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ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ENERGY SECTOR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA – VIETNAM COUNTRY CHAPTER

USAID/RDMA Enhancing Equality in Energy for Southeast
Asia (E4SEA) Activity

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Activity	Enhancing Equality in Energy for Southeast Asia Activity
ACE	ASEAN Centre for Energy
ACCEPT	ASEAN Climate and Clean Energy Project
ACW	ASEAN Committee on Women
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADS	Automated Directives System
AGEP	ASEAN-German Energy Programme
APAEC	ASEAN Plan of Actions for Energy Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Asia EDGE	Asia Enhancing Development and Growth through Energy
BoD	Board of Directors
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DJSI	Dow Jones Sustainability Indices
DV	Domestic Violence
E4SEA	Enhancing Equality in Energy for Southeast Asia
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GAD	Gender and Development
GBV	Gender-Based Violence

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GIDAP	Gender and Inclusive Development Action Plan
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GWNET	Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition
HR	Human Resources
IDIs	In-Depth Interviews
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, Inter-sex, and Others
MCW	Magna Carta of Women
MOIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
OSYC	Out of school youth/child
PCW	Philippine Commission on Women
RDMA	Regional Development Mission for Asia
RE	Renewable Energy
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SOE	State-owned Enterprises

SOGIE	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression
SRE	Society of Renewable Energy
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SWE	Society of Women Engineers
TAAP	Transforming Agency, Access, and Power
TWEA	Thai Women Engineers Alliance
VAWC	Violence Against Women and Children
WEAFEO	Women Engineers of the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organizations
WEN	Women Engineers Network
WIEA	Women in Energy, Asia
WIME	Women in Mining and Energy
WING	Women in Geothermal
YSEALI	Young Southeast Asia Leader's Initiative

NOTE

As a requirement of its Performance Work Statement (PWS) and to better understand gender gaps and challenges in the Southeast Asia Region, the E4SEA Activity first conducted desk research on seven (7) countries that were initially slated as focus countries. These countries were Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Based on this desk research, using essentially secondary data and information and analysis, the Activity prepared two documents as follows:

1. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Analysis Report
2. Gender and Inclusive Development Action Plan (GIDAP)

Both of these documents were reviewed by RDMA and were approved.

Next, the Activity embarked upon conducting primary research in the focus countries. RDMA closely coordinated the Activity with the bilateral USAID Missions in all seven countries. It became very clear early on that Burma and Cambodia were to be excluded based on various factors. In addition, while the Activity did sign an MOU with the National University of Laos (NUOL), to be in full effect, the MOU requires approval by the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This approval is required before donors and their implementing partners can do any in-country work. Vietnam, too, was not ready at the time when Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand were ready. Accordingly, the E4SEA Activity proceeded to conduct primary research on gender gaps and challenges in the energy sector in the SEA Region in the three focus countries of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. The methodology deployed for in-country research included 1) In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with selected stakeholders in each country, 2) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with selected groups of participants, and 3) baseline Citizen Surveys using a survey instrument designed to gather baseline information on gender gaps and challenges. Based on this primary in-country research, the Activity submitted the following six reports:

1. Executive Summary
2. Research Methodology
3. Assessment of Women's Participation in the Energy Sector in Southeast Asia ("Assessment Report")
4. Indonesia Country Chapter (documentation of findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for further in-depth research)
5. Philippines Country Chapter (documentation of findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for further in-depth research)
6. Thailand Country Chapter (documentation of findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for further in-depth research)
7. Based on continued engagement between RDMA and the Vietnam Mission, Vietnam came on board during Quarter 1 of Year 3 of the Activity. E4SEA utilized the same methodology as for the other three countries and, with the cooperation of the Vietnam Mission and the IPs (VUES and V-LEEP II), conducted in-country research in Vietnam and prepared a stand-alone report – Vietnam Country Chapter (documentation of findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for further in-depth research).

It must be underscored that this Vietnam Country Chapter report, similar to the other three country chapter reports for Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, is based on a rather focused and limited effort to gain an understanding of the overall Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) issues, challenges, and opportunities in Vietnam to the extent they are relevant to the primary focus of the Assessment Report as part of the E4SEA Activity. It is not intended as a comprehensive country gender report that would require significant in-country research and meetings with a large number of stakeholders. Rather, this Vietnam Country Chapter provides a

foundation for the USAID Mission in Vietnam and the IPs engaged in various activities to further expand the research and conduct a more detailed GESI analysis to further inform the gender equity and equality issues in the energy sector in the country. Indeed, the report makes specific recommendations for a number of focused studies and assessments needed for making decisions on country-specific impactful programming for energy and gender activities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GENDER AND ENERGY CONTEXT

