

# Position Change of Vietnamese Women in Macroeconomic Policy Reform Episode: Comparative Analysis of Secondary Data

**Ngo Van Thu**

*National Economics University, Vietnam  
Email: thunvkt@neu.edu.vn*

**Le Thanh Tam**

*National Economics University, Vietnam  
Email: tamlt@neu.edu.vn*

**Pham Thi Nga**

*National Economics University, Vietnam*

**Nguyen Thuy Trang**

*National Economics University, Vietnam*

## **Abstract**

*Macroeconomic transition is toward sustainable growth and equality in all economic-social livelihoods. Women – the important population force – participate in most economic-social activities and are the “fire-keeper” of any family as the cell for society. Women’s roles reflect the important achievements in society advancement and gender equality. In this paper, we summarize some findings from our research with UN Women on the impact of macroeconomic reform on women roles over 10 years, such as (i) the overall economic conditions and living standards have been much more improved, which directly benefit women and their families (ii) women in Vietnam have generally been treated equally to men in almost all aspects; (iii) women capacities have been improved over time, thanks to access to education and resources; (iv) the Women’s Union plays an important role in ensuring the beneficiaries and activities of women in general. However, several issues created the challenges for development of women in the next period, such as (i) less spending proportion for education and health; (ii) women still have to face the burden of housework, particularly childcare and household farmings; (iii) women lag behind men in their participation in industrial employment and are concentrated in agriculture and services. The recommendations for related stakeholders are settled for more gender equality in terms of quality in the future. It is important for sustainable development which results from macroeconomic reform.*

**Keywords:** Women’s role, women’s position, macroeconomic reform, Vietnam

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## 1. Introduction

In late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the macroeconomic policies of the government have contributed significantly to the rapid change and remarkable achievements of the Vietnamese economy and society. The change is characterised by its nature of economic restructuring, thus many economic and social issues need attention. These issues are related to sustainable growth, poverty, social stratification, gender equality and women development. During the socio-economic transition process, the government has carried out many different policies regarding women issues, and the objectives of gender equality and women empowerment have been reflected in several government policies and resolutions of the Communist Party. This paper attempts to assess the changes of all aspects of Vietnamese women over time through the analysis of available information sources up to 2011.

The paper consists of 4 main parts: (1) Introduction; (2) Economic growth of Vietnam; (3) Issues during the economic growth; (4) The impacts of economic transition on women's position in Vietnam.

## 2. Economic growth in Vietnam

### 2.1. Objectives

Since the beginning of the economic transition, the Vietnam Communist party has determined its target as economic growth toward the poor, this target also implies a sustainable economic growth process. The economic growth associated with development is one of the main targets of earlier years in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Vietnam has been aware and paid attention to this balancing issue because of

some practical problems that happened when examining investments and factors affecting the effectiveness of the investments. Sustainable economic growth has been emphasized since the social consequences of overheating economic growth revealed clearly in the 2005-2007 period with GDP growth rate above 8% (GSO, 2010). Thus, it can be concluded that the targets of economic growth and micro-economic restructuring have been identified, and Vietnam concentrated lots of intellectual resources to identify a comprehensively sustainable growth model for the 2009-2020 period. Although, there are some shortcomings during the operation of the economy, the results are remarkable and are the basis to determine the country's development strategy for the 2011-2020 period.

### 2.2. Policy system

One of the remarkable economic growth policies which have shown their effectiveness and attention is investment policy. Foreign investment policies and the number of FDI projects have increased dramatically, from only 391 projects in 2000 to over 1,500 projects in 2008. Domestic investment has also been encouraged, from 54 billion VND in 2001. It increased to 251 billion VND in 2009. The total investment rose to more than 40% of GDP in the 2005-2009 period.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the policies of sectoral restructuring partially achieved the goal of building a modern economy. The economy moved from high dependence on agricultural, forestry and fishery to having a high proportion of manufacturing industries and services. Production restructuring also took place and a new economic

structure was formed. Production values of agriculture, forestry, and fishery, as well as mining declined and seem to stay stable at 18% and 4.5% levels, respectively. Whilst, the figure of the manufacturing industry increased steadily at 29.5 percent, and trade and services increased and stabilized at 30% (Table 1).

The equitization process was implemented with many multilateral supportive programs and has achieved better results. Most enterprises have been equitized; the enterprise law was amended and completed in 2003. The stock market was established in 2000, this marked a step up on the capital market and provided opportunities for almost all enterprises to become public companies.

It can be said that the system of socio-economic policies and economic forms which were organized and adjusted by the

Vietnamese government, has helped the economy be on the right track and gain a lot of achievements. This has been confirmed in several assessment reports by national and international researchers and organizations.

### 2.3. Results and characteristics

The economic transition process has affirmed that the Vietnamese economy has clear market oriented characteristics. That is reflected in many aspects, from the restructuring of economic sectors, organizational forms of production and business, labor and capital distribution, to income and spending allocation.

The major results of the macro-economic transition process can be summarized by some following socio-economic indicators:

#### *Restructuring of economic sectors*

**Table 1. Output values by sectors**

Year	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	Mining and quarrying	Manufacturing	Trade and Services	Financial intermediation	Science and technology consultation
2000	24.10	6.97	21.87	28.82	2.14	16.11
2001	23.33	6.82	22.93	28.90	2.13	15.88
2002	22.76	6.46	23.97	28.97	2.14	15.70
2003	22.03	6.41	24.98	28.81	2.16	15.60
2004	21.36	6.48	25.76	28.84	2.17	15.39
2005	20.53	6.10	26.86	29.18	2.19	15.13
2006	19.72	5.54	28.11	29.50	2.19	14.94
2007	18.93	5.01	29.13	29.91	2.21	14.81
2008	18.51	4.50	29.88	30.17	2.27	14.66
2009	17.97	4.62	29.47	30.80	2.36	14.78

*Source: GSO Vietnam, Statistical Yearbooks 2001-2010*

Overtime, the production and business sectors which yield high productivities gradually become prevalent . The service and socio-economic consultant sectors gradually have a steady and stable orbit/cycle.

*Labor distribution by industries and economic sectors.*

The labor force was redistributed so that the share of employment in the agricultural sector went down (from 62% in 2000 to less than

**Table 2. Employment by industries and economic sectors**

Percent (%)

	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2009
Agriculture and forestry	62.46	58.66	55.37	51.78	48.87	48.22
Fishing	2.63	3.25	3.38	3.59	3.75	3.70
Mining and quarrying	0.68	0.72	0.78	0.85	0.96	1.00
Manufacturing	9.44	10.53	11.62	13.05	14.04	14.35
Electricity, gas and water supply	0.22	0.29	0.33	0.40	0.50	0.55
Construction	2.77	3.86	4.62	4.93	5.33	5.64
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motor cycles ....	10.36	10.84	11.46	10.81	11.04	11.05
Hotels and restaurants	1.82	1.81	1.82	1.66	1.71	1.71
Transport, storage and communications	3.12	2.99	2.89	2.57	2.51	2.51
Financial intermediation	0.20	0.25	0.30	0.39	0.45	0.46
Scientific activities and technology	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06
Real estate, renting and business activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Consultant services	0.17	0.23	0.31	0.38	0.52	0.54
Public administration and defense; compulsory social security	1.00	1.11	1.29	3.64	3.81	3.81
Education and training	2.65	2.76	2.85	2.75	2.88	2.88
Health and social work	0.60	0.71	0.83	0.79	0.82	0.82
Recreational, cultural and sporting activities	0.35	0.32	0.31	0.28	0.28	0.28
Activities of party and of membership organizations	0.17	0.24	0.30	0.36	0.45	0.41
Community, social and personal service activities	1.31	1.39	1.48	1.72	2.01	2.01

*Source: GSO Vietnam, Statistical Yearbooks 2001-2010*

48% in 2009). The proportion of employment in the processing industry, construction, services and consultation has increased. Some new sectors appear and attract more and more labor (although the percentage is small).

