 for youth with severe disabilities. This has indicated that, while the country has basically attained significant progress on gender equality and empowerment of women, far greater efforts are tremendously vital to support and encourage vulnerable groups such as the disability group.

• Gender stereotypes still persist in the learning materials and textbooks at all levels of education, which is possible to generate gender bias in behaviours of school boys and girls.

• The resources dedicated for gender mainstreaming in learning programs is still limited, thus affecting the promotion of gender equality in education sector.

Lessons learnt

• Priority issues should be clearly identified in eliminating gender inequality in education and training in accordance with different target groups and specific actions. Thanks to that, various groups of vulnerable women such as women in far, remote areas and ethnic minority areas will be able to obtain better access to education and qualification improvement opportunities.

• Proper and targeted resources should be focused to address the most critical gender issues in the field of education, serving as a basis for ensuring gender equality in education in general.

C. WOMEN AND HEALTH

Laws, policies, programmes, implemented activities and results

• Viewing health investment as the investment for sustainable development, Vietnamese Government continues formulating and enacting new policies to ensure the rights to have access to health services of women and girls, thus improving people’s health care quality. Strategy for protection, care and improvement of people's health period 2011-2020 with a vision to 2030; Strategy for population and reproductive health period 2011-2020; Safe motherhood program; Communication Scheme to raise awareness of reproductive and sexual health, HIV/AIDS prevention and control for adolescents, women and men; Plan of Action on gender equality for the period 2011-2015 of the health sector have been led and proactively implemented by the Ministry of Health with focus with a view to ensuring people’s accessibility to health care services, especially

women. The Labour Code (amended) 2012 increases maternity leaves from 4 months to 6 months. In addition, the adoption of the Law on handling of administrative violations in 2012 has ended the measures for taking sex workers into labour-social affair centers, created a better environment for HIV prevention as well as minimized harms related to sex work (e.g., the exploitation caused by clients, bouncers, rapes, etc.) towards sex workers, most of whom are women. Circular No. 16/2009/TT-BYT dated 22 September 2009 of the Ministry of Health provides specific guidelines for the reception and delivery of medical care, reporting of the cases of domestic violence victims in health facilities.

- The set of gender statistical indicators in the health sector was promulgated at Decision No. 3318/QD-BYT of the Ministry of Health (MoH) with the support of the European Union in Vietnam. 39 pilot indicators were introduced to monitor and evaluate the situation of gender development, for the advancement of women and gender equality in delivery and entitlement of health care services. This has been considered an essential tool to help the MoH adjust and formulate gender-sensitive health care programs/activities nationwide, thus ensuring the elimination of gender inequality in the field of health in Vietnam.

- Having determined the severity of imbalanced sex ratio at birth in Vietnam in the current period, MoH in collaboration with relevant ministries, sectors and international organizations in Vietnam is conducting research, advocacy and propaganda activities to eradicate the male chauvinism mindset, intensifying tight control over health care services in private and public sectors to limit sex selection at birth.

- Propaganda and dissemination of health sector’s policies and laws concerning gender equality have been conducted on a regular basis in order to change people’s conventional behaviours and habits on reproductive health. The contents on gender equality and health care continue to be communicated on Vietnam’s mass media such as VTV1, VTV2, O2 TV; thematic writings and articles on safe motherhood, reproductive health published on Health and Life Newspaper, Family and Society Newspaper and specialized magazines, publications; operational forms of Clubs on Reproductive health care counseling have been maintained and scaled up through such socio-political organization system as Youth Union, Women's Union, Farmers' Union, etc.

- Since 2010, State budget allocation for the health sector has still been maintained at the ratio of more than 24% of the total annual state budget expenditure (equivalent to more than VND11 trillion onwards).

- Laws and policies have enabled civil society organizations to more actively participate in the empowerment of women and girls in the prevention, care and support for people living with HIV. The civil society organizations have also actively participated in the service delivery, policy formulation and advocacy (UN, 2013).

- The enforcement of the above policies, programs, projects and activities has made positive contributions to gender equality achievements in the field of health. A number of major results can be highlighted:

  - People’s average life expectancy has been constantly increasing. According to thematic survey data of the Ministry of Health, average life expectancy of Vietnamese people was 71 years old in 2005; above 72 in 2009, and 73.2 as of 2011. Female average life expectancy was 4-5 years longer than the male one.
On average, each woman of childbearing age gave birth to 2.03 children in 2009; 1.99 children in 2011. Accordingly, Vietnam has achieved the replacement-level fertility 5 years ahead of the set target.

By the end of 2012, the proportion of underweight children under 5 years old had dropped from 41% (in 1990) to 16.2%. Notably, the infant mortality rate (under one year old) reduced from 44.4‰/1990 to 15.8‰ in 2010, approximately 15.5‰ in 2011 and 15.0‰ by the end of 2012. The under-five mortality rate also fell significantly, from 58 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 16 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011.

According to data from the survey on children and women targets in 2006, in 2011, the ratio of underweight children of 5% in 2006 fell down to 1.8% in 2011; the ratio of stunting children of 15% in 2006 went down to 6% in 2011; the ratio of wasting children of 2.9% decreased to 1.2% in 2011. Notably, the infant mortality rate (under one year old) reduced from 22‰ in 2006 to 14‰ in 2011. Under-five mortality rate also remarkably dropped, from 27 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2006 to 16 deaths in 2011.

The percentage of pregnant women receiving more than 03 times of prenatal visits increased from 86.2% in 2007 to 87.5% in 2013. The rate of child-bearing mothers who were provided with delivery care by health workers increased from 94.3% in 2007 to 96.0% in 2013. The maternal mortality rate witnessed a drop of more than three folds from 233/100,000 live births in 1990 to 67/100,000 live births in 2011.

Vietnam has attained remarkable results in prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The proportion of pregnant women tested for HIV increased from 16.5% in 2006 to 36.1% in 2011 and 49.7% and 2013. ARVs to prevent mother-to-child transmission have also gone up. In 2013, among 2981 pregnant women who tested positive for HIV during their pregnancy, there were 1,648 mothers and 1,758 infants received ARV. The virus tests for early pregnancy diagnosis were expanded. In 2013, up to 1,985 infants that received early pregnancy diagnosis and were referred to the pediatric care services, which indicated a significant increase in the delivery of this service from 26% in 2011 to 68% in 2013.

Difficulties and Challenges

- The accessibility to reproductive health care services for women in rural and ethnic minority areas has been still limited and the reduction of maternal mortality rate in far, remote and ethnic minority areas in the past 10 years has been slow. Young ethnic minority women and migrant people have encountered numerous difficulties in accessing the information and services on reproductive health care, including family planning services. The prenuptial reproductive health care has not been taken seriously.

- 35.4% of the needs for contraceptive method use among the 15-19 age group and 34.6% for the 20-24 age group have been unmet. The rate of adolescent pregnancy out of the total number of pregnancies increased from 2.9% in 2010 to 3.2% in 2012. Women continue to face various risks from having unprotected sex with their husbands/partners due to gender stereotypes on this issue. Data from 2006-2010 indicated that 54% of HIV-infected women reported that they had gotten HIV infection only from having sex with the husbands with high-risk behaviors (UN, 2013).

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33 Results of the Assessment Survey on Targets for Women and Children 2006, 2011 (MICS3, MICS4).
The imbalanced sex ratio at birth has been quite severe. Gender stereotypes and the male preference mindset coupled with easy access to technical services for early diagnosis of fetal sex, birth selection and abortion services have been the causes leading to the increasing sex imbalance. This will be likely to generate shortcomings in the national labour force and the country’s population in the future, whilst exerting negative impacts on women’s health and depriving them of the equal opportunities with men in finding jobs.

**Lessons learnt:**

- It is advisable to widely mobilize the participation of all sectors, socio-political organizations and communities in communication and education activities, delivery of population and reproductive health services, contributing to the realization of gender equality goal in the health sector.

**D. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Laws, policies, programmes, implemented activities and results**

- Gender-based violence prevention and control with emphasis placed on forms of violence against women in families continues to be explicitly stipulated in Vietnam’s legal documents. Pursuant to the regulations of the Domestic Violence Law, a vast array of Vietnam’s legal documents have incorporated the contents amending the domestic violence perpetration acts such as Civil Code, Civil Procedure Code, Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, and Ordinance on Handling of Administrative Violations, etc. Specifically, Vietnam’s Family Development Strategy up to 2020, with a vision to 2030 has required awareness raising on roles, positions and responsibilities of families and communities in properly exercising the advocates, guidelines, orientations, policies and laws on marriage and family, gender equality, domestic violence prevention and control, especially violence against women.

