

IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GENDER EQUALITY IMPLEMENTATION IN VIETNAM IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

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<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2025.1011>

ABSTRACT

Over the years, our Party and State have always paid attention to caring for and promoting gender equality, protecting rights and enhancing the role and contribution of women in all aspects of political, economic and social life. During his lifetime, President Ho Chi Minh once affirmed: "Talking about women is talking about half of society. If we do not liberate women, we do not liberate half of humanity. If we do not liberate women, we will only build half of socialism". Therefore, women's liberation is not only women's work but is closely linked to the cause of national liberation, class liberation, and human liberation. Therefore, since its inception, our state has paid attention to gender equality and focused on creating opportunities for women to develop. Our Party and State have made many breakthroughs in awareness and action, from the legal, policy to practical aspects, and have achieved many important achievements in gender equality. Our country is considered one of the countries that has eliminated the gender gap fastest in the past 20 years. The paper offers some solutions to contribute to improving the effectiveness of gender equality implementation in Vietnam today.

Keywords: Solution, implementation, fairness, gender equality, Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

The cause of women's liberation in Vietnam has been of concern to our Party and State since the beginning of the revolution. The slogan "gender equality" has been affirmed from the first Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1946) until now. Over the past decades, the fight for gender equality in the world as well as in Vietnam has made much progress. Vietnamese women have many opportunities to assert themselves, participate in many leadership positions, and make great contributions in politics, economics, society, family and community. To perfect the legal system on gender equality, in addition to the Law on Gender Equality, in recent times, Vietnam has continuously supplemented and perfected the legal framework as a basis for solving gender equality issues such as: The National Assembly promulgated the Constitution 2013, 7 codes, and 161 laws; the National Assembly Standing Committee promulgated 15 ordinances, including about 45 codes, and laws related to gender equality; the Government promulgated 1,413 decrees; considered integrating gender equality issues according to the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents; approved the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2021-2030 period, issued together with Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP; Program on prevention and response to gender-based violence for the period 2021-2025; Program on Communication on Gender Equality until 2030; National Program on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence in the New Situation

until 2025... In particular, the Law on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence (amended) was passed, effective from July 1, 2023, making an important contribution to perfecting the legal system, creating a legal corridor for the prevention and control of domestic violence and support for victims, ensuring human rights and promoting gender equality. With these policies, Vietnam has created a favorable environment and conditions for women to increasingly affirm their position, role, importance and have many opportunities to contribute to their families, communities and society.

2. CONTENTS

2.1. Implementing gender equality in Vietnam - Some theoretical issues

According to the United Nations, gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same conditions to fully exercise human rights, have the opportunity to contribute and enjoy the achievements of national development in the political, economic, social and cultural aspects.

Although there are many international conventions on human rights that clearly stipulate gender equality in many areas, in reality, until the 1970s, inequality between men and women still occurred everywhere in the world. Therefore, on December 18, 1979, the United Nations General Assembly reached a consensus to promulgate the “*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*” (abbreviated in English as CEDAW) and it came into effect from September 5, 1981. This is considered the most complete and comprehensive legal document on women’s human rights. Until now, 189 countries have signed the Convention, of which Vietnam is one of the first 35 signatory countries.

In Vietnam, gender equality is clearly demonstrated in the first Constitution of 1946, in Article 9: “*Women are equal to men in every aspect*”. The amended and supplemented Constitutions of 1959, 1980, and 1992 stipulates: “*Male and female citizens have equal rights in all aspects of politics, economics, culture, society and family. Discrimination against women and insulting women's dignity are strictly prohibited. Men and women who do the same work receive the same pay. The State and society create conditions for women to improve their qualifications in all aspects and constantly promote their role in society*”. (Article 63, 1992 Constitution).

Regarding gender equality in politics, Article 54 of the 1992 Constitution also clearly states: “*Citizens, regardless of ethnicity, gender, social class, belief, religion, educational level, occupation, or length of residence, who are 18 years of age or older have the right to vote and those who are 21 years of age or older have the right to run for election to the National Assembly or People’s Council according to the provisions of law*”.