Women are underrepresented in the formal workforce across Southeast Asia, particularly in male-dominated industries such as the energy sector. This is more than an issue of equity; it is a missed economic opportunity for countries, companies, and communities. A growing body of evidence links increased gender equality with stronger business outcomes, as well as with more innovation and higher overall productivity. Tapping into women's unique contributions can 1) strengthen energy sectors, 2) accelerate inclusive economic and social development, and 3) add trillions of dollars to global GDP. The reasons for a lack of women's participation in the energy sector are many and varied. They include cultural biases, lack of policies on gender equality, deficiencies of focus for increasing STEM education and internship opportunities for women, and recruitment and promotion practices that typically favor males as energy sector jobs are considered too labor intensive for women.

THE E4SEA ACTIVITY

In order to better understand the gender gaps and design targeted interventions to address the gaps, the USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) designed the Enhancing Equality in Energy for Southeast Asia (E4SEA) Activity. The Activity is designed to address the challenges faced by women in the energy sector through developing and implementing collaborative interventions with 1) tertiary educational institutions to prepare women students to enter the energy field and 2) energy companies to create more employment opportunities for women at all levels in the Southeast Asia region.

The E4SEA Activity is part of Clean EDGE Asia, which builds upon the work of Asia EDGE to bring together government and private sector resources to advance sustainable growth in the region.¹ Clean EDGE Asia harnesses the expertise and resources of the U.S. government, private sector, international financial institutions, and like-minded governments to support and accelerate Asia's clean energy transition.² E4SEA supports the cross-cutting outcomes of "Enhanced Gender Equity and Social Inclusion" (CC3) and "Strengthen Civil Society Engagement" (CC4).³

Specifically, the E4SEA Activity is working towards three primary outcomes.

1. Increased workplace diversity in Southeast Asia
2. Improved inclusive workplace environment
3. Expanded equitable promotion opportunities

¹ <https://www.state.gov/clean-edge-asia>

² IBID

³ Clean EDGE Asia TOC v.I 06/28/2022

The E4SEA Activity is being implemented through a number of targeted interventions under five (5) specific objectives:

1. **Objective 1:** Identify core challenges to gender equality in the energy sector in Southeast Asia
2. **Objective 2:** Increase the number of women and girls pursuing careers in the energy sector
3. **Objective 3:** Increase the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women in the energy sector workplace
4. **Objective 4:** Increase mentorship and leadership opportunities for women in the energy sector
5. **Objective 5:** Enhance communication, collaboration, and learning

While there are a number of regional gender-related activities being implemented by many regional organizations in the SEA Region, E4SEA is the first regional Activity that specifically focuses on GESI in the full chain of the energy sector and specifically focuses on enhancing opportunities for women in the energy sector.

THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

As part of Objective 1, the Activity completed a comprehensive report titled “Assessment of Women’s Participation in the Energy Sector in Southeast Asia,” also referred to as the “Assessment Report.” The report provided a summary overview of regional gender and social inclusion gaps, challenges, and opportunities within the energy sector regionally and across three countries – Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, in the first year and Vietnam in the second year. While E4SEA Activity was designed to cover seven (7) countries – Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam - the initial four countries were selected in consultation with RDMA and the bilateral missions based on two main criteria: 1) the availability of bilateral energy programs and 2) the country and mission’s readiness for engagement at the time.

The Assessment Report also updated the findings from the GESI Analysis and Gender Inclusive Development Action Plan (GIDAP) developed at the beginning of the Activity. Direct stakeholder engagement through In-depth Interviews (IDIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and a Baseline Citizen Survey added crucial depth and detail to prior analyses, largely based on secondary data and information, and extensive literature review.

GUIDING PILLARS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The key context for the methodology deployed for preparing the Assessment Report is defined by the following guiding pillars:

1. The **USAID Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (2020)**⁴ is the overarching policy tool which outlines USAID's vision and objectives for integrating gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the program cycle.
2. **USAID ADS Chapter 205: Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment** in USAID's Program Cycle (revision 2021)⁵ serves as an in-depth guide to the operationalization of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy. It provides a broad framework for gender analysis, which considers the following domains: 1) Law & Policy, 2) Access to Resources, 3) Power and Decision-Making, 4) Roles and Responsibilities, and 5) Knowledge and Beliefs. This report, as well as the E4SEA GESI Analysis and GIDAP, includes in its analysis framework an additional domain not required by USAID ADS 205 which considers human dignity and gender-based violence.
3. **USAID Delivering Gender Equality Best Practices Framework for Male-Dominated Industries:** This framework (2021) identifies eight phases of the employee life cycle as well as four organizational enablers as key entry points to effecting long-lasting and impactful gender equality interventions within partner electricity and water utilities⁶.
4. **Student Life Cycle:** There are a number of conventions that are used by different researchers. The Student Life Cycle offers three broad stages and eight steps⁷. There are typically three (3) broad stages: 1) Attract, 2) Transform and Empower, and 3) Advance. In addition, there are eight (8) steps: 1) Engagement, 2) Recruitment, 3) Application/Admission, 4) Orientation/Enrollment, 5) Studentship, 6) Graduation, 7) Career Preparation, and 8) Alumni. The student life cycle stages provide key opportunities during a student's journey for affecting impactful gender equality interventions. Typically, the stages used by most analysts are: 1) Enrollment, 2) Curriculum, 3) Internship and Higher Education, and 4) Career Opportunities and Challenges.
5. **Employee Life Cycle:** The employee life cycle includes seven (7) stages: attraction, recruitment, onboarding, retention, development, offboarding, and happy leavers⁸. In addition, there are nine (9) organizational enablers in organizational change.

Based on the above guiding pillars, the methodology for both the regional Assessment Report and the individual Country Chapters for Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam included the following activities:

- **Additional Desk Research and Literature Review** – The Activity conducted additional research beyond what was done during the GESI Analysis and GIDAP preparation at the beginning of the Activity.
- **In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)** – Including stakeholder identification and mapping

⁴ (USAID, 2020)

⁵ (USAID, 2021)

⁶ (USAID, 2021)

⁷ (California State University San Marcos, n.d.)

⁸ (Verlinden, n.d.)

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** – For several stakeholder and participant groups and sub-groups
- **Baseline Citizen Surveys** – Well-designed and comprehensive baseline citizen surveys on gender biases, challenges, and lessons learned in each of the four (4) countries

All of these activities provided considerable primary data and information to inform the Activity's initial GESI Analysis and GIDAP that were based on secondary information only. In addition, the data and information for Vietnam directly resulted in the development of this Vietnam Country Chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

The complete Assessment Report consists of several stand-alone reports and annexes as follows:

1. **Executive Summary:** This part of the Assessment Report is a stand-alone Executive Summary for audiences interested in a high-level summary of the research findings and recommendations.
2. **Executive Summary and Main Report:** This part of the Assessment Report provides an overall executive summary of the report and a main report summarizing key findings and recommendation at the regional level.
3. **Methodology and Tools:** This report provides a summary of the research methodology and tools used in order to conduct the research and analysis that led to the development of the Assessment Report and the individual Country Chapters for the three countries. This report includes the following Annexes:
 - **Annex 1:** Targeted Stakeholders and Selection Criteria
 - **Annex 2:** List of Stakeholders
 - **Annex 3:** List of Questions for the In-depth Interviews (IDIs)
 - **Annex 4:** List of Questions for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
 - **Annex 5:** Survey Instrument for the Baseline Citizen Survey
4. **Annex 6: Indonesia Country Chapter:** This is a separate stand-alone report on the gender gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the energy sector in Indonesia.
5. **Annex 7: Philippines Country Chapter:** This is a separate stand-alone report on the gender gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the energy sector in the Philippines.
6. **Annex 8: Thailand Country Chapter:** This is a separate stand-alone report on the gender gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the energy sector in Thailand.
7. **Annex 9: Vietnam Country Chapter:** This is a separate stand-alone report on the gender gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the energy sector in Vietnam.

This report is the “**Vietnam Country Chapter.**”

It should be noted that the Country Chapters for Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam are based on a rather focused and limited effort to gain a deeper understanding of the overall GESI issues, challenges, and opportunities in the four (4) countries to the extent they were relevant to the primary focus of the Assessment Report as part of the E4SEA Activity. These Country Chapter Reports provide a foundation for the bilateral missions and the IPs engaged in various activities to further expand the research and conduct more detailed GESI analyses to inform the gender equity and equality issues in the energy sector in the countries.

This “The Vietnam Chapter” provides a summary overview of gender and social inclusion gaps and challenges within the energy sector in Vietnam based on 1) literature review and desk research, 2) extensive discussions and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with key stakeholders, 3) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a wide array of participants, and 4) a Baseline Citizen Survey. This report also updates the Vietnam-specific information in the Activity’s GESI and GIDAP previously completed almost two years ago based on secondary data and information gathered and analyzed from desk research and literature review.

HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY OF GESI FINDINGS

Table A9-I provides a high-level summary of the GESI findings based on primary research, data collection, and analysis for Vietnam.