*Structure of enterprises by ownership forms.*

The market oriented economy is reflected clearly as the number of economic units (independent economic agents) with different ownership forms has increased quickly. The num-

ber of SOEs which stood at 13% in 2000 went down to only 1.6% in 2009. Whilst, the figure of non-state enterprises rose dramatically from 83% in 2000 to 95% in 2009.

*Capital accumulation and consumption rates.*

Except for the years 2008-2009 (the years of global financial crisis), the asset accumulation rate seems to have increased faster than the consumption rate. This phenomenon

**Table 3: Number of enterprises by ownership forms**

Unit: No. of enterprise

	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
<b>Total</b>	<b>42288</b>	<b>62908</b>	<b>91756</b>	<b>131318</b>	<b>205689</b>
<b>SOEs (No., %)</b>	<b>5759</b>	<b>5363</b>	<b>4597</b>	<b>3706</b>	<b>3287</b>
	<i>13.62</i>	<i>8.53</i>	<i>5.01</i>	<i>2.82</i>	<i>1.60</i>
Central	2067	2052	1968	1744	1630
Local	3692	3311	2629	1962	1657
<b>Non- state enterprises (No., %)</b>	<b>35004</b>	<b>55237</b>	<b>84003</b>	<b>123392</b>	<b>196776</b>
	<i>82.78</i>	<i>87.81</i>	<i>91.55</i>	<i>93.96</i>	<i>95.67</i>
Collective	3237	4104	5349	6219	13532
Private	20548	24794	29980	37323	46530
Collective name	4	24	21	31	67
Limited Co.	10458	23485	40918	63658	103091
Joint stock Co. having capital of State	305	558	815	1360	1812
Joint stock Co. without capital of State	452	2272	6920	14801	31744
<b>Foreign investment enterprise (No) (%)</b>	<b>1525</b>	<b>2308</b>	<b>3156</b>	<b>4220</b>	<b>5626</b>
	<i>3.61</i>	<i>3.67</i>	<i>3.44</i>	<i>3.21</i>	<i>2.74</i>
100% foreign capital	854	1561	2335	3342	4612
Joint venture	671	747	821	878	1014

Source: GSO Vietnam, Statistical Yearbooks 2001-2010

**Table 4: Using assets**

Year	Total	Asset accumulation			Ultimate consumption		
		Total	Fixed assets	Inventory changes	Total	State	Individual
2000	106,8	110,1	110,2	109,0	103,2	105,0	103,1
2001	106,9	110,8	110,7	111,5	104,7	106,6	104,5
2002	107,1	112,7	112,9	110,5	107,4	105,4	107,6
2003	107,3	111,9	111,9	111,2	107,9	107,2	108,0
2004	107,8	110,5	110,4	112,2	107,2	107,8	107,1
2005	108,44	111,15	109,75	133,48	107,34	108,20	107,26
2006	108,23	111,83	109,90	137,17	108,36	108,50	108,35
2007	108,46	126,80	124,16	154,56	110,63	108,90	110,80
2008	106,3	106,3	103,8	126,9	109,2	107,5	109,3
2009	105,3	104,3	108,7	73,8	104,0	107,6	103,7

Source: GSO Vietnam, *Statistical Yearbooks 2001-2010*

reflects the fact that economy is likely to maintain its growth rate because of the capital investments. The fact that Vietnam was not seriously affected by the 2008 financial crisis has demonstrated the role of asset accumulation in resistance/fighting against crisis.

#### *Per capita income and spending*

During the economic growth process, the income and spending have increased significantly. That means the economic growth process benefits the citizens. Even though, the rate of increased income and spending are considerably different among sectors and regions. The problem that can be seen clearly is: the

two major economic regions always achieve higher growth rates compared with other regions in the country, whilst the income and spending gaps between urban and rural areas have not been narrowed overtime.

#### *Poverty and income inequality*

Along with the economic growth, the percentage of poor households also went down considerably in both urban and rural areas. However, the poverty reduction rate in the poor areas did not reach the expectation/desire.

The GNI income index indicates that the relative income gap between the rich and the

**Table 5: Per capita income per month, current price**

Unit: 1,000 VND

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Whole country</b>	<b>356.1</b>	<b>484.4</b>	<b>636.5</b>	<b>995.2</b>
<b>Urban – Rural</b>				
Urban	622.1	815.4	1058.4	1605.2
Rural	275.1	378.1	505.7	762.2
<b>8 regions</b>				
Red River Delta	353.1	488.2	653.3	1048.5
Northeast	268.8	379.9	511.2	768.0
Northwest	197.0	265.7	372.5	549.6
North Central	235.4	317.1	418.3	641.1
South Central Coast	305.8	414.9	550.7	843.3
Central Highlands	244.0	390.2	522.4	794.6
Southeast	619.7	833.0	1064.7	1649.2
Mekong River Delta	371.3	471.1	627.6	939.9

*Source: Vietnam Living Household Standard Surveys 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, GSO***Table 6. Per capita spending per month, current price**

Unit: 1,000 VND

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Whole country</b>	<b>293.7</b>	<b>396.8</b>	<b>511.4</b>	<b>792.5</b>
<b>Urban-rural</b>				
Urban	497.5	652.0	811.8	1245.3
Rural	232.1	314.3	401.7	619.5
<b>8 regions</b>				
Red River Delta	300.2	417.7	531.8	813.9
Northeast	240.8	324.9	414.6	630.8
Northwest	192.4	250.8	324.7	496.8
North Central	210.2	275.7	350.0	560.2
South Central Coast	267.0	366.4	453.3	706.5
Central Highlands	216.3	321.3	431.0	670.9
Southeast	482.1	624.4	818.1	1292.6
Mekong River Delta	284.8	376.1	485.5	709.3

*Source: Vietnam Living Household Standard Surveys 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, GSO*

**Table 7: Percentage of poor households**

Unit: %

	2002	2004	2006	2008
<b>Whole country</b>	<b>28.9</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>14.5</b>
<b>By urban-rural</b>				
Urban	6.6	3.6	3.9	3.3
Rural	35.6	25.0	20.4	18.7
<b>By regions</b>				
Red River Delta	21.5	11.8	8.9	8.0
Northern midland and mountain areas	47.9	38.3	32.3	31.6
North Central area and Central coastal area	35.7	25.9	22.3	18.4
Central Highlands	51.8	33.1	28.6	24.1
South East	8.2	3.6	3.8	2.3
Mekong River Delta	23.4	15.9	10.3	12.3

Source: Vietnam Living Household Standard Surveys 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, GSO

**Table 8: GNI income index**

	2002	2004	2006	2008
<b>Whole country</b>	<b>0.420</b>	<b>0.420</b>	<b>0.424</b>	<b>0.434</b>
<b>Urban – Rural</b>				
Urban	0.410	0.410	0.393	0.404
Rural	0.360	0.370	0.378	0.385
<b>8 regions</b>				
Red River Delta	0.390	0.390	0.395	0.411
Northeast	0.360	0.390	0.407	0.415
Northwest	0.370	0.380	0.392	0.403
North Central	0.360	0.360	0.369	0.371
South Central Coast	0.350	0.370	0.373	0.380
Central Highlands	0.370	0.400	0.407	0.405
Southeast	0.420	0.430	0.422	0.423
Mekong River Delta	0.390	0.380	0.385	0.395

Source: Vietnam Living Household Standard Surveys 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, GSO



poor has been narrowed slowly, whilst household income and spending increased significantly. That means the absolute income gap tends to extend.