Next, the right to gender equality is further demonstrated in the 2013 Constitution, which is to ensure substantive equality, completely eliminate all forms of discrimination against women; continue to recognize the right to equality before the law of men and women (Clause 1, Article 16); equality in marriage and divorce (Clause 1, Article 35); the role of the State, society and family in protecting women and children (Clause 2, Article 26 and Clause 2, Article 36); non-discrimination between men and women (Clause 2, Article 16). This specifically stipulates that “*No one shall be discriminated against in political, civil, economic, cultural or social life*”.

Gender equality is not only mentioned in the Constitution but also specified in Vietnam’s legal documents on gender equality such as: Law on Gender Equality 2006; Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control 2007 and 2022; Law on Marriage and Family 2000 and 2014.

The Law on Gender Equality 2006 affirms: “*The goal of gender equality is to eliminate gender discrimination, create equal opportunities for men and women in socio-economic*

development and human resource development, move towards real gender equality between men and women, and establish and strengthen cooperative and supportive relationships between men and women in all areas of social and family life” (Article 4). At the same time, it also affirms: “Ensuring gender equality in all political, economic, cultural, social and family fields; supporting and creating conditions for men and women to develop their abilities, have equal opportunities to participate in the development process and enjoy the fruits of development.”. (Clause 1, Article 7)

The 2014 Law on Marriage and Family clearly states in Article 23: *“Husband and wife have the right and obligation to create conditions and help each other choose a career; study and improve their cultural, professional and technical level; participate in political, economic, cultural and social activities”.*

In the Law on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence 2022, gender equality is also mentioned in Clause c, Article 13: *“Focusing on changing the behavior of people who commit domestic violence, people who regularly promote violence, stigma, discrimination based on gender, sex, and gender stereotypes”.*

Besides, our Party has also concretized the viewpoint of gender equality through Resolutions and Directives on women’s work, typically: Resolution 04/NQ-TW dated July 12, 1993 of the Central Party Politburo on innovation and strengthening of women’s mobilization in the new situation; Directive 37-CT/TW dated May 16, 1994 of the Central Party Secretariat on some issues of female cadre work in the new situation; Resolution 11-NQ/TW dated April 17, 2007 of the Central Party Politburo on women’s work in the period of promoting industrialization and modernization of the country; Directive 21-CT/TW of the Central Secretariat on continuing to promote women’s work in the new situation dated October 20, 2018; Strategy on gender equality for 2011 - 2020 period...

2.2. The current situation of gender equality implementation in Vietnam in the current context

Vietnam is one of the earliest countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on gender equality and women’s empowerment and is currently working to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes goals on promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls.

Vietnam’s strategy to promote gender equality is reflected in many policies and guidelines of the Party and State. The recent 13th National Party Congress documents continued to affirm: *“Promoting the traditions, potentials, strengths, and spirit of mastery and aspirations of women of all classes; building Vietnamese women of the new era; improving the quality of female human resources, meeting the requirements of sustainable development and international integration”.*

This consistent policy is concretized by the legal framework and policies of the State to create the most favorable conditions for Vietnamese women to promote their great potential in the new era, pioneering in contributing to the realization of the goal and aspiration of making Vietnam a modern industrialized country by 2045.

Over the past time, Vietnam has continuously supplemented and improved the legal framework as a basis for solving gender equality issues such as: The National Assembly promulgated the 2013 Constitution, 7 codes, and 161 laws; the National Assembly Standing Committee promulgated 15 ordinances, including about 45 codes and laws related to gender equality; the Government promulgated 1,413 decrees; and considered integrating gender equality issues according to the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents. Most recently, on March 3, 2021, the Government approved the National

Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2021-2030 period, issued together with Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP.

Up to now, after 10 years of implementing the Gender Equality Strategy (according to the National Target Program on Gender Equality for the period 2011-2020), Vietnam has achieved many encouraging results, contributing to narrowing the gender gap in various fields, making positive contributions to the country's socio-economic development.

