* **Population Disaggregation: 98.1 males/100 females[[1]](#endnote-1)**
* **Population Age Disaggregation: <15 years: 25%; 15-24 years: 19.4%; 25-54 years: 43.1%; 55-64 years: 5.9.4%; > 65 years: 6.6%1**
* **Average household size: 3.8[[2]](#endnote-2)**
* **Female headed households: 26.8%[[3]](#endnote-3)**
* **Literacy Rates: male 96%; female 92%1**
* **Infant Mortality rates: 16 per 1000 live births1**
* **Rate of Domestic Violence: 58.3% (physical violence against women > 15 years) [[4]](#endnote-4)**

# Gender in Brief

Viet Nam is a diverse country and homes fifty-four recognized ethnic groups, the majority of which live in the highland areas. Since the 1980’s Viet Nam has undergone major socio-economic transformation and has risen from one of the poorest countries in the world to a middle income country. While this has led to significant advances in gender equality and women’s empowerment, challenges still remain. Contributing factors include: poverty, discriminatory attitudes and gender roles, the exploitation of women migrants and Gender-Based Violence (GBV); all factors limit women’s ability to exercise their political, economic and labor rights and worsen women’s vulnerability to poverty and the pre-existing inequalities they face, particularly in relation to livelihood opportunities, land ownership and inheritance, access to credit, wages and workplace benefits and violence.

**Gender roles and responsibilities:** For most people in Vietnam, traditional gender roles exist; women are supposed to maintain harmony within the family and are expected to undertake the majority of household, childcare and overall caring work. [[5]](#endnote-5) Men, on the other hand, are traditionally responsible for livestock rearing and planting of crops and are expected to protect and provide for the family as the head of the household.5 Research shows that there is strong family and community pressure to maintain male dominance in general and “son preference” in particular. And while daughters are often valued for their emotional closeness to parents, their practical and economic contributions to their natal households, and their reliability a son is thought to be essential to carry on family lines and names; perform ancestor worship; and take care of parents in their old age. People prefer sons to daughters because of the ‘intrinsic’ value of male children but also because having a son improves a woman’s status in the family and confirms a man’s reputation in the community. Men and women with no sons are often exposed to strong pressures within the husband’s family, and experience humiliation within the community; it is a matter of pressure, pride, prestige and moral recognition.[[6]](#endnote-6) This is particularly true in the North and among the country’s wealthier citizens. Research shows that Viet Nam has one of the highest rates of abortions and sex-selective abortions are on the increase, particularly in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous regions.[[7]](#endnote-7) Changing economic conditions continue to alter traditional gender relations and roles and women’s economic contribution to the household continues to increase in addition to their existing domestic roles. However, Women’s ability to engage in paid employment is hampered by their traditional responsibilities in the home.

**Education and Economic Empowerment:** Primary school enrolment is almost equal among boys and girls however female educational attainment in secondary level education decreases and women tend to be segregated into feminized or less profitable fields of study. Rural and urban differences also exist; girls in urban areas are more likely to attend school than those in rural areas and males- in both urban and rural regions- are more likely to attend and stay in school than females. Similar differences also exist in employment and labor force attainment; men are more likely to be employed in skilled occupations such as mining, metal work, woodworking, manufacturing and handicrafts. They are also more likely to be found in senior management positions. Women, although have a high overall employment rate, generally work in informal forms of employment where they have lower wages and are often exposed to unsafe and insecure working environments. All factors that exacerbate women’s economic security, particularly female headed households, who are found to be denied credit as local credit associations often do not feel secure giving loans to single mothers. In addition, Viet Nam is a source country for migrants, and current trends indicate a rise in migration. In general, women migrate at an earlier age than men, and the number of female migrants moving to urban areas and industrial zones is increasing and exceeds the number of men. These women tend to send a higher proportion of their income home in the form of remittances than men do (17% compared to 10%).[[8]](#endnote-8) All these factors increasingly expose women to more vulnerable and less secure work, without legal, economic and social protections.

**Policy and Participation:** Viet Nam has signed and ratified the CEDAW, the Rights of the Child and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It has announced laws on Violence Against Women (VAW), ratified international conventions and implemented many progressive policies, strategies and plans to increase the number of women in leadership. Despite these advances, progress has been uneven and fragile; women continue to be extremely underrepresented in government and have little opportunity for meaningful participation in local, regional, and national governance and decision-making. In addition, there remains a widespread belief that women are unsuitable in high positions. As such, women tend not to be involved or consulted in planning and decision-making processes and policies and programs largely neglect their needs and rights. Women in the public sector also face challenges regarding age-related training eligibility criteria and a retirement age that is five years earlier than males. The Government of Viet Nam has demonstrated its commitment to ending VAW through the 2006 Law Gender Equality (GE Law) and the 2007 Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control. However, public knowledge of the domestic violence law is limited and often undermined at the point of implementation. In addition, the Penal Code takes into account whether the victim/survivor of violence was able to defend herself, instead of whether she was able to give consent.[[9]](#endnote-9)

**Gender Based Violence and Protection:** Studies show that violence against women and girls in Viet Nam is high, pervasive and largely accepted.[[10]](#endnote-10) The 2009-10 National Study on Domestic Violence in Viet Nam revealed more than half (58.3%) of the women surveyed had experienced at least one form of violence in their lifetime; 9% of the women who experienced violence in the last 12 months reported experiencing sexual violence. Women from Kinh, Muong and Hoa ethnicity faced the highest rates of gender-based violence. It was also found that almost two-thirds of women believe it is acceptable for men to beat their wives.11 Individually, women experiencing violence earn 35% less than those who are not experiencing violence.13 Trafficking and forced prostitution is also a major concern in Vietnam and thousands of Vietnamese women and girls are trafficked annually for sexual exploitation. While this is the case, trafficking is often addressed in Viet Nam as a social problem with more attention being placed on the negative effects on social morals and security rather than as a serious human rights violation. HIV is also a concern among high risk groups, including people who inject drugs, sex workers and men who have sex with men. While HIV infection primarily occurs among men, the proportion of infected women has been increasing and significant numbers are contracting the disease through sex with infected husbands or partners.[[11]](#endnote-11) LGBTI people face considerable gender inequalities, particularly in terms of access to health, social, economic and legal services and are targeted for stigma, discrimination and violence based on their sexual orientation and identity. People with disabilities are socially marginalised and often denied basic human rights, unable to access basic services and stigmatised. Women with disabilities are especially disadvantages and particularly at risk of experiencing sexual violence.14

**Gender in Emergencies**: Humanitarian emergencies can impact women, men, boys and girls in different ways and can rapidly change their needs and vulnerabilities. Understanding these gendered differences is important to strengthening humanitarian responses and will help deliver more targeted assistance and programming. In times of disasters in Vietnam, women’s traditional gender roles in the household, such as mothers and carers to the sick, elderly and children have made them more vulnerable than men. Despite the decree to recognise the Vietnam Women’s Union as an official member of the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC), which is the main Government coordination body for disaster response and recovery, Vietnamese women remain poorly represented in decision-making structures in disaster preparedness planning, management and recovery. As a result, DRR programs largely neglect their needs and rights.[[12]](#endnote-12) Furthermore, their lack of involvement in formal training and gender-specific support for disaster preparedness has also impacted on their capacity to adopt effective strategies to the changing climate. This has highlighted the need for DRR training, awareness and support for women and the need to mainstream gender throughout institutions as well as a clear vision and capacity building for the Vietnam Women’s Union’s role in this process. It has also highlighted the need to provide this in parallel with efforts to increase men’s roles and responsibilities in the household and community.12

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