### 3. Issues during the economic growth

In developing countries, the governments always target high economic growth that is paralleled with a comprehensive development society, and the quality of life must be improved in a sustainable way. To achieve this goal, the government should have relevant control systems of economic growth. Recently, Vietnam has been aware of the shortcomings of its growth model. Most research and forums have demonstrated that the economic growth depends heavily on investment, particularly FDI, whilst the capital efficiency is low. The advantage of cheap labor is limited. Issues related to the quality of life and living environ-

ment become more severe. Natural and mineral resources and ecological environment have deteriorated gradually.

Although the government and community have realized what should be controlled, and the state has launched many legislative provisions, the effectiveness of the legal system is debatable, and the legal enforcement system still have many defects. In such conditions, each socio-economic achievement should be attached with not only the progress of the society, but also the limitation and consequences that negatively affect the development.

### 4. The impact of economic transition on the position of Vietnamese women (2000-2010)

#### 4.1. Population, gender and age structure

The structure of Vietnam's population by gender has fluctuated slightly during late 20<sup>th</sup>

**Table 9: Structure of gender and residential areas**

Year	Gender		Residential area	
	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
2000	49.16	50.84	24.12	75.88
2001	49.17	50.83	24.55	75.45
2002	49.17	50.83	24.99	75.01
2003	49.13	50.87	25.76	74.24
2004	49.17	50.83	26.53	73.47
2005	49.18	50.82	27.10	72.90
2006	49.21	50.79	27.66	72.34
2007	49.21	50.79	28.20	71.80
2008	49.29	50.71	28.99	71.01
2009	49.52	50.48	29.60	70.40

*Source: GSO Viet nam, Statistical yearbooks 1990 - 2010*

and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. However, the structure of residential areas has changed substantially; the proportion of people living in urban areas has increased significantly.

Vietnam's population increased steadily during 2000-2010 period, the total fertility rate TFR was almost constant (TFR was around 2.1 in 2005-2010). This indicates that the population is reaching a steady state. According to the rules of demographics, a population will reach its steady state after a process of reducing birth growth rates, then achieves a period of "demographic bonus". Many forecasts indicate that the demographic bonus has come to Vietnam and can last for 30-40 years.

## 4.2. Employment and income of women

### 4.2.1. Resources

Female labor force should be considered in two main aspects of quality and quantity. The analysis in this section is primarily based on the data of the labor and employment survey from 2000 to 2007, the labor force survey from 2007 to 2009, and ILO's reports<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Gender and residential structure of labor*

The Law of gender equality has been promulgated, amended many times and completed, there is a clause that genders are equal when participating in socio-economic activities. On the surface, there is no discrimination on

employment opportunities for male and female labor. The female labor force has accounted for a high proportion of the population. The gender structure of population under working age (according to the Labor law) is described in Table 10.

The ratio of male-female labor was almost stable with slightly more from 2004-2009, compared with slightly less in the years 200-2003. It should be noted that, compared with the 1997 figure, this ratio did not change much, because the data in 1997 reported the population ratio of working age and above (>=15 years old). This ratio remained at approximately 52% in the years 2000-2009. Thus, the gender structure of labor has not changed much and with the above status of the population, the age structure of labor is almost unchanged. However, the structure of residential areas has changed considerably. The proportion of female labor in urban areas has increased from 24% in 2000 to 30% in 2009, and the corresponding proportion of female labor in rural areas decreased from 76% in 2000 to 70% in 2009. Thus, compared with data of Unifem's report in 1997, the residential structure has not changed much (Table 11).

This was also the general structure of residential areas of Vietnamese labor from 2000 to 2009.

Related to the aggregate labor supply, every

**Table 10: Gender structure of labor (%)**

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Male	49.52	49.56	49.82	49.92	50.04	50.44	50.58	50.65	50,68	50.65
Female	50.48	50.44	50.18	50.08	49.96	49.56	49.42	49.35	49,32	49.35

*Source: Calculated from Annual Labor and Employment Surveys*

**Table 11: Structure of residential areas for female labors**

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Male	23.77	24.23	24.85	25.7	26.56	27.45	28.12	28.73	29.55	30.14
Female	76.23	75.77	75.15	74.3	73.44	72.55	71.88	71.27	70.45	69.86

*Source: Calculated from Annual Labor and Employment Surveys*

year there is about half a million female workers added to the workforce. This figure is almost unchanged over many years.

*Education and technical and professional qualification of female workers.*

Normally, these factors are considered as the basis of labor quality. The investment for labor quality comes from both the private and public sources through socio-economic development policies and human resource development strategies of the country, the industries, as well as the enterprises.

Education of the working age population by gender and residential areas, described in

Table 12.

Table 12 shows that the improvement of education has been focused during the observed years, however the education of women, particularly rural women remain a matter of concern. In 2000, the highest average class of urban men was 8.9, higher than that of urban women 0.4 point, however these figures were leveled equally in the years 2005-2006. Whilst, in rural areas, the picture that was not as good. The highest average class of women in 2006 only approximately equal to that of the men in 2000. Refer to the median statistics value, 50% of rural women have not complet-

**Table 12: Education of the working age**

Year	Mean				Median			
	Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2000	8.9	8.5	7.1	6.4	9	9	7	7
2001	6.7	6.1	8.7	8.4	7	6	9	9
2002	9.5	9.2	7.3	6.8	10	9	8	7
2003	9.1	8.8	7.1	6.5	10	9	7	7
2004	9.0	8.8	7.1	6.5	10	9	7	7
2005	9.1	8.9	7.3	6.8	10	10	7	7
2006	10.5	10.6	7.4	7.0	12	12	8	8

*Source: Calculated from Labor and Employment Surveys*

ed high school (same status for rural men), whilst 50% of urban labor population (both male and female) have graduated from high school.

The problem of the main macro impacts are as follows:

- The sluggish/slow improvement of universalize high school education for women.

- The large discrepancy of policy effectiveness between rural and urban areas.

The rural labor survey in 2007 provided even worse information about the above situation. Table 13 indicates that 50% of rural female laborers have completed only grade 7 (the system of 12 grades). The picture of education of female laborers by region also shows

**Table 13: Education of rural women labor by economic region**

No	Region	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median
1	Rural Northern Upland and mountain areas	7.38	2.459	7.00
2	Rural Red river delta	7.76	1.855	7.00
3	Rural north central area	7.78	2.144	7.00
4	Rural central coastal area	8.09	2.887	9.00
5	Rural central highlands	7.05	2.816	7.00
6	Rural south east	7.41	3.018	7.00
7	Rural Mekong river delta	6.07	2.914	6.00
	Average	7.36	2.686	7.00

*Source: Rural labor survey 2007- Central Women's Union*

**Table 14: Average number of schooling years of female business owner**

Province	Downtown	Province, town	Rural	Total
Hanoi	8.8			8.8
Thai nguyen		10.0	8.9	9.5
Da nang	10.0			10.0
Quang Nam		11.0	9.2	10.1
TP HCM	9.9			9.9
Dong nai		8.6	8.9	8.8
Average	9.6	9.9	9.0	9.5

*Source: Survey on Women Microentrepreneur – WU Academy, 2006*

the instability of this figure in the southern provinces (region 4-7), in which the Mekong river delta should be noted most. (mean: 6.07; std: 2.9; Med: 6.0).