This is most clearly demonstrated in the participation of women in leadership and management positions to gradually reduce the gender gap in politics. Vietnam ranks 60th in the world, 4th in Asia and 1st in the Inter-Parliamentary Union of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in terms of the proportion of women participating in elected bodies; 3rd in the ASEAN region and 47th out of 187 countries in the world participating in the ranking of gender equality in politics and management.

Currently, the proportion of leaders and managers in Party and State agencies has been improved in quantity and especially in quality. Outstanding female leaders in recent terms include Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan comrade, Nguyen Thi Xuan My comrade, Tong Thi Phong comrade, Truong My Hoa comrade, Nguyen Thi Doan comrade, Truong Thi Mai comrade, Bui Thi Minh Hoai comrade, Vo Thi Anh Xuan comrade...

In the 13th Central Executive Committee, there are 19 female comrades (9.5%), the 15th National Assembly achieved a rate of 30.26% female delegates which is the highest rate ever; the Provincial Party Executive Committee has 16% female comrades, the Provincial People's Council has 29% female delegates... The rate of ministries and ministerial-level agencies with key female leaders is over 50%.

Vietnam is in the top 1/3 of countries in terms of the proportion of female National Assembly deputies and the proportion of women participating in the workforce, with the proportion of female National Assembly deputies reaching over 30%. The proportion of female People's Council delegates at all levels for the 2016-2021 term increased compared to the 2010-2015 term at all three levels: province, district and commune. In the 2010-2015 term, the percentage of female People's Council delegates at the provincial level was 25.17%, at the district level was 24.62%, and at the communal level was 21.71%; this percentage has been increased in the 2016-2021 term to 26.54%, 27.85%, and 26.59%, respectively. By the end of the 2011-2015 term, the proportion of key female leaders in People's Committees at the provincial, district and commune levels was respectively: 32.14%; 32.64%; 21.95%.

In addition, achievements in gender equality are also reflected in the aspect of reducing gender gaps in the economy, labor and employment fields; enhancing women's economic empowerment, enhancing access of poor women in rural areas and ethnic minority women to economic resources and the labor market; focusing on developing high-quality female human resources.

The rate of women-owned businesses reached 26.5%, ranking 9th out of 58 studied countries and economies; many female entrepreneurs are prestigious and highly ranked in the region and the world. In the fields of culture and sports, many women have won regional and international awards. Female ambassadors, female diplomats, female police officers, and female soldiers participating in United Nations peacekeeping activities have become "messengers" of peace, friendship, cooperation, and development of our country in foreign affairs activities... Female human resources doing scientific research have increased significantly. Many women are professors, associate professors, and doctors. There are 20 groups and 49 outstanding female

scientists in various fields who have been awarded the Kovalevskaya Prize in the past 35 years. Thousands of female intellectuals have had many successes domestically and internationally in scientific research, bringing high economic value and profound humanity.

Internationally, at the United Nations Security Council, Vietnam actively promoted the cross-cutting priority of “Women, Peace and Security” by presiding over the adoption of Resolution 1889 on the role of women in post-conflict reconstruction (in 2009) and organizing the only global-scale International Conference on Women, Peace and Security in 2020 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the birth of this agenda. Vietnam has also sent female officers to join the United Nations peacekeeping force in South Sudan and the Central African Republic; this number currently accounts for about 16% of Vietnam’s force and will continue to increase in the coming time; this rate is higher than the United Nations’ recommended rate.

In bilateral cooperation, promoting gender equality and empowering women are integrated into foreign affairs activities at all levels, from exchanges and work of senior leaders, to exchanges, experience sharing and signing and implementing specific and practical cooperation agreements with partners.

However, women and girls remain vulnerable to risks and need more equal opportunities. Currently, Vietnam’s gender inequality index ranks 65/162 countries and territories; ranks 87/156 in terms of gender gap reduction index. Although the United Nations and the international community have recognized and highly appreciated the efforts to achieve gender equality and women’s advancement, Vietnam still has the problem of mistreatment of women, especially in areas where people have low education levels, and gender prejudice still exists and causes a lot of damage not only to the vulnerable group but also affects the whole society.

