



FACT SHEET

Gender Equality and Female Empowerment

USAID's development mission is a world in which women, men, girls and boys enjoy economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights and are equally empowered to secure better lives for themselves, their families and their communities.



The USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy aims to advance gender equality and empower women and girls. USAID pursues an inclusive approach to foster equality, regardless of gender identity, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or disability.

In pursuit of this goal, USAID invests in programs expected to:

- **reduce gender disparities** in access to, control over, and benefit from resources, wealth, opportunities and services;
- **reduce gender-based violence**; and
- **increase the capability of women** and girls to influence decision-making in households and society.

An integral component of all programming in Vietnam, directed by USAID Vietnam's Country Development Cooperation Strategy, is to advance gender equality and female empowerment. We are particularly committed to empowering women with capacities and platforms to ensure their voices are represented, needs addressed, and leadership potential fostered. Examples of how gender is integrated into our key programs in Vietnam are provided below:

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND GOVERNANCE

On the UN Development Program's 2012 Gender Inequality Index, a composite measure of inequality in achievements between women and men in reproductive health, empowerment and the labor market, Vietnam was ranked 48th out of 148 countries listed. While Vietnam has made strong progress on a solid legal foundation for gender equality, significant disparities remain in the workplace and household, especially at a subnational level and in rural and remote areas. Women continue to earn less money than men, face entrenched cultural barriers and discrimination, and are under-represented in political decision-making. Our Governance for Inclusive Growth program will work with Government of Vietnam (GVN) agencies, private sector and other stakeholders to improve inclusion and advance women's empowerment by:

- reducing legal and regulatory barriers and expanding legal awareness for women via issues forums that generate policy recommendations and action plans;
- increasing women's participation, leadership and voice in policy dialogues;
- improving gender data collection, analysis and dissemination;
- improving access to economic opportunities for women; and
- establishing innovative partnerships to advance women inclusion.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Women currently account for a small percent of students enrolled in engineering and applied technologies programs at Vietnam's vocational colleges. Women also hold fewer leadership and managerial positions

at universities than men. USAID has been working with the GVN to promote more women's participation in higher technical education skills to enable women to seek higher paid employment. We also work with colleges to improve the representation of female faculty leadership positions and expand opportunities for women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Our Higher Engineering Education Alliance Program (HEEAP) has provided capacity building for women engineering professors and promoted women's enrollment in technical fields. The Social Work Education Enhancement Program (SWEEP) has trained female social work education administrators to become a more empowered and effective cohort of leaders in social work academia.

HEALTH

Gender roles and cultural norms influence men and women's response to health and well-being. Women living with HIV/AIDS appear to be less socially accepted than men and face significant barriers regarding sexual and reproductive health. Through our HIV/AIDS and Pathogenic Avian Influenza programs we promote:

- creation of an environment that is conducive to greater participation of both women and men;
- women's roles in advocating for good health, safe practices and protecting communities from HIV/AIDS and highly pathogenic avian influenza;
- engagement and empowerment of men and boys to address gender norms and behaviors;
- integration of activities to prevent and respond to gender-based violence; and
- organizational development and health systems strengthening activities to enable a more sustainable and gender appropriate HIV response.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Vietnam is particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, and women are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Women's restricted mobility and time-consuming caretaking responsibilities limit their opportunities to participate in activities to improve climate change knowledge, voice their opinions and be engaged in prevention efforts. In our programming we will:

- advance the recognition of women's roles, concerns and contributions in clean energy development, sustainable landscape and other climate change adaptation and disaster risks reduction intervention;
- undertake social impact analyses of policies such as those relating to the distribution of benefits for ecosystems services which includes issues of land tenure, property rights, and comparative effort on the part of women in maintaining and preserving forests; and
- support enhanced participation and benefits for women in Payment for Forest Environmental Services (PFES) schemes.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Improving inclusion and equality for vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and ethnic minorities, is an integral component of U. S. Government activities in Vietnam. There exists a strong link between gender vulnerabilities and an increase in gender-based violence at homes of women with disabilities. Despite efforts, many women with disabilities, LGBT and ethnic minorities continue to live on the margin of society, face social exclusion, discrimination and stigma. Our work focuses on:

- deliberately addressing gender-related barriers that male and female persons with disabilities face in accessing health and social services;
- promoting the role of families' male members in care and support to persons with disabilities;
- gender-based violence training for students with disabilities that aims to empower women with disabilities to recognize gender-based violence and take preventative measures against such violence.
- strengthening rights of the LGBT and civil society organizations that will help better advocate for their rights and help reduce discrimination and stigma against LGBTs; and
- increasing the voices of ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups in policy dialogues and improving their access to economic opportunities.

This factsheet has been developed by USAID Vietnam. For more details about our work, please visit our website at <http://vietnam.usaid.gov>.