Data from micro-business women in 2006 shows that women who run their own business had more schooling years, but not as much as target (only completed secondary school).

**Table 15: Professional and technical qualification of laborers over the years (%)**

Professional and technical qualification	Year	Urban		Rural	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Untrained	2000	72.3	78.3	92.9	95.5
	2001	92.5	95.1	70.6	77.1
	2002	65.6	72.9	90.4	94.1
	2003	60.6	70.4	85.5	91.2
	2004	59.3	69.5	83.8	90.4
	2005	57.8	69.2	84.2	90.3
	2006	49.2	56.7	87.4	90.1
Certificate, vocational primary, technical workers	2000	12.8	5.8	3.7	1.5
	2001	4.2	1.7	13.8	6.1
	2002	17.2	8.5	6	2.4
	2003	21.7	10.8	10.5	5.2
	2004	40.7	30.5	16.2	9.6
	2005	42.2	30.8	15.8	9.7
	2006	50.8	43.3	12.6	9.9
Vocational college	2000	7	9.7	2.3	2.1
	2001	2	2.1	6.3	9.4
	2002	7	10.2	2.2	2.2
	2003	7.2	9.9	2.5	2.3
College, university	2000	7.8	6.2	1.1	0.9
	2001	1.3	1.1	9.1	7.2
	2002	10	8.3	1.4	1.3
	2003	10.3	8.7	1.5	1.3
Post-graduate	2000	0.1	0	0	
	2001	0	0	0.2	0.1
	2002	0.2	0.1		
	2003	0.2	0.1	0	

*Source: Calculated from the labor and employment surveys, 2000-2007*

Table 14 describes the average number of school years in the surveyed areas.

The status of professional and technical qualifications will be analyzed by using several data sets, so in this research we only selected possible differences to find out the causes without focusing on broad analysis.

Extracted from the labor and employment surveys in 2000-2006, table 15 provides information about professional and technical qualifications by gender and rural-urban. It is clearly that there was a better shift (overtime) for male laborers, but not for female laborers.

The rate of untrained female labor in 2000 was 6% higher than that of un-trained male labor in both rural and urban areas. After 6 years, this difference was 6.5% in urban areas and 2.6% in rural areas. However, the absolute figure showed an unexpected image that nearly 70% of urban female laborers were not trained, and almost all (91%) of rural female laborers have not been trained, this ratio was similar for untrained rural male labor in 2000.

The rest of the laborers only have vocational certificates, primary degree or are technical workers without certificates.

**Table 16: Professional and technical qualifications of above 30 year-old laborers through the years**

Percentage (%)

Professional and technical qualification	Year	Urban		Rural	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Untrained	2000	62.1	72.0	90.0	94.5
	2001	89.5	94.1	60.1	71.2
	2002	54.8	66.9	87.0	93.3
	2003	49.6	65.5	82.0	90.9
	2004	48.7	64.8	80.5	91.1
	2005	47.2	64.9	81.7	91.2
	2006	37.5	49.1	86.1	89.6
Certificate, vocational primary, technical workers	2000	16.8	7.3	5.0	1.4
	2001	5.6	1.7	18.2	7.7
	2002	21.8	10.2	7.4	2.1
	2003	27.0	11.8	12.6	4.7
	2004	51.3	35.2	19.5	8.9
	2005	52.8	35.1	18.3	8.8
	2006	62.5	50.9	13.9	10.4

Source: Calculated from the labor and employment surveys, 2000-2007

For the laborers above 30 years old (who are believed to have completed training processes and career choices), the untrained ratio was not much better (Table 16). The ratio of untrained female laborers in urban areas still remained high at 49%. This insignificant change leads to a conclusion that the professional and technical qualification of female labor has not improved much, even though the economy achieved high growth rates during the 2000-2007 period. Thus, the model of employing human resource is characterized as labor intensive and taking advantage of cheap labor, the reinvestment of state and enterprises is inefficient, the employees themselves do not have active investment strategy to enhance their own capabilities. This is most evident in female employees.

#### 4.2.2. Jobs

In developing countries, jobs are always the first priority to confirm the position of employees in their community, more people need to

seek a job than people who choose jobs. This characteristic certainly exists in Vietnam even though the economic growth rate has been high and stable for many years. Together with economic growth, Vietnam has carried out the national employment strategy since 1990. Job creation and employment assurance for the laborers have been included in every socio-economic development strategy, and jobs are considered as the foundation of social security.

#### *Jobs and the impact of socio-economic changes on women.*

The time period referred to in the questionnaire was 7 days before the survey, the data of labor and employment survey provided information about the ratio of having income generated activities in Table 17. The ratio of having income generated activities for female labor was always lower than that for male labor, particularly in urban areas. In rural areas, the collected ratio seems to be better but not very precise, as the survey was usually carried out in

**Table 17: Percentage (%) of labor with income generated activities**

Year	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2000	72.3	66.0	83.0	81.0
2001	84.1	80.9	73.0	66.0
2002	71.5	66.2	83.8	82.1
2003	72.4	66.1	83.4	81.3
2004	71.5	64.5	82.6	79.8
2005	71.1	64.0	81.4	76.5
2006	67.0	65.2	83.9	84.6

*Source: Calculated from the labor and employment surveys, 2000-2007*

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April when most rural labor had income generated activities, moreover the situation of part-time or seasonal jobs was very popular in rural areas. The statistics usually give different data of employment and unemployment ratios. However, almost all the different statistics showed that the employment pattern has not changed much over time.

The percentage of women working in urban areas was lower than that in rural areas. This did not allow a prediction that their probability to have income was lower than in rural areas, there should be a further analysis of this phenomenon. According to the calculation from the annual rural labor and employment surveys, there were about 60% female laborers working for their own households without salary or wages. In other words, they worked, but the work was to take care of the family or did not generate income, there was no concept of salary or wage for this work.

Thus, it is very difficult to calculate the correct income of rural labor including female labor who do most of the work in each family.

Along with the economic transition process, female laborers also had certain changes in their occupations and careers. Usually, the change started as the laborers determined their own occupations, participated in training courses and found suitable jobs. Based on the annual labor survey to analyze the occupations of female laborers, there were 7 major occupations: Education and teacher training science (KHGD & DT), economic business and management (KD & QL), technical workers (KT), processing workers (CB), health care (SK), agriculture - forestry and fishery (N, LN & TS), hotel - tourism - sports and services

(KS). Meanwhile, in addition to the above 7 occupations, the general trend also focuses on developing training related to transportation, construction and architecture, staffs, laws and some other sectors.

Afterwards, we now analyze the change in women's selection of the above 7 occupations. We can find a trend that women make choices for training and occupation, as well as their future jobs.

The education and teacher training sciences had highest proportion of women participating in education and vocational trainings, the annual rate always reached approximately 20% to 30% per year. The number of total participants has increased or decreased unevenly year after year, however this industry has attracted the most women. The second best was the processing industry that had the highest and continuously increased rate of participants over the years. Even though, the proportion of laborers participating in training was small, this labor force was significantly involved in export and light processing industries in Vietnam. Particularly, the hotel and tourism industry was new but popular and rapidly increased year after year in Vietnam. Tourism and culture were considered as non-smoking industries that brought very high profit, thus Vietnam should make more policies to encourage the further development of these industries. The other industries have increased or reduced unevenly year after year, but the proportion of labor participating in training remained stable over the years. The analysis of women participating in trainings and selected occupations indicated that the effect of gender was significant.