- Simultaneously, on 12 November 2013, the Government signed and promulgated Decree No. 167/2013/NĐ-CP defining sanctions for administrative violations in the fields of social security, order and safety; social evil prevention and control; fire prevention and fighter; domestic violence prevention and control. Then, the National Plan of Action on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control up to 2020 was ordained by the Prime Minister in February 2014 to boost the quality and effectiveness of domestic violence prevention and control activities; to generate fundamental changes in domestic violence prevention and control work; to protect and support victims of domestic violence; to gradually minimize domestic violence incidents nationwide. These are the legal documents aiming at the effective execution of domestic violence prevention and control activities in Vietnam.

- The State also enacted the Anti-Human Trafficking Law (effective date of 1 January 2012) and the 2nd National Plan of Action period 2011-2015 on anti-human trafficking. These are the critical efforts in terms of legislation, serving as the foundation for the prevention and control of trafficking in persons in Vietnam. Vietnam has also signed

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38 GSO: The sex ratio at birth of the whole country in 2011 was 111.9 boys /100 girls, 112.4/100 in 2012 and by June 2013, the ratio was 112.6/100. This ratio was typically high in some provinces of Red River Delta such as: Hưng Yên 130.7 boys/100 girls, Hải Dương 120.2 boys/100 girls, Bắc Ninh 119.4 boys/100 girls.

- The counseling and supporting activities for marriage and family, minimization of domestic violence against women have gradually been reinforced. Plenty of models have been sustained and replicated, attracting the engagement of various female groups, one distinctive one of which is the club on construction of happy families, non-social evil family club, mutual support inter-generation club model, etc. The new models in counseling and supporting marriages and families, marriages involving foreign elements, domestic violence prevention and control, trafficking in women and children and other social evils have been implemented, e.g., the Marriage Supporting Center, Reliable Addresses in the community, Peaceful House, Hotline, etc. have initially met various needs of different female groups. These models have been put into pilot implementation by MOLISA, MOCST and VWU on grounds of their assigned functions and tasks. The VWU has been effectively conducting the VWU Plan of Action for the imp of the DVL period 2010-2020. Through these initiatives, victims of domestic violence and trafficked women received physical and emotional, occupational and legal support to be able to get more adequate access to social and private services.

- The non-governmental and international organizations in Vietnam carry on promoting their initiatives on implementing grassroots level models and providing technical assistance to the deployment of domestic violence prevention and control activities. The particularly important beacon was that in 2010 and 2012 two major surveys on violence against women in the family setting were conducted. The National Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Vietnam in 2010 conducted by the General Statistics Office (GSO) and the World Health Organization in Vietnam within the framework of the UN-GoV Joint Programme on Gender Equality has provided the first national data source on this field and has been an important basis for the formulation of policies for the prevention and control of domestic violence against women. The Survey on economic costs caused by domestic violence against women carried out in 2012 by UN Women and the Institute for Family and Gender Studies was the starting or way-paving survey on the international scale regarding this particular topic, making good contributions in terms of methodology and policy implications when it pointed out economic losses caused by domestic violence against women.

**Difficulties and challenges**

- Violence against women is still a severe issue at present. According to the results of the national survey on domestic violence against women in 2010, 27% of the interviewed women had experienced at least one form of violence during 12 months prior to the survey, 87% of the interviewed female victims of domestic violence reported that they had never sought for support from official services or competent authorities. Even if they did, the violence normally got serious. This suggests that gender stereotypes in this regard are still very serious and the implementation of laws and policies on prevention and control of violence against women is still limited. People, including many women, regard violence against them as normal behaviours. At the same time, a number of local authorities and social organizations have not resolutely determined to combat these

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behaviours as they consider spousal conflicts and violence are family affairs in which they should not be involved.

- The guarantee of the right to inviolability of the human body has been confirmed in the Constitution of Vietnam. However, so far Vietnam has not had any separate laws specifying and guiding the measures to sanction acts as well as behavioral manifestations of gender-based violence. The detailing on the specific manifestations of gender-based violence to clearly identify acts of violation is also limited (such as the definition of sexual harassment, trafficking in women and children). The main challenge in implementing the policies on gender-based violence prevention and control is that a national coordination mechanisms for gender-based violence prevention and control is still unavailable, the funding is constraint, the interference models have been primarily in pilot form without any conditions for replication; there is a shortage of scientific data on the scope, scale and forms of manifestations of gender-based violence.

**Lessons learnt**

- The further completion of legal framework on prevention and control of violence against women has exerted effective impacts on suppression of all forms of violence against women in the family setting.

- The promotion of initiatives and execution of the pilot models providing supporting and counseling services to men and women in sharing family responsibilities from local and international organizations have raised people’s awareness of mental and economic losses in the events of domestic violence towards more sustainable suppression of violence against women.

**E. WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

**Laws, policies, implemented activities and results**

- During the entire journey of almost 40 years to date of the country’s construction and development, Vietnam’s stable political status had brought about peaceful life to its people in general and women in particular.

- With the aim of ratifying the aftermaths of historical wars, better performing the grateful and favour-repayment policies, the Ordinance defining the State’s honourable title of “Vietnam heroine mothers” was amended and supplemented by the National Assembly in 2013 to honour and express deep gratitude to those who devoted to and sacrificed themselves for the Fatherland. Accordingly, Government Decree No. 56/2013/ND-CP dated 22 May 2013 was enacted to realize this ordinance. As of 2013, 6,785 Vietnam heroine mothers that were alive had been supported and taken good care of by the State and people.

- During the two wars of resistance to protect the country, the vanguard youth force made gigantic contributions. To further exercise the preferential policies for the people with meritorious services to the revolution, the Government Prime Minister issued Decision No. 40/2011/QD-TTg dated 27 July 2011 prescribing the regime and policies for the vanguard youth who fulfilled their missions during the wars of resistance. The lump sum allowance and monthly allowance, coupled with priority and preferential loans from the National Employment Fund and the Bank for Social Policies for business and production to improve lives of the former vanguard youth have been applied under this
Decision. Especially, 4,500 lonely and homeless female vanguard youths have been regularly taken care of and supported by functional sectors and social organizations.

- The Vietnam Former Youth Volunteer Association was established and put into operation in 2004. The Association’s goal is to gather and unite former cadres and members of youth volunteers all over the country throughout revolutionary periods in an attempt to stimulate and promote the youth voluntary tradition in the period of the Fatherland’s reform, development and defense, motivate its members to support one another in life, alleviate poverty and eradicate hunger, conduct camaraderie activities; protect its members’ legitimate rights and interests; participate in policy and regime settlement for former youth volunteers in accordance with statutory regulations; collaborate with Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union in the education of revolutionary tradition, youth volunteer tradition for young generations. So far, the Association system has been established nationwide. The Association has been making a great deal of positive contributions to the reinforcement of State preferential policies to people with meritorious services, especially taking care of and supporting lonely and homeless former female youth volunteers at grassroots levels.

- The contents of legal documents on gender equality and the advancement of women have been regularly updated and mainstreamed with gender by the Ministry of National Defense and Ministry of Public Security into the sectors’ programs and activities. Currently, there are 02 females in the Ministry of National Defense conferred General rank and 02 female directors of Departments of Public Security in two provinces (holding General rank). The percentages of female officers in the Public Security sector represent 14.64% and 2.14% in the army forces.

- When acting as President of the United Nations Security Council in October 2009, Vietnam proposed an initiative to hold open discussions, draft and presided negotiations, which subsequently led to the Security Council’s unanimous adoption of Resolution 1889 on Women, Peace and Security with 20 co-author nations. This is one of the most important Resolutions of the UN Security Council in this regard, in which measures to boost the protection of rights and promote the role of women in all stages of the peace process were set forth.

Difficulties and challenges

- The national economy’s difficulties has restring the mobilization of supporting sources from society, businesses and communities, thus affecting the enforcement of the policies for people with meritorious services.

- It is estimated that there are over half a million former youth volunteers in anti-French and anti-American periods. However, a list of only 420 thousand people, including 60% females has been identified to be entitled to the State’s preferential policies.