According to the 2019 National Survey on Violence Against Women in Vietnam, nearly 2 in 3 women (nearly 63%) have experienced one or more forms of physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence and controlling behavior by their husbands in their lifetime. The rate of female workers doing vulnerable jobs is up to 59.6%, much higher than the rate of 31.8% of male workers.

However, the Party and State remain steadfast in their goal of continuing to narrow the gender gap, creating conditions and opportunities for women and men to participate and enjoy equality in all areas of social life. In particular, Vietnam sets the goal: In the political field, by 2025, 60% of state management agencies and local authorities at all levels will have female key leaders; and by 2030, this rate will increase to 75%. In the economic and labor fields, we strive to increase the proportion of female wage workers and reduce the proportion of female workers in the agricultural sector in the total number of employed female workers to 50% and below 30% by 2025, and to about 60% and below 25% by 2030; The proportion of female leaders, business owners, and cooperatives will reach at least 27% by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

In family life and prevention, response to gender-based violence, in addition to reducing the average number of hours women do paid housework and care work in the family, the targets set out require that by 2025, 80% of people who experience domestic violence and gender-based violence will be detected and have access to at least one of the basic support services, and 50% of perpetrators of domestic violence and gender-based violence who are detected at a level that has not been prosecuted will be advised and counseled, and strive to achieve the targets of 90% and 70% by 2030, respectively...

This current situation is partly due to people’s limited awareness of the law, so they do not know how to protect themselves; partly due to the fact that sanctions are not strong enough, so there is a lack of deterrence; domestic violence, and trafficking of women and children have not

been prevented and handled promptly. Moreover, partly due to the influence of old-fashioned and backward concepts, many women themselves are not only self-conscious and content with their lot, but also lack the will to rise up, accept their fate, do not dare to fight, and are afraid of public opinion... This not only affects development and the implementation of equality, but also has a negative impact on the completion of the country's social progress goals.

2.3. Solutions to improve the effectiveness of gender equality implementation in Vietnam in the current context

In order to liberate “half of the world”, create conditions and opportunities for women and men to participate and enjoy equality in all areas of social life; and especially to successfully implement goal 5 (of 17 sustainable development goals by 2030 of Vietnam) which is “achieve gender equality”, it is necessary to implement the following solutions:

First, continuing to research and promptly promulgate legal documents and policies related to women. The State needs to have more practical policies to ensure legitimate rights for women, take measures to create more employment, opportunities to improve knowledge and start businesses, and be creative for women, train and foster female cadres, and create conditions for women to combine their civic duties with their roles as wives and mothers, and build happy families.

Second, The Vietnam Women's Union needs to promote its role, continue to innovate its organization and methods of operation; diversify the organization forms, content and methods of operation of the Union according to age, profession, interests, regions, and link rights with obligations. The Union regularly coordinates with unions and socio-political organizations in performing its tasks. Organize, train, propagate and mobilize women of all walks of life to carry out revolutionary action movements, care for their lives, resolve and protect the legitimate and legal rights of women; pay special attention to vocational training, job creation, research and application of science and technology, economic development, improvement of life, and protection of women's and children's health. Focus on building a team of female intellectuals and businesswomen associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with the process of economic restructuring and international integration. Equip women with the necessary knowledge and skills in responding to natural disasters, climate change, epidemics...

Third, continuing to focus on female cadres to meet the requirements of tasks in the new situation. Continuing to improve the proportion and quality of female cadres participating in leadership, state management, socio-economic management, and scientific research. Having a comprehensive, long-term plan for training, fostering, using and promoting the capacity of female cadres. Focusing on training female cadres to work in science - technology, economics, law, administration, state management, female cadres who are ethnic minorities, religious, and female cadres in remote areas. Paying attention to developing female party members, paying attention to training and admitting female entrepreneurs who are private sector business owners to the Party. The use, arrangement and assignment of female cadres also need to pay attention to gender characteristics; assigning them to suitable fields and occupations, so that they can maximize their abilities and strengths. There are preferential policies and appropriate treatment for female cadres with many years of working, female cadres working in remote areas, border areas, islands and foreign countries.