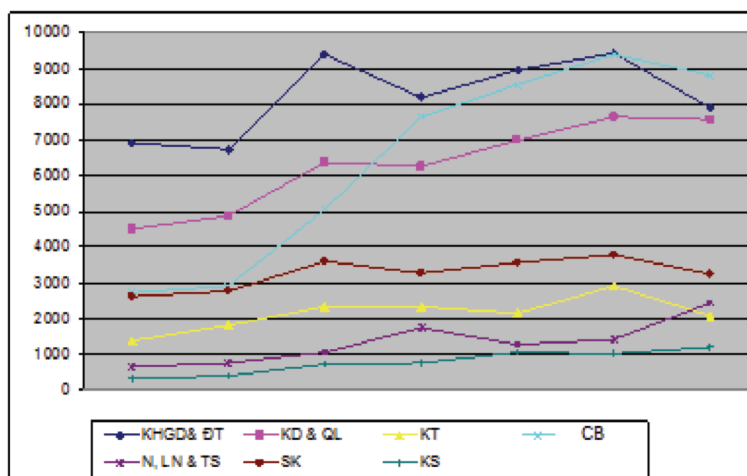
Besides the gender related characteristics, region and age group are two important factors affecting the selection of occupational training for women. So, for those different regional and age groups, are the selections different or are they the same? Since then, there could be a more suitable occupational training system that is specific for female labor in particular, and for Vietnamese labor in general. It can be seen clearly that the number of laborers participating in all occupational trainings in rural areas was much less than the same number in urban areas for all sectors. That means occupational education was not popular in rural areas, the labor force was abundant but the number of high quality laborers was small, thus partly resulting in the status of unemployment or insufficient working time for rural laborers. The rural laborers only participated in simple and manual work, their work was based on experiences or learning by doing without any formal education or training.

Compared to other sectors, the agricultural, forestry and fishery sectors had more rural female laborers participating than the urban females. Whilst, the other sectors always had higher urban females participating in training, even though the discrepancy has narrowed over the years.

The proportion of rural female laborers participating in training seems to generally decline in all sectors, except the agriculture-forestry-fishery sector (Figure 1). On the other hand, urban female laborers, accounted for only 34% of the total female laborers, and increased annually compared with rural female laborers in all high income sectors.

The proportion of urban female laborers participating in training courses was generally not lower than that of urban male laborers. That situation did not happen in rural areas. However, the proportion of urban female laborers participating in training courses in the service sectors have increased slowly in recent

**Figure 1: Number of women participating in occupation training from 2000 to 2007**



Source: Calculated from the labor and employment surveys, 2000-2007

**Table 18. The number and proportion of female laborers participating in training by sectors**

Year		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2007
		Number participated in occupational trainings						
Education and teacher training science	Rural	1481	1516	2445	2002	1743	1944	1366
	Urban	5421	1543	6927	6173	7211	7469	6512
Economic business and management	Rural	288	786	491	560	469	587	601
	Urban	4236	351	5869	5697	6510	7050	6961
Technical workers	Rural	104	307	337	349	293	377	282
	Urban	1290	199	1994	1983	1849	2538	1803
Processing workers	Rural	490	349	1309	2352	2710	2926	2840
	Urban	2229	538	3729	5297	5845	6447	5963
Agriculture - forestry and fishery	Rural	144	211	341	974	45	513	1290
	Urban	514	209	728	788	153	897	1140
Health care	Rural	343	518	542	505	477	487	410
	Urban	2290	396	3066	2762	3085	3307	2843
Hotel - tourism - sports and services	Rural	24	54	90	105	127	138	194
	Urban	312	38	623	667	920	878	994

*Source: Calculated from the labor and employment surveys, 2000-2007*

years, even though it seems to decline compared with the previous years (healthcare, hotel-restaurant-tourism, and so on).

*The structure of female laborers by occupations and economic entities:*

The GSO's report in the early 2008 indicated that Vietnam's population was about 86.3 million people in which females accounted for 50.9%. The labor force (more than 15 years

old) had 44.1 million laborers working for the national economy, in which there were 21.1 million female laborers, accounted for 47.8%. Female laborers work in different occupations and for different economic entities, but mainly for household business entities. In 2007, the proportion of female labor working for household business entities went down slightly, but remained high (74.6%). From 2000 to 2001,

**Table 19: Professional level by urban and rural sector, 2000-2007**

Unit: %

	Areas	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2007
Education and teacher training science	Rural	47,41	35,90	20,74	1,54	2,16	25,49	2,12
	Urban	28,88	43,50	25,56	5,83	6,65	22,79	6,32
Economic business and management	Rural	9,22	18,61	4,17	0,43	0,58	7,70	0,93
	Urban	2,57	9,90	21,65	5,38	6,01	21,52	6,75
Technical workers	Rural	3,33	7,27	2,86	0,27	0,36	4,94	0,44
	Urban	6,87	5,61	7,36	1,87	1,71	7,75	1,75
Processing workers	Rural	15,69	8,26	11,11	1,81	3,35	38,36	4,41
	Urban	11,87	15,17	13,76	5,00	5,39	19,68	5,79
Agriculture - forestry and fishery	Rural	4,61	5,00	2,89	0,75	0,06	6,73	2,00
	Urban	2,74	5,89	2,69	0,74	0,14	2,74	1,11
Health care	Rural	10,98	12,27	4,60	0,39	0,59	6,39	0,64
	Urban	12,2	11,16	11,31	2,61	2,85	10,09	2,76
Hotel - tourism - sports and services	Rural	0,77	1,28	0,76	0,08	0,16	1,81	0,30
	Urban	1,66	1,07	2,30	0,63	0,85	2,68	0,96

*Source: Calculated from the labor and employment surveys, 2000-2007*

the proportion of female laborers working for state entities increased sharply and kept relatively stable until 2007 (15.2%). The collective entities had a reducing proportion of female laborers, only 0.3% in 2007. In contrast, the percentage of female laborers in joint stock, limited co., collective name and private enterprises has gradually increased, from 2.0% in 2000 to 7.7% in 2007. The proportion of female laborers in foreign enterprises changed slightly from 2000 to 2007 (Table 20).

Females joined the labor market at a younger age than males, but mostly do unskilled or untrained jobs. The majority of women joined the labor market after graduating from high school, secondary school, even primary school (Table 21).

Thus, female laborers were mainly untrained; this proportion has been decreasing, but still accounted for 68.06% of the total female labor force in 2007. The percentage of female laborers having vocational primary,

**Table 20: Percentage of female laborers working in different economic entities (2000-2007)**

Unit: %

Economic entities	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
State	4.0	15.8	15.2	15.1	16.7	16.7	16.1	15.2
Collective	16.2	11.3	15.2	8.5	2.1	1.0	0.7	0.3
Individual/household business	75.5	68.8	65.2	71.4	75.8	75.9	73.0	74.6
Joint stock, limited Co., collective name, and private enterprises	2.0	2.9	3.4	3.5	3.8	4.6	7.8	7.7
Foreign investment enterprises	2.3	1.2	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.7	2.4	2.3

*Source: Calculated from the labor and employment surveys, 2000-2007*

**Table 21: Percentage of female laborers working in different economic entities by Professional and technical qualification (2000-2007)**

Unit: %

Professional and technical qualification	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Untrained	87.41	86.78	85.09	82.47	80.31	80.12	74.29	68.06
Vocational primary, technical workers certificates	3.56	3.83	4.99	7.21	19.69	19.88	25.71	24.84
Vocational college	5.70	5.50	5.74	5.84	.	.	.	2.59
College – university	3.31	3.84	4.14	4.45	.	.	.	4.51
Post-graduate	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.04	.	.	.	0.00

*Source: Calculated from the labor and employment surveys from 2000 to 2007*

technical worker certificates was 24.84%. The vocational college was 2.59%, and college-university was 4.51%. Particularly, the percentage of women having post graduate degrees was very low, almost zero.