- As a nation that has undergone many years of war, the issue of Agent Orange victims in Vietnam is now extremely serious. A great number of victims are suffering tremendous losses and disadvantages. Women are the primary caregivers of the Agent Orange victims while the support rendered by local authorities at all levels and social organizations is still limited. In addition, the female victims of Agent Orange themselves are suffering discrimination are also more vulnerable than men.

- The proportion of women’s participation in the national defense and security sector has been too low.
Developments of peacekeeping issues in the East Sea are really complex since early 2014 due to aggressive actions from China, which has severely affected the lives of coastal residents, including women (injured, intimidated, job loss, reduced income, etc.).

Lessons learnt

- Regularly reviewing, adjusting, promulgating and executing preferential policies for people with meritorious services to be commensurate with the current socio-economic development situation to ensure concerned people’s interests.

- Exercising focus-oriented activities on gender equality and for the advancement of women in the security and national defense sector, which increasingly enables female officers to promote their roles and positive contributions in the peacekeeping course in Vietnam and in the world.

F. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

Laws, policies, implemented activities and results

- Gender mainstreaming in formulation of legal documents and policies on labour and employment has been conducted quite sufficiently to obtain the gender equality objective in the economic filed. The Labour Code (amended) became effective on 1 May 2013 stipulates a number of new provisions on female workers in an effort to enhance gender equality in hiring, using, training, working hours, rest periods, salaries and other benefits; coupled with the increased maternal leaves to 06 months. However, female workers can return to work after at least 04 months of maternity leaves. Regarding the age range for pension entitlement, the Labour Code regulates full 60 years old for male and full 55 years old for women; nonetheless, workers are allowed to retire at the age of five-year earlier or later than their provided retirement age in accordance with Government’s regulations.

- One of the priorities in the implementation of the NSGE period 2011-2020 and NPGE period 2011-2015 is to reduce the gender gaps in economy, labour and employment; increase the access of poor rural and ethnic minority women to economic resources and labour market. Accordingly, the solution group to realize these priorities aiming at reducing the costs for job access as well as workers’ job-seeking time; develop sex-disaggregated database on the labour market and vocational training; ensure economic conditions for women to obtain full and equal access to economic resources; establish day-care centres for children in industrial parks to easy women’s burden of housework while encouraging them to take more active part in economic activities; develop and implement vocational training programs and policies for rural and ethnic minority women, etc.

- The Government Prime Miniter enacted and implemented a series of programs and schemes, including the National Targeted Program on Employment and Vocational Training: the National Targeted Program on Employment up to 2010; the National Targeted Program on Employment and Vocational Training for the period 2012 - 2015 under Decision No. 2101/QD-TTg dated 31 August 2012; Scheme on “Vocational
Training for Rural Workers up to 2020 under Decision No. 1956/QD-TTg dated 27 November 2009 of the Prime Minister; Scheme on “Support for women’s vocational training and employment period 2010-2015” under Decision No. 295/QD-TTg dated 26 February 2010 of the Prime Minister; Scheme on supporting poor districts to boost labour export, contributing to sustainable poverty reduction period 2009-2020 under Decision No. 71/2009/QD-TTg dated 29 April 2009 of the Prime Minister; Scheme “Supporting and developing the private-sector independent children groups in non-industrial areas and export processing zone” under Decision 404/QD-TTg dated 20 March 2014. This has been generating opportunities and favourable conditions for women’s access to job opportunities.

- On 8 August 2012, Prime Minister enacted Decision No. 1489/QD-TTg approving the National Targeted Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction for the period 2012-2015 with a view to improving and gradually enhancing living conditions of the poor ethnic minority peoples, poor people in poor districts, border communes, safety zone communes, villages and hamlets with special difficulties, coastal and island regions, generating drastic and comprehensive changes in poverty reduction in poor regions; narrowing the disparity gap of living standards between rural and urban areas, among regions, ethnic minorities and different population groups. The Program stipulated its eligible beneficiaries being the poor, poor households with priority given to ethnic minority people, the elderly, the disabled, women and children.

- The Employment Placement Loan Project financed by the National Employment Fund played an efficient and supporting role along with self-employment creation for workers in general and women in particular, contributing to awareness raising of people and the whole society on employment. On the basis of supplementing the state budget source from the National Targeted Program on Employment, the National Employment Fund has so far accumulated more than VND4,294 billion and allocated to 63 provinces/cities under central control as well as socio-political organizations and association such as the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), VWU, Farmers' Union, the Blind Association, Veterans’ Association, etc. Apart from prioritizing the employment placement lending projects for numerous female workers, the National Fund on Employment also dedicates a large capital source for the VWU for management to create jobs for its members with a total Fund of VND56 billion. For example, in 2013, more than 3,000 jobs were created to female workers. A vast array of models for job creation and skill enhancement for female workers were carried out such as the women’s club model, loan organization model, women-love-science model, model on tuition fee remission for female pupils from poor households, etc. Additionally, the loans allocated by local channels as well as other organizations and unions also contributed to job creation for a great number of women (the number of women entitled to loans annually accounts for 50% of the total number of borrowers from this fund). Particularly, the newly enacted policies recently have facilitated the formation of the Loan Projects for female sex workers, a form of support which only few nations in the world could implement.

- Some achievements obtained in this area are as below:
  - According to the labour and employment survey results, by the end of Quarter III, 2013, the nationwide workforce was 53.65 million people, of whom female workers
accounted for 48.5%. Proportion of men’s participation in the workforce was 82.5% as compared with 73.5% of women. The number of workers with jobs created in 2013 was 1.53 million people, of whom women accounted for 47%.

The proportion of female business owners stood at more than 20% onwards. Some localities hit the proportion of female business owners from 25% to above 30% such as Ba Ria-Vung Tau, Binh Dinh, Cao Bang, Da Nang, HCMC, Khanh Hoa, Kon Tum, Soc Trang, Thua Thien Hue and Tien Giang.

In 2013, the new vocational training enrollment rate amounted to more than 1.92 million people, of whom women accounted for 42% (an increase of 1.1% point vis-a-vis the actual implementation rate in 2012), including more than 400 thousand people with tertiary and secondary vocational training levels; 1.52 million people with primary and continuing vocational training levels of less than 3 months, in which vocational training was conducted for about 450 thousand rural workers (an increase of 10.2% point compared with actual implementation in 2012). Vocational training continues to lay its emphasis on and offer appropriate implementation forms to each type of learner, especially with the gender structure that ensures effective and feasible vocational training.

**Difficulties and Challenges**

- Women are facing the increasing threat of being marginalized from the official economy, or having less job options due to their higher representation in vulnerable jobs than men. The wage gap between men and women tends to be widened given the context of Vietnam’s economy, which is suffering negative impacts exerted by the global economy. Women’s average income wage is lower than men, with the gender gap index of 0.83. The men-women income gap is bigger among the low specialized skilled groups, with the gender gap index of 0.72.

- The risks of gender inequality still persist in the labour market: the ratio of female workers’ movement out of the agriculture is lower than that of male workers; which has led to an increasing number of women the agricultural workforce. E.g. the ratio of female workers in agriculture, forestry and fishery in 2012 dropped by 1.7% as compared with 2011 while the reduction rate in male workers was 2.4%. In industries and services, women have tended to occupy minor sectors and occupations. Women are accounting for a larger proportion in the informal sector of the labour market, especially the self-employment sector, the unpaid household work as well as other unstable forms of labour. Consequently, they earn lower income, are less protected by the legislation on labour and have less direct access to direct social protection.

- Women’s participation of women in the labour force in some specific groups such as the group of people with disabilities is even lower than the rate of their participation in the labour force in general. The percentage of women with disabilities participating in the labour force is about 10% less than the rate of female labour force participation in general, and the difference of men and women with disabilities in labour force participation is 7%.

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40 2013 Report on socio-economic situation, GSO
The percentage of employed female workers increased less than men in the period 2002-2012, an average of 2.4%/year versus 2.8%/year for men, leading to the reduced proportion of employed female workers in total number of jobs from 48.6% in 2002 to 48.3% in 2012.

The State has implemented various policies to support housing for the vulnerable social groups vulnerable, including the poor, families of ethnic minority households and households in remote areas. However, the migrant women working in the informal sector have been facing numerous difficulties in getting a place of minimum conditions to live. They have to live in difficult conditions, the temporary, unsafe accommodation with a shortage of basic services.