Forth, improving the quality and form of educating the gender role and life skills in schools, helping young people to correctly perceive gender issues and gender equality in a

fundamental, systematic and scientific way. As a result, helping children have a sense of responsibility for gender equality in building family and society. One of the important conditions to achieve gender equality is that despite facing many challenges and strict prejudices according to traditional concepts, “*women should not wait for the Government or the Party to issue directives to liberate themselves, but must be self-reliant and fight for themselves*”. Each person must overcome difficulties, strive to study, improve their qualifications in all aspects and practice necessary skills to not only participate in activities in various fields but also fully realize their legitimate and legal rights and interests in order to have conditions to fulfill well the role of a citizen, worker, wife, mother and be worthy of the eight golden words “*Heroism - Determination - Faithfulness - Resourcefulness*” that President Ho Chi Minh awarded.

Fifth, promoting information and propagating to raise awareness of gender equality among all classes of people; propagating so that women are clearly aware of their rights and know how to protect themselves from abuse or violence; expanding facilities providing advising, counseling, and psychological support services for women and children who are victims of gender-based violence, and creating temporary shelters and safe havens for victims of gender-based violence.... In September 2023, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United Nations’ Economic and Social Affairs Department released the Report on “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: Gender Situation in 2023”. The report finds that if the promotion of gender equality continues to make little progress, more than 340 million women and girls, or about 8% of the world’s female population, will live in extreme poverty by 2030 and nearly 25% of that will face moderate or severe food insecurity. Gender inequality in leadership and management still exists. At the current rate of progress, the next generation of women will still spend an average of 2.3 hours more a day on unpaid housework and care giving than men. The report also said that the world needs to invest an additional 360 billion USD/year to achieve gender equality and empower women, towards important global development goals by 2030. Thus, countries around the world in general and Vietnam in particular still need determination from policy to action, maintaining continuous and long-term resources to narrow the gender gap and empower women and girls.

3. CONCLUSION

Gender equality - an important issue that has been attracting deep attention from countries and the international community, including Vietnam. Over the years, our Party and State have always paid attention to caring for and promoting gender equality, protecting rights and enhancing the role and contribution of women in all aspects of political, economic and social life. With tireless efforts over the years, Vietnam has achieved many achievements in gender equality. This is a strong motivation for Vietnam to continue implementing gender equality goals, contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Over the years, Vietnam has achieved many important achievements in ensuring women’s rights, recognized internationally and regionally. Thanks to that, Vietnamese women have had many opportunities to access rights, devote and enjoy. However, from a human rights perspective, Vietnam still has many limitations in ensuring women's rights such as: limitations in the institutions that guarantee rights, in the operation of the institutions that guarantee rights; limitations due to barriers that women themselves have not overcome; limitations in the practice of ensuring women’s rights. The persistent ideology of male superiority and female inferiority is the cause of discrimination against women; inequality in retirement age creates barriers for women to access the right to participate

in politics, so the rate of women participating in politics is low; limitations in access to employment lead to high unemployment rate for women; limitations in access to health care services lead to high maternal mortality rate compared to some countries in the region; equality in marriage and family is not well guaranteed, leading to domestic violence against women... Building a gender-equal society is to bring a better life for women, so that women have the opportunity and conditions to contribute to society and the country. Vietnamese women are always the pride of the Vietnamese people. With the current progress and development, women will definitely promote the nation's traditions along with the qualities of women in the new era "*Confidence - Self-respect - Faithfulness - Resourcefulness*", to contribute worthily to the cause of building, protecting and developing the country, and will always be a solid support for each family, contributing to building an increasingly better life, a democratic, fair and civilized society.

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[7] Vietnam has one of the highest rates of female political participation in the world, *Portal of Ministry of Labor - Invalids and Social Affairs*, April 5, 2023, <https://molisa.gov.vn/baiviet/236568?tintucID=236568>

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