Professional and technical qualifications of female laborers in manufacturing and trading enterprises were generally lower than male laborers. The percentage of untrained female laborers was always prevalent, and the pro-

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portions of trained female laborers, particularly who have completed the university or post graduate levels were always lower. Those figures supported the description of the professional and technical qualifications of laborers in general and of female laborers in particular which were presented in section 3.2.1 (Table 21). In other words, the economy did not really require laborers with high professional and technical qualifications. Thus, the long-term strategy for economic development has been planned by the government; however the human resources and labor markets have not received any clear signals from both employees and employers.

#### *4.2.3. Income and employment*

##### *- Income:*

Income of female laborers has been discussed frequently and from different perspectives. Statisticians always want to accurately measure the contribution of female laborers which is not counted as income in their households. In Vietnam, this contribution brings assets, wealth and services for households. Different from the discussion of income equality by gender, the real situation of Vietnam's labor market does not support the consideration of gender equality by comparing the income of the two genders. The gender equality should be considered in terms of occupational opinion and the positions in manufacturing and trading activities and other social activities. Thus, income is not the main measurement of gender equality. The main reason leading to this notion is that the earnings of female laborers are hardly or inaccurately calculated, female labors mostly do housework or subsistence productions, and

there is no accounting measures for these items. However, the analysis of labor and employment surveys reveal some major points:

In enterprises, the income of employees depends on the outcome of labor and economic efficiency. Thus, salaries and wages paid to employees ensure fairness, no gender discrimination. However, in practice, female laborers have lower income than male laborers.

Female laborers accounted for the majority of the occupations which required low professional and technical qualifications and having low income. Although, there is no salary or wage discrimination, but the real income of female laborers is only 75% compared to males. The education of females at university and post graduate levels is much lower than males. Problems to access reproductive health care services of rural women, ethnic minorities are still limited. The traditional notion of "male-supremacy mentality" clings and persists in most Vietnamese families.

According to the labor and employment survey of 2009, average income per week of female employees was 383.030 VND, whilst males had average income levels of 509.940 VND/week. That means, the average females' income was only about 75% of men.

Most of female laborers did not have the opportunity to have high income jobs, the 2009 labor force survey showed that female income from salaries and wage was much lower compared to males.

According to the 2009 labor and employment survey, among the six job positions, female laborers working as business owners

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**Table 22: Average income of employees by gender**

Gender	Income/week (thousand VND)
Male	509,94
Female	383,03

*Source: Labor and employment survey 2009*

**Table 23: Average income of female employees by job position**

Job position	Income/week (thousand VND)
Business owner	995,65
Subsistence production	289,59
Housework	.
Employees	471,00
Member of cooperatives	313,26
Apprentice	237,07

*Source: Labor and employment survey 2009*

had highest average income, reached 995.650 VND/week, unfortunately the percentage of female laborers in this job position was too low. Female laborers working as subsistence production and apprentices had very low income; female laborers doing housework were without remuneration or salaries.

- Income affecting job creation and job quality:

Theoretically, in an economy with economic growth in width, an increased income will pull more jobs. This phenomenon has been seen recently in Vietnam. However, behind this relationship was the working quality that was reflected in labor productivity. According to a study by CSEDPF in 2010, when the pro-

duction value increased 1%, the employment rate of the industry increased at the highest level of 0.5679%, followed by agriculture (0.4521%), and the lowest was service (0.3453%)<sup>2</sup>.

This suggests that the labor productivity were very low when employing laborers. Thus, it was impossible to have high income levels as the education qualification of the current labor force, especially female laborers were very low.

#### ***4.3. The increase of women working in informal employment sectors***

Formal and informal economic sectors generated more and more diversification of informal jobs. Many studies have been seeking

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policies for informal labor and employment. These policies could have different specific objectives in different countries. In Vietnam, the major issue was to have a system to support the community of informal labor in order to reduce the disadvantages of labor as well as the possible negative consequences for the community.

According to the survey of a study by CSEDPF's cooperation with ILO in June 2011, 50% of informal employment were female laborers (non including agricultural laborers), this percentage was only 43% in 2009. Regarding the quantity, about 22 million female laborers joined economic activities, and a large proportion were agricultural laborers or informal employment. About 37% of informal female laborers did not have enough income to engage in social insurance. During the crisis process, many statistical reports showed that the laborers of job loss become informal labors, and the job loss rate was positively associated with the rate of low professional and technical qualification. That means, the increase in female labor in the informal sector happened frequently and became more severe under some bad socio-economic fluctuations. As female laborers became more involved in the informal sector, they suffered more disadvantages during the economic downturn and benefited less during the economic prosperity.

#### **4.4. Women in socio-economic activities**

##### *4.4.1. The position of women in production and business activities*

Job positions in socio-economic organizations in general, and in product and business enterprises in particular, which have been

organized as independent economic entities, indicated what a society deserves for each individual over time. Job positions of female laborers have been mentioned in most human resource programs or plans of all production and business enterprises. However, there remained many differences in the concepts and practical distributions of labor in the enterprises. There were many reasons which stemmed from the traditional notion and from the mindset of female laborers, the self-restricted roles of women within family caused their low status in production and business activities. The labor and employment surveys in 2000-2006, with some forms of production and business are showed in table 24.

- The tendency of increasing self-employment activities in their own production and business entities for females declined from 34.5 % in 2000 to only 10.9% in 2006, whilst the figure for males was 53% in 2000 to only 10.9% in 2006. This showed that the females' self-employment capacity went down, unfortunately there was no connection to the switching of job positions for each laborer, and thus it was hard to say if this was a good or bad phenomenon.

- Self-employment entities reduced the number of employees of both genders.

- Female business owners increased unsteadily from 0.2% in 2000 to the highest level of 21% in 2005, and then went down sharply. This situation also happened to males. Then, the changes of production and business conditions and macro policies after the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Vietnam's communist party as well as the process of equitization have led to

**Table 24: Job position by gender (%)**

	Year	Gender	
		Male	Female
Self-employment owner	2000	52.9	34.5
	2001	23.6	24.1
	2002	50.0	31.4
	2004	22.8	9.4
	2005	31.5	12.9
	2006	22.4	10.9
Self-employment owner and employing additional labors	2001	1.4	1.2
	2004	.5	.2
	2005	.7	.3
	2006	.5	.2
Business enterprise owner	2000	.3	.2
	2001	7.8	15.8
	2002	.5	.3
	2004	11.4	13.0
	2005	16.2	21.3
	2006	.6	.2
Do housework and others without salaries or wages	2000	19.5	45.2
	2001	2.3	1.7
	2002	19.3	45.4
	2004	12.0	24.4
	2005	16.3	37.9
	2006	11.5	23.5

*Source: Calculated from the labor and employment surveys from 2000 to 2007*

rearrange the structure among sectors and within sectors, and resulted in the above situation.

- Laborers working within the households

without payment seemed to decrease for both male and female laborers, however the absolute number still showed that the percentage of females working in this position in



2006 was still higher than the equivalent number in 2000 (23.4% compared with 19.5%). The next section will analyze this issue further by adding the data of the rural female labor surveys.