Female workers make up about one third of the total number of contractual overseas workers. Many of them are doing the jobs with low wages and are not protected by the labour law in the host country. The women working as domestic workers, caregivers of sick people are encountering lots of dangers. These women are also affected by strict and harsh limitations on pregnancy and childbirth during their contractual period of working overseas\textsuperscript{42}.

**Lessons learnt**

- That State’s advocacy and policies on economic growth in parallel with social equity, stability and sustainable development of the country during the last many years have created equal opportunities for the participation of both male and female workers in economic development.

- The promulgation and execution of policies and measures related to economic development has increased employment opportunities, adjusted and narrowed the income gap between men and women while ensuring safe working and living conditions for female workers.

### G. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

**Laws, policies, programmes, implemented activities and results:**

- In 2010, the goal of "Promoting women’s representation in management and leadership positions to gradually reduce the gender gap in the political field" was affirmed in the NSGE period 2011-2020. The NPGE period 2011-2015 has designed the Project 3 on strengthening capacity for female National Assembly Deputies, female members of People's Councils at all levels, female managers, female leaders at all levels; female candidates to the National Assembly and People's Councils at all levels for the period 2016 - 2020, female employees under the category of human resource planning.

- To date, in the public sector, the Government has enacted and implemented a number of documents prescribing the strengthening of women’s participation in leadership and management such as (i) Having a policy to lengthen the working age for the titles of female Vice Minister and equivalent to be equal to that of male employees, which is 60; (ii) Supplement the quota of 01 deputy title held by a female staff for ministries, ministerial-level agencies when the female staff is qualified.

- Results of women's current participation in management and leadership:

\textsuperscript{42} MOLISA in 2013
- During the last nearly two decades, Vietnam has always had Female Vice State Presidents.

- The representation of female National Assembly Deputies Legislature XIII reaches 24.4%, and the proportion of female members of People's Councils at all levels for the period 2011-2016 are as follows: 25.17% at the provincial/city level; 24.62% at the district/town level, 21.71% at the commune/town level. Currently, Vietnam has been ranked among the countries with the high representation of female National Assembly Deputies within the region and all over the world.

- The proportion of women’s representation in the positions of senior leaders has increased: The women’s representation in the Politburo achieved 12.5% in 2013 (an increase of 6% point against 2011). Since 2013, the appointment has been made to 03 female Deputy Ministers or equivalent and 01 more female Provincial party committee secretary (Ninh Binh); in the Public Security sector, it is the first time 02 female delegates have been appointed in the position of the Major General; in the Ministry of Defense, another female Major General has also been appointed.

- For the title of Department’s Head and equivalent in the Central and local agencies, the proportion of representation is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Central level&lt;sup&gt;44&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Department Director of a Ministry</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Director General of a General Dept.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Deputy Director General</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Director of a General Dept.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Director General under a Ministry</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dept. Director under a sector</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Director General of a General Dept.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chairman of a Committee of the Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Director of a Party Committee</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Standing Member of a Council and Committee of the National Assembly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Provincial level</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vice Chair of a People’s Council</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vice Chair of a People’s Committee</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Member of the Standing Committee of Provincial/city Party Committee</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Director of Department, Editor-in-chief, Director of a Radio and TV Station</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Head of Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Division Party Committee Secretary, Head of a Party Committee and Rector of a Political School</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Director of People’s Procuracy and Judge of People’s Court</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Standing Member and Chair of a Committee under the People’s Council</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>43</sup> National Report on 5 years of implementing the Gender Equality Law in Vietnam

<sup>44</sup> Excluding the female leaders and managers holding the title of Directors of Departments and Heads of non-business units

(2013 Summary Report of the National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam)
In 2013, 15/30 Ministries, Ministerial-level agencies, Government agencies had female representation in the key leadership positions, accounting for 50% \(^{45}\) (up by 10% as compared to 2011); 25/63 provinces and cities directly under the Central level had the female representation in the positions of Presidents, Vice Presidents of the People's Committees, accounting for 39.7%.

**Shortcomings and challenges:**

- The ratio of female representation in the management and leadership positions in general and the percentage of female participation in the elected bodies in particular have been low as compared to the female labor force and not commensurate with the potential of women. The proportion of women's representation in leadership and management in some fields, localities tends to go down and is unstable. The percentage of female heads in the sectors and localities are quite modest: only 9.1% for the representation in the Minister level (2/22 Ministers).

- The ranking of Vietnam in the proportion of female National Assembly Deputies has decreased compared to the previous period (now Vietnam ranks 43/143 countries in the world and ranks second (after Laos) among the 8 ASEAN countries. Despite 24.4% of female participation in the National Assembly, the proportion of female members in full charge only makes up 17%, which limits their representative role in the important decisions made by the National Assembly. The number of women put on the list of the candidates to the National Assembly is still small. During the last two legislatures, only 30% of the candidates were women, so the proportion of elected women would be lower.

- The burden of housework and the prejudices on management capacity of women have contributed to causing obstacles to women's participation in the political field.

- The regulation on women’s retirement of 5-year earlier than men has caused quite a few corollaries regarding women’s capacity of engaging in management and leadership work as the regulations on training, refresher training, appointment of staff depend on this regulation on retirement age.

**Lessons Learnt**

- The determination of the State and the personal efforts of each female staff along with the care, orientation, aggressive direction of the leadership; the right recognition and proper evaluation of female capacity by agencies, organizations and the community have helped improve the status of female participation in the process of decision-making, leadership and management.

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**I. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

Laws, policies, programmes, implemented activities and results:

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\(^{45}\) In 2013, the Prime Minister appointed 01 Female Deputy Director of Vietnam Television
• The system of laws and policies on gender equality has been increasingly refined, which contributes to the maintenance and development of the national apparatus on gender equality in Vietnam. The details are outlined in point 1b of Part 1 of this Report on the Development of the National Apparatus on gender equality, raising the quality of the activities of the inter-sectoral collaboration organization for the advancement of women.

• The legal documents and sub-law regulations have been increasingly mainstreamed with gender in a more effective manner, especially the role of the National Assembly Committee for Social Affairs in appraising legal documents and Government’s reports on the exercise of gender equality. The establishment of the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus has also been of great significance in promoting discussions that meet the gender needs in the National Assembly.

Difficulties and challenges:

• The current national apparatus on gender equality has not had enough resources required to perform various tasks and the social organization network has not been really positive, proactive in supporting and participating in the activities to enhance the professional capabilities as well as experiences on gender equality and advancement of women for the workers in charge of gender equality at all levels.

• There is still a lack of specific programs and initiatives on gender mainstreaming knowledge in specific sectors and domains at the central and local levels, thus causing numerous difficulties for the inter-sectoral coordination on gender equality as well as the work of the national apparatus on gender equality.

Lessons Learnt:

• Leaders’ commitment, efforts made by socio-political organizations, and the active participation of all people, especially women is the decisive factor to stimulate the process of completing the institutional mechanism for the advancement of women.

• The role of the head of an agency or organization, the one that has the final say in policy formulation and implementation at all levels contributes greatly to the success in executing the activities and organization of the national apparatus for gender equality and advancement of women.

J. HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Laws, policies, implemented activities and results:

• During the last many years, the policies, efforts and achievements of Vietnam in ensuring human rights, including women's human rights, have been highly appreciated by the international community. 104/106 countries participated in the 18th session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Cycle II of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva (Switzerland) in January 2014 has highly recognized or appreciated Vietnam’s efforts and achievements. The most highly appreciated contents include the adoption of the Constitution with new contents, laying a more solid foundation to promote and ensure human rights; the role model for having completed ahead of deadline many Millennium Development Goals; fulfillment of international obligations; accession to more international conventions on human rights including
CEDAW Convention. Vietnam has been elected by the UN General Assembly to become one of Human Rights Council members for the 2014-2016 tenure.

- The State of Vietnam always attaches much importance to incorporate the principles of CEDAW into the national policies and laws. This is expressed in the related contents on gender equality and women's human rights in the process of promulgating legal documents in Vietnam.