TABLE 9-I: KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS

DOMAIN	KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS
Law and Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender equality is considered both an objective and a key principle in policy formulation and implementation. Every ministry in the Government has an Action Plan for the Advancement of Women that guides policies and practices. The Constitution 2013 provides that male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields; the State shall adopt policies to guarantee the right to and opportunities for gender equality; the State, society, and family shall create the conditions for women to develop comprehensively and to advance their role in society; and gender discrimination is prohibited. Prime Minister’s Decisions/Directive responding to UN’s Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (#5 on Gender) in 2015, including: Decision 622/QĐ-TTg, dated 10 May 2017, Directive 13/CT-TTg on 20 May and Decision 681/QĐ-TTg dated 4 June 2019. Resolution 11-NQ/TW of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam dated 27/4/2007 on Women Affairs in the Period of Accelerating Industrialization and Modernization. Gender Equality Law (2006) stipulates that men and women should be treated equally in all aspects. Gender equality is to be achieved through eliminating gender discrimination and creating equal opportunities for men and women in all development fields. It specifies criteria and measures to promote gender equality in specific sectors including politics, economics, education, health, the workplace, and family life. The government of Vietnam has issued three Decrees to support and facilitate the implementation of the national Gender Equality Law. The National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021-2030)⁹ sets an overall objective of gender equality and specific gender objectives and relevant targets in areas of political,

⁹ (The Government of Viet Nam, 2021)

TABLE 9-1: KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS

DOMAIN	KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS
	<p>economic, labor, health, education, and communication. It includes six specific strategies towards the achievement of the targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor Code (2019) ensures gender equality principles, stipulating labor regimes and social policies aimed at protecting female employees, workers with disabilities, and elderly and underaged workers. It provides a strong legal framework to promote equal access to employment opportunities. It regulates special working conditions and rights for female workers, including prohibition of discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace.
Access to Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Land Law 2013 affirms that everyone has the same rights and obligations to the land allocated by the State. According to the regulations of land law, both husband and wife are entitled to the land use right certificate. • Compared to men, Vietnamese women, particularly ethnic minorities, are facing some challenges and difficulties in accessing land, wages, credit, and technical training. There is a big gap in wages between men and women, in both the informal and formal sectors of the economy.¹⁰ • A large percentage (42%) of SMEs are owned by women, but many of them face difficulty accessing financial support as bank decisions regarding loans are likely to be influenced by the traditional perception that businesses led by women are less profitable compared to those led by males. Women also have limitations in providing collateral as only a small percentage of them own land and other tangible assets under their names. Adequate training needs to be provided to financial institutions to implement gender-equitable financial policies. • In the agricultural sector, women and youth have less access to land use and ownership than men especially in mountainous areas. • Female entrepreneurs of SMEs indicated that lack of knowledge, market information, trade promotion, resources, and opportunities to network are the most common barriers they faced in business development. • Women face barriers to access to resources and productive assets and technical and vocational training. Such obstacles have created unfavorable patterns in the 1) types of occupations women enter, 2) quality of the working conditions, and 3) low and insecure earnings (UN, 2015).
Power and Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022, women represented 30.26% of the National Assembly members, which is an improvement from the previous election. Yet, it is still lower than the national target of between 35% - 40% (according to the Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW of the Politburo on women's work in the period of accelerating industrialization and modernization of the country). • Women's representation in public decision-making bodies in Vietnam is also under-targeted. Women have less opportunities for professional and self-development than men and hence, less opportunity to be promoted to senior leadership positions. • The Government of Vietnam also established a twenty-five (25) percent quota for women in the Committees of the Communist Party (According to the Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW of the Politburo on women's work in the period of accelerating industrialization and modernization of the country). • The percentage of female delegates in the People's Council at the province, districts, and commune levels has also increased during the current election term. Of the sixty-three (63)

¹⁰ Women, in general, make 77 cents for every dollar that men earn. *Gender pay gap in Vietnam: a propensity score matching analysis*, [Gabriel Obermann, Nguyen Hoang Oanh, Nguyen Hong Ngoc](#) [Journal of Economics and Development](#) ISSN: 1859-0020