#### 4.4.2. Women in families

According to the traditions of Vietnam as well as the above research results, women, specially married women, tied their activities with the family. Regarding the role of women in families, researchers and individuals all confirm the very important role of women in taking care of families, children and old people. This burden could be expressed by two indicators of household size and number of children. Tables 25-27 provided average data by region and age groups of married women living in rural areas in 2007.

After 5 years, household size decreased compared with the year 2002, but not for all regions. In some areas with socio-economic disadvantages, the household size even increased. The burden of housework and taking care of the family was almost no signal of relief in rural areas.

The reason to believe that household size is a factor that leads to an “anonymous” working burden for women comes from the tradition of housework belonging to women within every household. For rural women, this perception was shown clearly in the rural labor survey. When women were asked about doing housework and the reasons why, the statistics from 3863 rural women showed that 89% of them said that housework are a women’s (wife)’s responsibility. The reasons are explained as

**Table 25: Household size by age of female**

Age groups	Northern Upland and Midland	Red River Delta	Northern Central	Central Coast	Central Highland	Southern East	Mekong River Delta
15-19	3.00	4.00		5.00		3.00	6.00
20-24	4.32	4.00	4.00	3.86	4.11	3.71	3.89
25-29	3.86	4.06	4.35	3.68	4.39	4.13	4.02
30-34	4.33	4.00	4.67	4.35	4.52	4.27	4.67
35-39	4.35	4.25	5.22	4.57	4.89	4.69	4.65
40-44	4.50	4.07	5.39	4.69	5.07	4.75	5.05
45-49	4.67	3.76	4.67	4.89	5.49	5.08	5.18
General	4.43	3.96	4.86	4.64	4.84	4.67	4.80
<b>Year 2002</b>	<b>5.54</b>	<b>4.31</b>	<b>4.55</b>	<b>4.38</b>	<b>5.29</b>	<b>4.68</b>	<b>4.62</b>

*Source: Calculated from the rural female labor survey in 2007*

**Table 26: Reasons that women took responsibility for housework (2007)**

Reasons to take responsibility for housework	Number of people	Percentage
Free time of the household member	1702	49.38%
Education level of household member	108	3.13%
Income earning capacity of the household members	79	2.29%
The relevance of the household members	966	28.02%
Health status of member	69	2.00%
The participation perception of members	305	8.85%
Others	218	6.32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3447</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*Source: Calculated from the rural female labor survey in 2007*

follows:

49% of interviewees said that women had more free time than men?! And 28% agreed that housework was more suitable for women. The second reason might be rooted on the traditional notion and natural roles of women, whilst the first reason was unacceptable.

Among the family caring and housework, the taking care of children occupied a significant amount of time. What can increase the likelihood that women could gain benefits from socio-economic development is analyzed.

Compared with previous generations of women (particularly rural women), Vietnamese women have reduced some burden in caring for their children as the total fertility rate of the recent generations has declined considerably. The total fertility rate (TFR) was only about 2.1 (mentioned in section 3.2.1), most of the women would complete their childbearing at the ages of 34-35.

Thus, they could take better care of children. This result has been confirmed by a lot of research. However, we wanted to evaluate another aspect which is the impact of the economic growth and policies on the reduction of TFR. Figure 2 showed the process of GDP growth accompanied by the reduction of TFR. In Vietnam, we believe that the rate of 2.1% could be stable in the long term and the future fluctuation of income would almost have no impact on the TFR, Figure 2 recommended this prediction.

More opportunities to further change the status of benefiting from economic growth have occurred for Vietnamese women, even in rural areas.

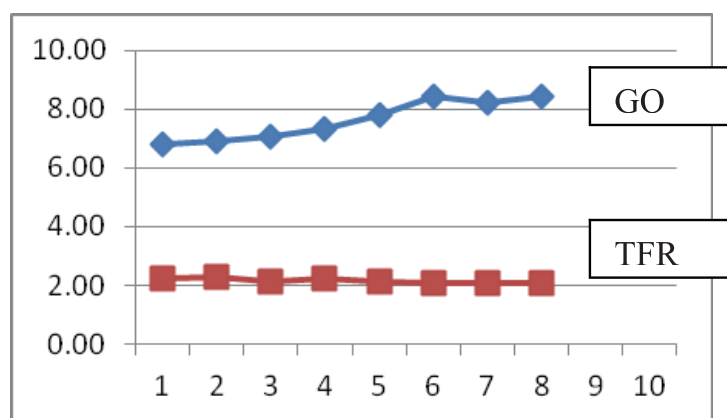
The advancement of gender equality within the family has been initiated. On the one hand, more and more males took some responsibilities in doing housework. On the other hand, women had better roles in some jobs that used to be exclusive for men.

**Table 27: Average children of women from ages 15 to 49 (2007)**

Aging group	Northern Upland and Mid	Red River Delta	Northern Central	Central Coast	Central Highland	Southern East	Mekong River Delta
15-19	2.00	.00		.00		1.00	5.00
20-24	.97	1.45	.80	.86	1.11	1.36	.80
25-29	1.28	1.77	1.39	.97	1.78	1.80	1.43
30-34	1.79	2.00	2.15	1.77	2.22	2.14	1.97
35-39	2.07	2.16	2.90	2.25	2.75	2.49	2.51
40-44	2.36	2.37	3.31	2.58	3.25	2.91	2.89
45-49	2.90	2.57	3.90	2.89	4.13	3.49	3.40

*Source: Calculated from the rural female labor survey in 2007*

**Figure 2: Growth rate of Gross Output and Total Fertility Rate in Vietnam**



*Source: General Statistical Office, 2000-2010*

**Table 28: Roles of wife versus husband in the main family decisions**

Decisions	Roles
Number of children and time of having children	Wife > Husband
Orientation of studying for children	Wife > Husband
Orientation of children's occupations	Wife > Husband
Orientation of children marriage	Wife > Husband
Daily and minor spending items	Wife >> Husband
Major/luxury spending items	Husband > Wife

*Source: Calculated from the rural female labor survey in 2007*

(> means more than. E.g. Wife> husband means that the wife has more role than husband in that issue)

About 49.9 % of rural women said that both spouses took care of to raise their children whilst the percentage of households where only the wife took care was 44%.

An increasing percentage of both spouses taking care of old or ill people in rural households (22.5% in 2007).

The role of generating income has been better identified, only 18% of households said that only the husband earned income, whilst only 12% of households said that only the wife earned income, and a large percentage of 66% households said that both spouses had the same role in earning income.

Regarding the social participating role within households, about 15% of households said that either husband or wife took the social participating role, and 61% of households agreed that the role of participating in social activities were equally for both spouses. Overall, this change should be noted and traditionally this change is sustainable as other

cultural characteristics.

The decision making process of other family issues has achieved better results. The decisions on daily works were discussed to have a consensus (55%). Besides, depending on different household work, the decision making role of wife or husband has been summarized as in Table 28.

#### *4.4.3. Women in the community*

##### *Information from the databases:*

The role of women within a community was primarily expressed by their representative for the family in participating in community's activities. This factor was formed as a specific cultural characteristic and resulted from a social development process, it did not depend only on some promotion programs of gender equality. Tables 29 were extracted from the rural labor survey, and briefly described this role of women.

The role of women in the political system

has always been confirmed in all resolutions of the Vietnam communist party and the government. The specific programs such as “for the advancement of women”, “empowerment for Vietnamese women”. The formation of business women clubs, the programs supporting women in economic activities, the movements for gender equality have always been concerned. Preparing for the Vietnamese women summit 2011, the Party and government paid special attention to the operational methods of the Women’s associations. They did research summed up all the movements, and listened to the critics from various organizations and individuals to better address the issues for women’s development and new ideal women that were in accordance with the economic development meanwhile not they did not detract from the good traditions of Vietnamese women.