- Right upon receiving the Conclusions and Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee after providing feedback on the Convention for the 5th and 6th time, the Government of Vietnam has developed plans to implement the recommendations, including a special emphasis on the dissemination and capacity building for implementation of CEDAW in Vietnam. Accordingly, the content of CEDAW provisions and the Gender Equality Law, gender equality in the field of family has been translated into minority languages (Khmer, Hmong language) and communicated to the community; developed and disseminated the training materials on the use of CEDAW principles in the implementation of the National Strategy and Program on Gender Equality’; organized periodic seminars to raise awareness of the CEDAW Convention’s implementation in each region/area of Vietnam, etc. To date, CEDAW has been gradually applied in the process of policy development and propaganda of gender equality in Vietnam. Vietnam has also mainstreamed the contents of CEDAW and the Convention on Human Rights, e.g. the fundamental principles of CEDAW and the Convention on Human Rights, as well as applied those principles in the amendments and supplements to the recent legal documents such as the Constitution, the Labour Code, the Marriage and Family Law, Civil Code into the training workshops for authority civil servants.

- To date, Vietnam has been ready for the preparations to present the combined 7th and 8th Periodical report on the CEDAW implementation in Vietnam to UN, which is expected to take place in July 2015 at the request of the UN.

Difficulties and challenges:

- Prejudices and discrimination against women remain popular in the society as mentioned in the above sections. The ill-treatment of women, prostitution, trafficking of women and children, HIV/AIDS epidemic, social evils, etc. are still developing complicatedly. This fact has resulted in the women’s poor entitlement of human rights and equal rights in the society as well as within the family.

- Women’s right to work in the public sector is still limited because of the retirement age, which is 5-year earlier than that of men.

Lessons learnt

- High determination of the Vietnamese government as well as all levels of authorities in the realization of gender equality goals, regional and international integration, and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and domestic codification of CEDAW Convention have contributed to the realization of people’s equal rights in Vietnam.
The mainstreaming of gender into legal documents has been put a premium on, contributing to the guarantee of feasibility of legal documents and policies.

The coordination and strengthening of community responsibilities among all levels of authorities, the apparatus for the advancement of women and the Vietnam Women's Union is an effective way and a crucial element in ensuring the exercise of human rights in practice and empowering women.

K. WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

Laws, policies, programmes, implemented activities and results:

- The communications and awareness raising on gender equality and the advancement of women are a crucial content in the Work Plans of the Ministries, sectors and localities in Vietnam. The NSGE period 2011-2020 has requested the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) to be responsible for being the lead agency in coordination with the MOLISA to strengthen guiding and directing the mass media agencies to promote and innovate the communication activities, educate the advocacies and policies of the State law on gender equality; strengthen the inspection and supervision of the activities concerning information, press, publishing, internet information on gender equality; seriously handle the acts of releasing the publications and information with gender stereotypes or prejudices.

- With the aim to create a significant change in awareness so as to promote the entire society to adopt the behavior change in the implementation of gender equality under the NPGE period 2011-2015, the communications and awareness enhancement on gender equality are considered to be the focus of the Program implementation. Accordingly, the Project of communications for awareness raising and behavior change on gender equality will be allocated with the budget of more than 50% the entire expenditure of implementing this Program on annual basis by the Government. The content of the project is to organize refresher training classes to enhance communication skills on gender equality for the reporters, correspondents, editors of the media agencies; research, create and develop programs, publish media products on gender equality; organize activities, campaigns to disseminate and raise awareness on gender equality in conformity with the specific target groups, residential areas; conduct surveys of social awareness on gender equality, etc.

- MIC has taken the lead, in collaboration with the concerning Ministries, sectors to promote the propagation and dissemination of the legislation on gender equality, such as coordinating with the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs to perform the project entitled “Training, refresher training and capacity building on gender communications at the central and provincial levels”; collaborating with the General Office of Population & Family Planning (Ministry of Health) to adopt the written document to guide publishers not to publish the books, materials with the content of gender discrimination, gender prejudice in any forms; directing the press agencies to boost communications to raise awareness on gender and gender equality; coordinating to check and issue letters requiring publishers to cooperate with the functional authorities to take measures to recover the publications with the dissemination content of methods for fetal sex selection as indicated in the list of General Office of Population and Family Planning, etc.
Acting as the State management agency on gender equality and the standing agency of the NCFAW, on a yearly basis, the MOLISA has published and released nearly 10 items of communication products for free with over 60 thousand of copies. A large number of documents have been published in Vietnamese and English, particularly Leaflets on gender equality in the political sphere published bilingually in Vietnamese, Hmong, Ede and Khmer languages. Continued efforts have been exerted to maintain the network of communication staffs on gender equality (01 meeting is held every Quarter on a yearly basis); organize training courses for the reporters on gender equality; upgrade the NCFAW Website associated with the construction of a new Center of information and data sources on gender in order to promptly satisfy the readers’ needs of exploring information and data on gender equality at home and abroad, etc.

The contest entitled “Learning about policies and laws on gender equality” at nationwide scale was successfully organized in 2012. The contest’s purpose was to disseminate and raise awareness on gender equality for the people from all walks of life, staff, civil servants and agencies as well as organizations nationwide; further increase the responsibilities of individuals, agencies and organizations participating in the implementation of the law on gender equality; and also create a forum for sharing knowledge on gender equality, gender equality law, finding solutions for the enforcement of gender equality and propaganda, communication on the effective gender equality work, contributing to raising awareness, changing behavior of individuals and society regarding this field. Despite the first time of organization, the Contest attracted the participation of numerous individuals, agencies and organizations, irrespective of gender, age, region, profession, people race, religion, etc. As a result, 700,000 applications were submitted by the collectives and individuals nationwide and 26 collectives and individual won the prizes of the contest. This affirmed that gender equality issues are at the heart of social interests, which has contributes to gradually achieving the goal of promoting gender equality in Vietnam.

Ministry of Justice has collaborated with all levels, sectors, unions to disseminate, diffuse, grasp thoroughly the documents regarding the Gender Equality Law, Domestic Violence Law; Law on Human Trafficking Prevention and Suppression and other related legal documents; organize training workshops, seminars; compile documents and outlines propagating and introducing legislative documents on gender equality; compile 30 questions on the law of human trafficking prevention in general and trafficking in women and children in particular; organize training courses to enhance knowledge on gender, legislation and policies on gender equality for legal reporters and speakers at the central level.

As of November 2012, the country developed 14,601 legal bookcases in communes, wards, towns, including the legal materials, documents for propaganda on marriage, family, gender equality, domestic violence prevention and control, etc., creating opportunities for all people in general and women in particular to access, understand, protect their own legitimate rights and interests.

Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs held more than 30 Law Dissemination Conferences in 30 provinces for more than 3,000 participants who were officers working in the field of ethnicity, ethnic minority peoples of the 300 communes under 60 districts in the remote areas with the particularly difficult socio-economic conditions. The Conferences introduced the participants the basic and practical contents relevant to
people's lives, such as Land Law, Law on complaints and denunciations, Law on Forest Protection and Development, Law on Drug Prevention Control, Law on Election of Deputies to the National Assembly, Law on election of Deputies to the People's Council, Marriage and Family Law, Gender Equality Law, Domestic Violence Law, Law on Road Traffic, etc., contributing to raising awareness of the ethnic minorities on the legislation and putting the legal documents into practice.

- The Voice of Vietnam, Vietnam Television, Vietnam News Agency and numerous media agencies have developed many programs, news categories for propaganda on gender equality to contribute to raising awareness on gender equality work. The daily news reports, short reportages are regularly broadcasted on television by the Stations. The topics of gender equality and women have become more and more popular, with the increase in broadcasting time. A huge number of programs have attracted the public’s attention, such as New Vitality, Embellishment, Home Maker, Raising Children, I Am a Woman, Beauty and Health Recipes, Gifts of Life, O2 TV, etc. The information and images on men and women on mass media have contained gender balance and are less gender-stereotyped.

- VWU has deployed successfully the Scheme "Propaganda, education of Vietnamese women’s qualities and moralities in the era of promoting national industrialization and modernization", laying an important foundation to encourage women to train, strive for preserving and promoting the fine traditions of Vietnamese women. The forms of propaganda have become increasingly diverse: direct communication, organization of festivals of competition, communication campaigns, documentary films, reportages, specialized pages, news categories, release of publications, organization of exhibitions, product displays and so on.