TABLE 9-1: KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS

DOMAIN	KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS
	<p>provinces, eight (8) have female chairpersons and thirty-one (31) have female vice chairpersons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the economic sector, women account for 48.7% of the national labor force. Women's participation is the highest in the agricultural sector. A high proportion of the female workforce can also be seen in the trade and service industries and food processing. • Relevance of women's leadership is supported by findings from the Baseline Citizen Survey. Most male and female respondents (over 60 percent) said that women's leadership is important for an organization because they can bring new outlooks and perspectives to the organization and business-wide communication can be enhanced because women are effective communicators. • Male and female employee FGD participants did not express any preference over male or female leaders or indicate that they perceive men or women to differ in their performance quality and effectiveness.
Roles and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of the Baseline Citizen Survey show that general attitudes on traditional gender roles are still prevalent among the male and female respondents. More than half of the respondents believe that men are the breadwinners and women are the caretakers of the family. • Many women with full-time work have dual roles. At home, they take care of the children and do housework. IDI and FGD results confirm that married women with children have limited time for self-development which can be a hinderance to them when it comes to promotion to high leadership positions. • The Survey results also show that most respondents believed that both men and women should make decisions together because they look at things from different perspectives and that is good for sound decision-making. • Women spend almost twice as much time on unpaid care work in the family than men and have less time for relaxation or entertainment. This trend has slightly improved in recent years.
Knowledge and Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SME Support Law (2017) states that women-owned SMEs or SMEs employing more women workers must be given priorities in attending training or capacity building programs organized by the State or its affiliates. • While the law mandates six months of maternity leave, many women workers are unaware of this benefit or are on short-term contracts that are terminated before giving birth. Short-term contracts may be used so that employers can avoid paid maternity leave to their female employees. • There is a perception that women usually do not like company politics which may serve as a detriment to their advancement in the male-dominated energy industry. • Baseline Citizen Survey respondents believe that key factors for lower enrollment of female students in STEM fields are 1) hardship and unsafe working environment in STEM-related jobs and 2) social norms and gender stereotypes. • FGDs and IDIs reflected that within the energy workplace, female engineers are believed to be less competent than their counterpart male engineers in machine operation and that most female engineers are often assigned to job functions involving administrative work such as record keeping, accounting, administrative support, etc. • LGBTQI persons also commonly experience stigma and discrimination in the workplace in Vietnam. The Labor Code does not include provisions to prevent discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.
Human dignity and gender-based violence (GBV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Survey on Violence Against Women in 2019 showed that 62.9% of married women have experienced at least one or more forms of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. The incidence has significantly increased from the previous survey in 2010. This is typically true among young women aged 18-24 years. • The same survey results also indicated that women with disabilities experience more forms of violence by their husbands/partners than women without disabilities. Almost 5% of girls under age fifteen (15) in the survey said they had been sexually abused, mostly by their male family members. Most women who experienced sexual abuse and violence did not report

TABLE 9-1: KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS

DOMAIN	KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS
	<p>such instances to authorities. Nor did they seek any support from relevant government agencies with jurisdiction over such matters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Among women who experienced GBV by their husbands, 61.4% said their children had witnessed the violence. They also reported that their children have behavioral problems as a result of living in such circumstances.

FINDINGS RELATED TO STUDENT LIFE CYCLE AND EMPLOYEE LIFE CYCLE

The research conducted under the E4SEA Activity also included an analysis of gender-related issues in the student life cycle and the employee life cycle. Overall, key findings from this analysis reveal the following:

- In Vietnam, students value guidance from parents and other role models in determining what subjects to study or career paths to pursue even though most students in the FGDs mentioned limited advice from teachers or schools. Most parents in the Baseline Citizen Survey (69 percent) either strongly agreed or agreed that parents should have the final word in the decisions regarding their children's choice of education and jobs. Additionally, most of the survey participants (63 percent) stated that gender roles influence their choice of profession to a great extent. Although the majority of the survey respondents thought that girls are more suitable for non-STEM studies and professions, they also agreed that there should be more female students enrolled in STEM studies. Although most schools do not have specific policies on gender equality, there is no gender discrimination in recruitment and classroom management.
- The proportion of female employees in the energy sector in Vietnam is relatively low (less than 10 percent), especially in positions requiring engineering work. There is a low supply of female graduates in STEM fields. The current government regulations forbid women to work in some hardship conditions, such as underground sites, and many women do not want to work in physically difficult jobs such as major energy plants and facilities. When applying for a job, men tend to look for opportunities for career growth while women look for a good working environment. In general, women have less opportunity than men in advancing to leadership roles. Most companies in the country do not have explicit policies on gender equality and there is little evidence of concrete policies to address gender discrimination.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings in this preliminary and limited assessment of the gender gaps and challenges in Vietnam, as part of the broader regional E4SEA Activity, this section provides a few key recommendations for further actions by interested parties. USAID regional programs in the SEA Region are overseen by RDMA based in Bangkok, Thailand. The following are a few key recommendations for potential activities/interventions specifically for Vietnam that RDMA may wish to consider for inclusion in its regional activities:

LAW AND POLICY

- Provide technical support for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA), and Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT) to develop a system to compile sex-disaggregated data and use the gathered data on employment to support gender sensitive planning and reporting.
- Build the capacity of the above-mentioned ministries and energy sector institutions to promote gender equality in their policies, in compliance with the national frameworks.
- Develop technical guidelines on gender mainstreaming in the development and implementation of energy policies and interventions in collaboration with the USAID Mission in Vietnam and the Government of Vietnam.
- Conduct research on best practices in gender mainstreaming in the energy sector from other countries to support evidence-based gender sensitive policy formulation by the public and private sectors in Vietnam. The goal of the studies should be to illustrate how gender equality in the energy sector can benefit both the Government, State-owned Enterprises (SOEs), and the private sector.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

- Support the USAID Mission in Vietnam and various regional organizations to provide capacity building of HR practitioners on gender inclusivity in recruitment to increase the number of women and LGBTQI+ individuals in the energy sector.
- Provide capacity building to school guidance counselors to encourage parents/students to consider a STEM education and/or career.
- Provide funding for internships and scholarships for female and LGBTQI+ students to study in STEM subjects in collaboration with energy companies to establish a career path for girls and LGBTQI+ students, and provide them with access to the industry's network.
- Provide inclusive internship opportunities for socially excluded low-income female students to work in leading energy companies and public agencies.

POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

- Conduct a comparative study on the gender-inclusive decision-making process in the energy sector within the Government and energy companies to identify gender gaps in decision-making and the potential benefit for having female leaders.
- Work with energy companies to identify potential women to become role models (mentors) for all students to raise their awareness and the visibility of women in the energy sector.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Government should initiate a study on female professionals' competing reproductive and productive roles in different stages of their career to understand nuances of gender roles at a household level and at energy sector workplaces.
- The Government should also commission a study on the gender aspects of the energy value chain to better understand women's role in production and consumption to identify how closing gender gaps in the value chain can have a positive impact on the businesses and overall productivity and profitability.
- Conduct public awareness raising and communications and outreach on gender equality and the potential roles of women in the energy sector
- Provide options for flexible working hours for female professionals to accommodate their domestic responsibilities without sacrificing their job promotion opportunities
- Work with line managers to encourage women to take up assignments that challenge gender roles
- Provide a combination of off-site (at corporate offices) and on-site (e.g., power plants, energy facilities, etc.) assignments for female engineers or scientists to ensure that they can develop the expertise and skills necessary for leadership positions in the energy sector.

KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

- Conduct a study to investigate gender norms in the energy sector to understand the root cause of gender biases in the industry and its repercussions. This study can help identify an entry point adjust biases and serve as the foundation for gender awareness campaigns
- Provide capacity building to staff and leaders of the public and private sector energy companies on the benefits of gender mainstreaming. The capacity building should focus on gender concepts, gender analysis, and gender mainstreaming which can guide the development of a gender-inclusive corporate governance structure and policies.
- Provide capacity building on male engagement in gender equality for HR practitioners and line managers to raise awareness on how gender equality can benefit everyone in the industry
- Conduct public awareness raising and communication outreach on gender equality and the potential roles of women in the energy sector. The success story of women working in the energy sector should be used to motivate women to participate in the energy sector to challenge biases against women in the industry.
- Incorporate clean energy into educational curricula in an inclusive fashion; use student-friendly language which could be different for young girls and young boys.

- Collaborate with universities and vocational institutions to encourage them to serve as suppliers of qualified women and persons of all genders to serve the growing needs of the transitioning energy sector.
- Conduct studies on the career paths and successes of women role models in the energy sector and use the knowledge to influence parents of female students aged under twenty (20) to pursue studies in STEM fields and pursue careers in the technical fields in industry generally, and in the energy industry, specifically.

HUMAN DIGNITY AND GBV

- To increase the number of female students in vocational institutions and male dominated fields such as engineering, there must be a safe space for women to study. Integration of extracurricular subjects and soft skills like prevention of sexual harassment and discrimination for both female and male students at the high school and university levels can increase the number of female students in vocational institutions.
- Build capacity of HR practitioners in the energy sector on different types of sexual harassment specific to the sector such as nightshifts, remote field sites, etc. and establish anti-harassment best practices and Code of Conducts that reflect those practices. Ensure that there is an established reporting mechanism that is confidential and safe in the event of a violation to the Code of Conduct.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Most countries around the world have struggled since the COVID-19 pandemic and Vietnam is no exception. The repercussions of the pandemic have widened the economic and social divide and disparity including in gender equality. According to UN Women (2021), Vietnam is considered to perform relatively well in improving the status of women in legal framework, workforce participation, and education opportunities. Despite some achievements, the country continues to face challenges in the eradication of gender biases which impede gender equality and women's empowerment at the structural level¹¹.