*The assessment from the document (draft)*

*of the 11st National women summit 2011:*

- Female laborers continued to contribute positively and effectively to the achievements of the economic development; and have accounted for a high percentage in the key economic sectors such as agriculture, industry, services, processing and exporting sectors<sup>3</sup>; and were involved more and more in formal economic sectors<sup>4</sup>. The percentage of women engaging in management positions has increased in both enterprises and household economic sectors<sup>5</sup>. The enterprises managed by women have generated substantial jobs for female laborers, and contributed positively to charity activities.

- Women contributed significantly to the social and cultural development of the country<sup>6</sup>. The health of women continued to be improved, and the life expectancy reached 75.6 years old<sup>7</sup>; the percentage of pregnant women having prenatal care tripled (reached

**Table 29: Roles of wife versus husband in the main economic and social decisions**

Contents	Role
Investment in production and business	Husband > Wife
Residential land use and housing	Husband > Wife
Using land for cultivation and production	Husband > Wife
Relationship with relatives	Wife > Husband
Relationship with neighbors	Wife > Husband
Relations with government agencies	Husband > Wife

*Calculated from the rural female labor survey in 2007*

(> means more than. E.g. Wife> husband means that the wife has more of a role than the husband in that issue)

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more than 86%).

- The female pupils and students accounted for approximately 52%, females who passed the university entrance exams increased, the problem of girls dropping out of schools went down. The number of female scholars continued to increase in terms of both quality and quantity, accounting for 1/3 of the total scholars, they carried out many research projects of scientific and technical applications that brought substantial socio-economic benefits in many fields.

- Women actively participate in political activities at all administrative levels, sectors and communities; positively exercise their citizen rights, and are involved in different forms of direct democracy at their local community<sup>8</sup>. Women taking leadership and management positions have increased in some sectors; more at the district and grass-roots levels<sup>9</sup>, their quality has been enhanced.

Women have increasingly enhanced their awareness and knowledge of laws, policies, families and society; played an important role in organizing family life, parenting, preserving and promoting the cultural and moral values of the traditional family and the nation.

*Difficulties and challenges:*

- The quality of female laborers was still lower than the average qualification of the national workforce. The percentage of female scholars among those who have post-graduate levels was still low. The majority of female labor are untrained, and worked in

occupations that do not require high professional and technical qualifications, had low income and insecure working conditions, and the jobs were usually unstable. The employment problems of female labors in rural areas and the areas that the land has been converted to other usage purposes have not been solved. The life of a portion of women, particularly vulnerable females, migrant women, ethnic minority women,..still had many difficulties.

- Women and female children made up the majority of people who cannot read and write<sup>10</sup>. The illiteracy eradication for women from 15 to 40 years old in remote and ethnic minority areas still had many difficulties. Women had less opportunities to access and benefit from cultural and information activities. The level of access to health care services and clean water of the women in remote areas, and migrant women were still limited; women still faced many problems in reproductive healthcare, the maternal mortality rate has not gone down much.

- The percentage of female officials and party members was low, not commensurate with the potential contribution of women. The participation of women in policy making in some areas was not as effective as the desire, thus the execution of gender equality has not achieved the expected outcomes.

- A portion of women was deficient in knowledge of laws, policies, and limits on political awareness, and thus were easy to be enticed by reactionary forces.

- In the family, the thought of “male-supremacy mentality was still common in

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many places leading to an increase in the imbalance of birth ratios by gender. Moral values and family traditions seem to be reduced; gender related violence in various forms were still an emerging issue; social evils tended to increase, family services and social welfare supporting family and women, especially rural females, were still limited. Women were under pressure from housework, social responsibility, and their demands to study and improve the qualifications and professional skills.

### 5. Conclusion

Along with the development and changes of the economy in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Vietnamese women have benefited from important and remarkable changes. Similar to the general community, the female community has contributed to the successful roads of the country's development and borne all the risks of that road.

The analysis of the position of women over the past years has demonstrated that the outcome of the development that Vietnamese women have benefited include:

(i) The gender equality have been confirmed and accelerated in both the community and family scopes both in ideology and daily life. The Law of gender equality has been promulgated, amended many times and completed. Female labor force has accounted for a high proportion of the population (approximately 49%); most women can participate in training, and their husbands share the household responsibilities with them.

(ii) The Women's Capacity has been and is going to be developed. Women have par-

ticipated in different short-term training courses to improve their knowledge and skills, particularly in science, and the processing industry

(iii) Womens organizations bring actual benefits to their members by specific and effective activities. The Vietnam Women's Union, with nation-wide network and huge number of members, has done a great job in connecting and coordinating women in different activities, of which credit is a significant one.

(iv) Women have gained better access to the resources of socio-economic development such as land, public services (education, health, infrastructure).

(v) Compared with the previous generations of women (particularly rural women), Vietnamese women have reduced some burden in caring for their children as the total fertility rate of the recent generations has declined considerably.

(vi) Most women are relatively well-protected. The role of women in social decisions have improved over time, particularly the relationship with relatives and neighbors.

However, several issues still remain which may create both opportunities and challenges for women, and needed to be solved. For example:

- Education of women, particularly rural women remains a matter of concern, 50% of rural women have not completed high school. It shows the sluggish/slow improvement of universal high school education for women, and the large discrepancy of policy

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effectiveness between rural and urban areas.

- Females joined the labor market at younger age than males, but mostly do unskilled or untrained jobs. A significant proportion of female laborers working for their own households without salary or wage (60% in rural areas). In other words, they worked, but the work was to take care of the family or they did income generate activities but they did not receive any payment, there was no concept of salary or wages for these works. That is not fair to them and it creates a heavier burden during their lives.

- Female laborers accounted for the majority of the occupations which required low professional and technical qualifications and had low income. Although, there is no salary or wage discrimination, but the real income of female labors is only 75% compared to males.

- Women still have to spend much more time taking care of their family, and are responsible for family work more than men.

The recommendations to different stakeholders to improve the position of women in the society, and solving the side-effects of macroeconomic reforms include:

- Clarify the heritages that need to remain such as the good tradition of women in gen-

eral and Vietnamese women in particular.

- Identify more clearly the inevitable problems during the development process to be accepted and actively overcome among the community.

- Avoid passive participating and getting benefits, and enhance the enjoyment of the outcomes of the socio-economic development.

- Invest more in education and training for women, provide more qualified and suitable training classes, particularly for rural women.

Macroeconomic reforms in Vietnam in the last century have brought rapid changes and remarkable achievements for the Vietnamese economy and society. The general impacts on women's positions are very good. However, a few problems still remain, which may strongly affect the sustainable development of Vietnam in the next century. Among the key problems are the lack of investment in education and professional skills for labor in general, and for women in particular is a hot issue. This problem needs to be taken care of, and the solution shall be a key to the success for the development and equality of Vietnam in the future.

#### Notes:

1. Hereafter, if there is no significant difference between data sources, we will quote the data source from Labor and employment survey.
2. Model to forecast Vietnam's labor demand and supply in 2010-2015-2020. CSEDPF and ILO
3. Percentage %
4. 46% of employees in all production and business sectors were female



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5. 41.12% enterprise or entities owners, 49.42% head of household business
  6. % females in health and education industries
  7. Compared with the average life expectancy in 2007 of 72 years old
  8. % females joined the election
  9. % women in the party committees, the national assembly, and the ministries
  10. Accounted for 50.2% of people aged 15 and over could read and write and 68.4% of people aged 15 or older could not read and write

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