- The movement of reading and learning from books and newspapers has been proactively implemented among staff, members and women. Many Women’s Union branches have developed and maintained the Women Bookcases, Women Libraries at commune level, women’s reading rooms, etc. to first cater for the needs of grassroots Women’s Unions’ staff in the implementation of work for Women’ Unions, contributing to enhance women’s knowledge. Sub Scheme 4 on law communications and dissemination to female farmers and ethnic minority women was effectively conducted. By 2013, 10,141 Women’s Union branches had established women’s bookcases. Vietnam Women Newspaper and WU website has had specialized columns communicating on gender equality.

- During the period 2007-2012, VWU issued 13,000 printed copies of the book on Gender Equality Law and guidelines on implementation of this law; Handbooks on Things to know on gender equality in the family; 13,000 legal newsletters for women with specialized topics of gender, gender equality and the GEL; 12,000 printed books on FAQ related legal aspects of domestic violence prevention and control, marriage and family, gender equality. As a result, laws and policies on gender equality were propagated and disseminated to 14 million members were propaganda and popularization of law, gender equality policy.

- The civil society organizations have also participated actively in the communication work on gender equality through various and diversified forms of communications, such as organizing training courses on gender equality for reporters and editors of various
newspapers and radio stations; conducting gender equality training for staff of numerous socio-political organizations, etc.

**Difficulties and challenges**

- Women in remote areas and ethnic minorities still face numerous difficulties in access to information and culture; a large number of ethnic minority women and women in extremely difficult areas are illiterate. They can’t listen to or speak the Vietnamese, thus causing numerous difficulties for the communication work at the grassroots level.

- Despite the efforts to increase awareness of reporters on gender equality, many socio-economic newspapers and electronic information websites in Vietnam still contain many negative gender-stereotyped images and contents against women in various forms.

- The provision of necessary knowledge and skills on gender for reporters, editors has been attached with much importance to through the Joint Programme on Gender Equality, with the collaboration between the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) and MOLISA. However, this provision has not met various different requirements.

**Lessons learnt**

- The focus of ministries, sectors and localities on the effective propaganda on gender equality has helped change the perceptions and behaviours of communities on gender and gender equality in the relationship between men and women. This work has contributed significantly to changing the perception of women towards the advancement in their positions and roles as well as help them assert themselves in the society.

- The diversity and richness in forms of propaganda through meeting, seminars, conferences, and means of public communications such as radio broadcasting, television, magazines, brochures, knowledge contests, etc. have proactively helped people understand clearly the valuable contribution of women in the social life of Vietnam today.

**L. WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Laws, policies, programmes, implemented activities and results**

- The Land Law, the National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change for the period 2009 - 2015; the National Strategy for Environmental Protection until 2010 and vision to 2020 (2003) and the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control (June 2013) continue to be deployed effectively. Accordingly, the content of research and consultation for the policy development in response to climate change from the gender perspective has been conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs so as to help the decision makers to take reference in the process of designing and developing activities in response to climate change.

- With an aim to promoting the participation of women at grassroots levels in activities of mitigating and managing disaster risks through the enhancement of knowledge and
skills, towards improving the culture of preventing, controlling, responding and mitigating the impacts of natural disasters in the community, the Vietnam Women's Union is implementing the Capacity Building Project for women in response to climate change for the period 2012-2016 funded by UN Women Vietnam. From 2012 to date, the project has been successful in intensifying women's role in the mitigation of disaster risks through the enhancement of awareness, skills and experience in disaster prevention; encouraging the formation of disaster preparedness and prevention culture in the community; providing early warning messages to respond to disasters more effectively; strengthening the participation of women in the decision-making process related to the adaptation to climate change and mitigation of disaster risks. In September 2013, the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control issued a decision recognizing VWU as a full member of the Committee at all levels from the Central to grassroots levels. This is an important result thanks to many years of efforts in advocacy and discussions among policy makers on the role of women in decision making for disaster risk management and climate change adaptation in Vietnam. This decision marks an official recognition of the country for women's contributions to the preparedness as well as recovery activities before and after disasters.

- In March 2012, the Prime Minister approved the National Targeted Program on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation for the period 2012-2015. Accordingly, the Vietnam Women’s Union is one of the representatives of Program Management Board as well as is responsible for coordinating with the concerned ministries and sectors to executes the projects under the program to ensure women’s accessibility to clean water supply services, to raise awareness, change hygienic behaviours and minimize environmental pollution so as to contribute to improving the health and quality of life for rural people, including women.

- VWU has implemented the programs and actions related to environmental protection at all levels. The objective of these programs and actions is to improve women's knowledge on environmental issues. 400 key staff of the VWU has been trained in formulating plans for environmental protection and much importance is attached to the State administration skills related to environmental issues.

- In 2011, MOLISA, VWU, MARD coordinated with a number of international organizations to develop materials on Gender and climate change to conduct training of trainers and pilot training courses for the staff working on gender equality and climate change response to provide knowledge and skills on consultation and policy formulation on responses to climate change from the gender perspective for various localities.

**Difficulties and challenges**

- Vietnam continues to be ranked in the group of the countries facing the most impacts from climate change: average temperature increases, heat, heavy rainfall, sea level rise, big storms in continuous occurrence, which will exert negative impacts on the lives of people, including women.

- Women are at higher risks of losing their livelihoods and basic resources as compared to men, causing women to be deeply plunged into poverty, with the increased burden of work and affected health.

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46 Decision No. 366/QD-TTg in March 2012.
Lessons learnt

- Gender and climate change issues should be put a premium on in formulation and enforcement of legislative documents and policies that help women better improve their living conditions.

- Promoting the role of women’s organizations in the activities in response to natural disasters as well as the environmental protection activities is a crucial element in an effort to boost gender equality and women’s empowerment.

M. THE GIRL-CHILD

Laws, policies, programmes, implemented activities and results:

- Law on Human Trafficking Prevention and Suppression taking effect as from January 2012 stipulates MOLISA to be responsible for instructing the mainstreaming of human trafficking prevention and suppression into the programs deployed by the Ministry, including the content on gender equality. At the same time, this Law also gives terminology clearly interpreting the implications of sexual exploitation, sexual slavery of which women and girls are highly vulnerable groups.

- The Program of Action on Human Trafficking Prevention and Suppression for the period 2011-2015 was promulgated by the Government. The Ministry of Public Security is the lead agency for implementing, managing and monitoring the implementation of the Program. VWU takes the responsibility for taking the lead and coordinating with relevant ministries to implement the Sub-Scheme 2: “Propaganda and education to raise awareness and skills on prevention and suppression of human trafficking through communication activities in the community”. The contents of implementation include: Develop general communication materials on the Party's guidelines, the State’s policies and laws on human trafficking prevention and suppression; methods, tricks and harmful effects of human trafficking crimes; preventive measures; skills to respond in case of detected signs of human trafficking in various forms such as banners, slogans, pamphlets, posters, handbook, manuals, Q&A booklets; Establish, strengthen and expand the network of reporters, communicators, collaborators on human trafficking prevention and control; Organize communication activities in various forms such as meetings and talking in person, providing documents; through activities in the educational institutions; cultural, tourism and community activities as well as other forms; Disseminate and educate the legislation on human trafficking prevention and control; Develop, maintain and scale up the preventive models in key spots of human trafficking; Organize communication campaigns in different communities; campaigns of communication, information and experience exchange with other countries within the region, especially the countries sharing border lines with Vietnam.

- Since 2009, MOLISA has taken a leading role and collaborated with line ministries/agencies and localities to organize Children’s forum and conference for children at all levels with the aim of helping children voice their concerns and expectations related to policies for child issues. Following up, National Children’s Forum has been conducted every two years with the suitable topics to let children engage in this dialogue, namely “Children and Objectives for Children in 2009”, “Children in a safe and friendly environment in 2011” and “Children's feedback on the revised Law on Child Protection, Care and Education in 2013”. In addition, the Magic
number-18001567”- the Vietnam’s child helpline has been operated for over the past of 10 years with the aim of better taking care of children national wide. As the results, there has been 1,544,400 phone calls which asked for getting information and supporting to address psychological and physical problems or gaining access to relevant organizations or agencies. In this regards, intervention needs of children from this helpline included legal support, information on child policies, violence against children, child sexual abused, out of school children.