With respect to laws to advance gender equality, Vietnam is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and has taken many concrete legislative steps, and implemented policies, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all aspects. The country has made considerable effort to approve several legislative documents and policies in recent years.

The Constitution 2013¹², dated 28 November 2013, regulates a general principle that "Female citizens and male citizens have the same rights in every aspect of politics, economy, society, and family." This constitution lays out a strategic basis for other subsequent laws related to gender equality as well as strengthens previous laws. For example, the Law on Gender Equality – Law 73/2006/QH11, was approved by the National Assembly in 2006 and came into force from 01 July 2007 which legalizes gender equality in all fields such as politics, economy, work, education, and training, science and technology, culture, communication, sport, public health, and family relationships. It also provides instruction on gender mainstreaming in legislation formulation.

In addition, three Decrees were developed and approved by the Government to provide guidelines for the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, including (1) Decree 70/2008/ND-CP issued on 4 June 2008; (2) Decree 48/2009/ND-CP issued on 19 May 2009; and (3) Decree 55/2009/ND-CP issued on 10 June 2009. Resolution 57/NQ-CP dated 1 December 2009 approved the Action Plan to implement Resolution 11/NQ-TW dated 27 Apr 2007. The Resolution provides the plan for the mobilization of the female labor force during the country's industrialization and modernization period. The Action Plan aims to raise awareness and promote effective management of administrative agencies, to enable women to achieve a higher level of knowledge and access to higher education and associated professions, and to meet the national goal of industrialization and modernization and international cooperation. It stipulates that Vietnamese women in the future should have a career and a life of material, cultural and spiritual values, and participate in social activities on an equal footing with men. Ministries and sub-branches are required to carry out their responsibilities as stated in the Action Plan.

There are three (3) main systems for promoting gender equality and women empowerment in the country. The first system is the Committee for the Advancement of Women (CAWW) at the central, provincial and the Women's Union levels. Overall, Vietnam establishes basic principles to promote gender equality as well as some guidelines such as the Action Plan to provide advice for relevant stakeholders to mainstream gender in their respective assignments. The Action Plan also provides

¹¹ (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2013)

¹² (The Government of Viet Nam, 2013)

specific directions to the Government and private sector entities to design and implement policies and programs to enhance gender equality and gender equity in their respective operations.

Vietnam has established a strong legal infrastructure necessary for moving forward with gender equality. However, the challenge continues to be in the implementation of the policies and programs as biases still persist and hamper policy implementation and operational reform. The Vietnamese saying *“men are the pillar of a house and women are the roof”* reflects the male domination perception which influences attitudes of the people, especially the older generation. The struggle to achieve gender equality lies within the male-dominated social and gender norms that still dictate gender roles and responsibilities of men and women. With 48% of the workforce being women, it is interesting that the perception continues to be that men are the “bread winners”. This perception needs to be reversed through widespread outreach and communication.

The gender and social norms also exacerbate gender-based violence in the household and also impact the workplace. With more than half of Vietnamese women experiencing domestic violence at some point in their lives, it causes damage at the personal and structural level. Women who experience gender-based violence often have a residual psychological trauma which can impact their work and their career choices. While there are national data on domestic violence, sexual harassment, and more subtle forms of gender-based violence, are underreported. These circumstances impact the working environment, work performance, and businesses’ bottom lines.

Regarding power and decision making, Vietnamese women enjoy better opportunities in leadership positions than several countries in the region. However, in particular sectors, such as energy where males dominate, gender bias still plays a detrimental role obstructing women’s leadership and empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

The methodology deployed for the development of this report included a combination of 1) initial desk research and literature review during the preparation of the GESI Analysis and GIDAP; 2) additional desk research (secondary data collection and literature review); 3) stakeholder identification and mapping; and 4) field research in the SEA countries (primary data and information collection through IDIs, FGDs, and the Baseline Citizen Survey). The outputs of desk research were 1) the GESI Analysis and 2) the GIDAP that were completed and submitted at the beginning of the E4SE Activity including initial findings for Vietnam. This Vietnam Country report represents the output of the field work that updates and validates the E4SEA Activity's GESI Analysis and GIDAP based on primary in-country data collection and analysis in Vietnam.