- VWU has mobilized the technical and financial assistance from international community to build the Peaceful House to support victims of domestic violence and the returned victims of trafficking. From 2007 to date, the Peaceful House has supported 589 victims, including 241 returned victims of trafficking and 348 victims of domestic violence. Out of these victims, children accounted for 28.5%, including girls. The victims coming to the Peaceful House are provided with a free package of relatively comprehensive support, including the provision of: secure accommodation, socio-psychological consultation, medical care, counseling, legal intervention, education, vocational training, job placement, recreational and entertainment support, life skill and physical strength development, occupational equipment support, initial capital support.

- So far, many non-governmental organizations have been actively engaged in promoting human rights for girls. The Action to the Community Development Center (ACDC) in Hanoi has implemented the Program of Monitoring Educational Rights for Girls with Disabilities in Vietnamese Schools (MRGD) funded by the Canadian partner aiming at enhancing capacity of women and girls with disabilities in their participation in overseeing the rights of people with disabilities, and promoting gender equality in disability issues within the school and community settings. The Program has disseminated the in-depth knowledge about the education right of girls with disabilities; strengthened the capacity of women and girls with disabilities to participate in overseeing the rights of people with disabilities, promoted gender equality in disability issues, thus creating positive changes in the community's awareness and awareness of the people with disabilities themselves regarding the disability issues.

- 15 provinces across the country have been funded by the Plan International in Vietnam to conduct the Campaign “Because I am a girl”, which was launched by the organization in Vietnam with the main objective to support 4 million girls in education and basic skills and help them change their lives. President of the VWU was invited to be Ambassador for this campaign by Plan International. Accordingly, the VWU coordinated with Plan International to raise knowledge and reinforce practices for ethnic minority parents on care and education of children aged 0-8 in 9/15 provinces and cities mentioned earlier.

Difficulties and challenges

- The early marriages of ethnic minority girls still remain very popular in remote areas of Vietnam; the percentage of girls dropping out of school in this area is also higher as compared to boys.

- Awareness of ethnic minority girls on reproductive and sexual health as well as the hygienic practices is still very limited, especially the girls living in boarding schools that lack attention and support of their parents.

- Sexual abuse, trafficking in girls and adolescents still occur in a number of areas and regions of Vietnam.
Lessons learnt

- Focus-oriented support for girls and adolescents targeting their needs is vital, especially in the shortage of funding.

- Mobilizing support and participation of various organizations and social groups in the community, international organizations to help the Government prevent and suppress violence against girls in Vietnam.

SESSION 3
GENDER DATA AND STATISTICS IN VIETNAM

1. Development and promulgation of the National Indicators overseeing the progress in gender equality in Viet Nam

With the aim of monitoring and evaluating situation on implementing gender equality and empowerment of women in Vietnam, PMI (assigned for General Statistics Office-GSO to implement this task) takes the lead and collaborates with ministries, ministerial-level agencies to develop the national Gender Statistical Indicator System (GSIS) for submission to the Government for enactment. As the results, the first-ever National Gender Statistical Indicator System was issued by the Government\textsuperscript{47}. The GSIS was established 2 years prior to the UN’s release of the UN minimum set of gender indicators, which has been highly appreciated and recognized by the international community.

The GSIS is a synthesis of the statistical indicators to monitor and evaluate the status of gender development, the advancement of women and gender equality in the areas of socio-economic life with a view to meet the needs of gender statistical information of the Vietnamese Government, other organizations and individuals. In addition, many indicators in GSIS are kept unchanged from the national statistical indicator system, some indicators derived from the national statistical indicator system but need to be disaggregated by sex or ethnicity; some indicators from the NSGE were added. The Indicator System of a number of ministries, sectors, UN Statistical Indicator System was also added.

\textsuperscript{47} Decision No.56/2011/QD-TTg dated 14 October 2011
The issued GSIS contains the list of indicators, the major groups, reporting periods and task assignment. The set of indicators including 105 indicators under 10 areas and the Synthesized Indicator Group:

(1) Synthesized Indicator 03 indicators
(2) Population 13 indicators
(3) Labour, employment 14 indicators
(4) Leadership, management 09 indicators
(5) Education & training 12 indicators
(6) Science & technology 04 indicators
(7) Culture, information, physical exercises, sports 05 indicators
(8) Health 18 indicators
(9) Family life 07 indicators
(10) Sponsorship and social safety 14 indicators
(11) State management capacity on gender equality 06 indicators

The GSIS comprises 60 indicators within the national statistical indicator system, of which 21 indicators were added or regrouped/disaggregated (mainly on gender and ethnicity). Besides, the 45 indicators that were not specified in the national statistical indicator system have been added. At present, GSO is collaborating with various ministries/departments/sectors to promulgate the mechanism for reporting and collecting information for this set of indicators. Some remaining indicators which have been mentioned in the set of indicators but their information have not been able to be collected such as the use of.

2. The collection and synthesis of data for the UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators of UN Statistical Commission in 2013

The indicators mentioned in the UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators has been partly reflected in the national statistical indicator system and the GSIS of Vietnam. Thus, these indicators have been periodically disclosed under the regulations of Vietnam Statistics in the data releasing periods. However, there are still some indicators in the gender statistical indicator set have not been mentioned in the above two indicator sets, so they have not been collected and published. At present, GSO is in the course of conducting a review between the GSIS and the UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators to see the gap to be closed in the near future. The results will be updated in the next Review.

3. Collection and synthesis of data of the 9 indicators related to violence against women in Viet Nam

According to the UN requirement of collection and synthesis of data of the 9 indicators related to violence against women, in 2010, Vietnam carried out a National Survey on domestic violence against women in Vietnam, which was provided with technical and
financial assistance by UNFPA. This survey was conducted within the framework of the “UN-GoV Joint Programme on Gender Equality period 2009-2011” (MDGF-1694).

This survey did collect ratio of violence, scope, causes and consequences of violence against women. This was the first-ever survey on this issue national wide in six social economic regions of Vietnam. Participants and interviewees were female victims of violence, WU officers, health workers, village or hamlet chiefs/leaders and the local authority leaders as well as women and men in the community. This was the first time for a survey to be conducted in Vietnam on a national scale as well as in the 6 socio-economic regions. In addition, the survey also evaluated the coping strategies, awareness of domestic violence against women and women's knowledge of their legal rights. Results of this survey have facilitated Government agencies and civil society organizations to raise awareness and develop policies and programs to prevent and solve the problem of domestic violence against women more effectively.

In the process of conducting survey, requirements and principles of safety and survey, depth interview, group discussion were designed by international and national experts with the aim of collecting maximized statistics and information on violence against women. In addition, surveyors were selected and trained on information collection skills in a safe manner with regard to sensitive issues to be engaged in the survey. The principles of safety and survey ethics developed by WHO exclusively for the surveys on domestic violence against women was also applied. A safe name was used in the survey in order not to reveal this was a survey on domestic violence in an attempt to keep respondents safe and prevent surveyors from risks. The title “National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experience” was used in all of the materials during the whole process of training and fieldwork.

As the results, this survey gave some findings. In addition, the indicators on violence against women have been proposed for considerations and incorporated into the national survey system as follows:

(i) Total and age specific rate of women subjected to physical violence in the last 12 months by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency. (Collected and released with regard to the violence acts inflicted by the husband during the last 12 months, no violence perpetrated by others during the last 12 months);

(ii) Total and age specific rate of women subjected to physical violence during lifetime by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency. (Collected and released);

(iii) Total and age specific rate of women subjected to sexual violence in the last 12 months by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency;

(iv) Total and age specific rate of women subjected to sexual violence during lifetime by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency. (Collected and released);

(v) Total and age specific rate of ever-partnered women subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months by frequency. (Collected and released with regard to the violence acts inflicted by the husband during the last 12 months, no violence perpetrated by others during the last 12 months);

(vi) Total and age specific rate of ever-partnered women subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by current or former intimate partner during lifetime by frequency. (Collected and released);
(vii) Total and age specific rate of ever-partnered women subjected to psychological violence in the past 12 months by the intimate partner. *(Collected and released).*

(viii) Total and age specific rate of ever-partnered women subjected to economic violence in the past 12 months by the intimate partner. *(Only collected this indicator during lifetime)*

(ix) Total and age specific rate of women suffering female genital cutting. *(This incident does not exist in Viet Nam, thus the question on this phenomenon was excluded from the questionnaire and no collection was conducted)*

4. **Process of collecting data on the situation of specific groups of women such as rural women, elderly women, women with disabilities, ethnic minority women, women living with HIV and AIDS, and other groups.**

In the official statistics, especially the data collected from the GSO surveys on the population size (sampling surveys and censuses), the analyses can only be performed in details for rural women, elderly women, or ethnic minority women (based on analyzing the population censuses conducted every 10 years in Vietnam). Hence, the official statistics on women living with HIV and AIDS or other groups cannot be analyzed or synthesized using the data sourced from these surveys and censuses. Besides, in the future, Vietnam is considering the design of mainstreaming the surveying information on disability into the population census of the next tenure (2019). If it is realized, the data on disabilities, especially women with disabilities will only be collected and published. On the other hand, Vietnam currently has no national survey on gender equality in order to collect information of the 8 fields stated in the Gender Equality Law. Therefore, the implementation of a National Survey on Gender Equality should be taken into account in an attempt to put forwards the grounds for suggestions on statistical data system on all fields and with specific groups of women.

In fact, only some small-scale surveys were conducted by the Ministry of Health or the organizations/agencies working on gender equality on domestic violence against women/or women and children and the issue of HIV and AIDS. Accordingly, a number of reasons explaining why women and girls were at high risks of HIV and STI infections had been given. However, in order to provide sufficient grounds for the formulation of policies related to these groups of women, it is necessary to have larger scale surveys/investigations.

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Along with the completion of the legal and policy framework on gender equality policy, the Government of Vietnam is fully aware of the importance of establishing and maintaining the gender statistical system in Vietnam. However, to ensure consistency and sustainability of the gender statistical system from the central to the local level and the feasibility of collection, guidance as well as experience sharing in using and maintaining national gender statistical system of various countries in the world is really needed.
SESSION 4
EMERGING PRIORITIES IN GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

A. The country’s priority actions within the next 3-5 years to accelerate the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly:

1. Further reinforcing the legal system on gender equality:

   - Reviewing the gender inequality contents in the existing laws and policies; reinforcing gender mainstreaming into legal documents and policies. Accordingly, proposing the possibility of amending and supplementing those policies to be consistent and in line with the regulation on gender mainstreaming into the formulation of legal normative documents;
   
   - Further applying principles of BPFA, CEDAW to development of policies and legal documents in a practical way, consistent with each sector, locality and various groups in the society, different regions and areas.

2. Consolidating the organizational structure and enhancing capacity of the staff working on gender equality and for the advancement of women
- Continuing to strengthen the organizational structure and enhance capacity of the staff, collaborators working on gender equality and for the advancement of women at all levels in accordance with current regulations as well as actual conditions of each locality and unit, ensuring sufficient allocation of staff working on gender equality at all levels.

- Organizing training courses on gender knowledge, gender analysis and mainstreaming of gender equality issues for the staff working in policy formulation and making, legal officers, members of the Drafting Committees, Editorial Team that develop draft legal normative documents.

- Building a team of professionally qualified staff that are responsible and capable of implementing gender equality activities. Continuing to provide training, specialized refresher training, strengthen capacity for the staff and collaborators working on gender equality and the advancement of women from the central to local and grassroots levels.

- Enhancing the efficiency of inter-sectoral coordination in the implementation of the GEL, especially the functional ministries and sectors related to the exercise of gender equality in the 8 fields defined in the GEL, which are: politics, economy, health, labor, education and training, science and technology, culture, information, physical exercises, sports, health and family. Well fulfilling the accountability of various agencies in exercising laws and policies on gender equality.

- Propagating and disseminating the BPFA, CEDAW, and MDGs in Vietnam. Management staff at all levels from central to grassroots levels must have a correct and sufficient understanding of gender knowledge as well as legislation on gender equality to apply in the process of performing their tasks. It is necessary to use multiple forms and diverse measures to educate on gender equality awareness raising for people, staff and civil servants. The modes of communications should be diversified and are directed towards men and managing officers at all levels to help change gender stereotypes in a radical and sustainable way. Mobilizing the NGOs’ participation in advocacy, awareness raising activities on gender equality and women's human rights. Maintaining and developing a team of collaborators and communicators on gender equality and for the advancement of women, especially at the grassroots levels to strengthen effective communications on gender equality.

3. Forming and developing gender equality promoting services

- Evaluating, summing up the activities of service models, on which basis the service models to promote gender equality will be replicated. Special attention should be paid to the continued implementation and consolidation of the models on gender-based violence prevention and control, consultation service for girl child, model on development of friendly environment for children, especially girl children.

- Strengthening the role and contribution of NGOs, international organizations in shaping the new service models on gender equality.

4. Perfecting the mechanism to promote women’s participation in politics

- Boosting the leadership and direction of authorities at all levels on women’s work, female staff's work and gender equality. Focusing leadership to well perform the human
resource planning, appointment and use of female staff in line with a tight and thorough roadmap from the grassroots level. Attaching much importance to and putting a premium on appointing female leaders in the sectors and domains with extensive use of female workers. Special attention should be put on distinctive or specific characteristics of female staff for appropriate human resources planning and appointment of female staff.

- Well implementing measures so as to change social norms on roles of men and women. Increasing men’s share in housework as well as having policies to encourage and develop family supporting services with a view to enabling women to take more active part in social work.

- There should be appropriate mechanisms to ensure greater women’s participation in politics in a more substantive and efficient manner. First of all, training and refresher training should be strengthened for female staff in a flexible mechanism, which corresponds to women’s biological characteristics. Amending the regulations on working ages in conformity with the spirit of CEDAW. Specific guidance should be provided to the implementing or host agencies in arranging, appointing key female staff of various agencies, provinces and cities under Central control in preparing personnel for the elections of National Assembly deputies, members of People's Councils at all levels for the tenure 2016 - 2021 under authorized powers.

- Increasing the oversight over the exercise of gender equality from the central to grassroots levels.

5. Establishing sex-disaggregated data bank

- Completing the work on gender statistics on the basis of combining the periodical reporting system from the grassroots level, the surveys/censuses. Promoting analysis of secondary data from the existing databases.

- Strengthening the regular exchanges between producers and users of data to timely capture data needs as well as the ability to provide gender statistics in Vietnam, avoiding overlapped data collection in a number of areas, which may lead to both redundancy of data and shortage or discrepancy of data, not comparable over time as well as comparisons between local and international data sources.

- Developing a data bank on gender statistics in accordance with standardized statistical methods of gender statistical areas; ensuring comparability over time and space, between Vietnam and other countries in the region and internationally; increasing the publishing of periodic gender statistical publications to serve as a basis for policy making on gender in a timely and effective manner.

- Continuing to refine statistical methodology; further exchanging, learning and studying about research implementation, data collection, analysis of some sensitive surveying topics such as gender-based violence, violence against women, violence against children, time use survey, etc., in an attempt to timely complete the gaps in gender statistics in the official statistical system in Vietnam as well as to meet the needs of international comparison.
6. Strengthening international cooperation on gender equality and advancement of women:

- Maintaining and developing bilateral relations and multilateral gender equality in order to exchange experiences and promote learning model of gender equality and the advancement of women;
- Mobilizing technical assistance and expertise from international experts in order to effectively implement gender equality and advancement of women in Vietnam.

B. Country priorities and recent recommendations to strengthen gender equality and women’s empowerment in the current discussions on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda:

1. Proactively implement NSGE and NPGE

- Promote the mainstreaming of gender equality targets and tasks in to socio-economic development plans at all levels and sectors, concretizing by targets and attaching with the resources for implementation.
- In 2015, ministries, sectors and localities will conduct mid-term evaluation and review of the implementation of the NSGE as well as the final review of the implementation of the NPGE in an effort to make proposals on the formulation of the NPGE period 2016-2020.

2. Reinforcing the implementation of the regulation on gender equality mainstreaming in formulation and execution of legal normative documents.

- Boosting the strict implementation of the regulation on gender equality mainstreaming in formulation and execution of legal normative documents, strategies, plans and work plans of ministries, sectors, localities and units.
- Effectively exploiting and using data on gender equality in policy formulation, expanding the scope and level of gender mainstreaming in different areas.
- Reinforcing training and communications to raise awareness on gender equality and for the advancement of women for the staff and civil servants in charge of policy formulation and execution.
- Ministries, agencies and localities will direct, accelerate, facilitate and inspect the Drafting Committees, Editorial team and relevant functional staff in the implementation of mainstreaming gender equality in the formulation of legal normative documents, policies, strategies, plans and projects.

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