INITIAL DESK RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW DURING GESI ANALYSIS AND GIDAP FOR THE E4SEA ACTIVITY

At the start of the Activity, initial desk research included a literature review and data collection from over 200 available sources on gender and energy activities. Specifically, research papers and reports of projects funded by various donors were reviewed to identify gender challenges and gaps. The analysis and findings of the extensive review were documented in the GESI Analysis and GIDAP submitted at the start of the Activity. Based on the identified gaps, standardized semi-structured interview questions and guidelines for IDIs and FGDs, as well as research protocol documents and survey instruments were developed and tested for research and analysis in this report.

Later, during the first year of the Activity, additional desk research and a literature review were conducted to update the GESI Analysis and GIDAP for the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand. The same process was repeated in the second year for Vietnam. Additional research included an extensive review of government laws, policies, regulations, and practices related to gender inclusion, research conducted by various donors and private entities on the status of gender in Vietnam, and discussions with USAID Missions and implementing partners in the country. The body of knowledge related to gender analyses is expanding very rapidly worldwide which mandated updating the previously conducted desk research.

STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND MAPPING

Identification and mapping of target stakeholders in the participating countries was a key component of the methodology deployed for this report. Stakeholders were selected from among many public and private sector organizations based on a set of clearly defined criteria to maximize both the quality of information and the quality of data needed to inform the GESI Analysis and GIDAP.

FIELD RESEARCH/PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Field research (primary data collection) included three distinct activities: 1) IDIs with selected stakeholders, 2) FGDs with various groups, and 3) a Baseline Citizen Survey in Vietnam. Key elements of the methodology deployed for conducting these activities are discussed below.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS (IDIS)

The principal objective of the IDIs was to gather information on gender and energy gaps and challenges as well as interventions already implemented by the stakeholders selected for the IDIs. The IDI interviewees were from five specific groups of stakeholders: 1) Private sector (energy companies), 2) Public sector (government ministries and regulators), 3) State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), 4) Secondary and Tertiary institutions (high schools, universities, and vocational institutions), and 5) non-profit organizations, foundations, associations, and related networks (gender, energy, and engineering). A detailed questionnaire for each stakeholder group was developed and tested prior to conducting the IDIs. A copy of the IDI Questionnaire is included in the “Methodology and Tools,” a stand-alone report accompanying the Assessment Report.

Table A9-2 provides a list of 10 organizations that were selected for IDIs through a stakeholder mapping process as part of the field research in Vietnam.

TABLE A9-2: LIST OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Son Ha Renewable Energy Company |
| 2. | Solar BK Company |
| 3. | Vietnam Sustainability Social Enterprise/ Vietnam Energy Efficiency Network |
| 4. | Hanoi Industrial Vocational College |
| 5. | Ho Chi Minh National University |
| 6. | Ministry of Industry and Trade |
| 7. | Institute of Strategy and Policy on Natural Resources and Environment (ISPONRE), Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MONRE) |
| 8. | Vietnamese Women’s Union |
| 9. | German Development Cooperation Office - GIZ in Vietnam |
| 10. | UN Women |

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

In addition to the IDIs, ten (10) FGDs were conducted in Vietnam with a variety of pre-selected respondents. The FGD participants included 1) engineers and geologists from energy companies, 2) high school students, 3) vocational school students, and 4) university students.

Table A9-3 provides the list of stakeholders selected for Focus Group Discussions based on the methodology to ensure representation of all key groups. A detailed questionnaire targeted to each FGD was prepared and tested prior to conducting the FGDs. This questionnaire is included as part of the stand-alone separate report – “Methodology and Tools” that accompanies the Assessment Report.

TABLE A9-3: LIST OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	STAKEHOLDERS SELECTED FOR FGDS
Energy Sector Engineers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Institute of Mining Science and Technology - Coal Group 2. Lao Cai Copper Refining Branch – Lao Cai Mineral Corporation 3. Sin Quyen Copper Mining branch, Lao Cai - Vimico 4. Petroleum Company B12 5. VINACOMIN 6. EVN in Northern Region 7. B. Grimm Power Vietnam
University Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The University of Technology and Education – Da Nang University 2. Vietnam-Korea University of Information and Communication Technology 3. Ton Duc Thang University 4. Hoa Sen University 5. Tay Bac University 6. Thai Nguyen University 7. Ho Chi Minh City Open University 8. Hanoi University Science and Technology, studying Automotive Technology
Vocational School Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vietnam Russia Vocational Training College No.1 2. Thanh Dong University 3. Cao đẳng nghề Công nghiệp Hà Nội (HNIVC) 4. Hanoi University of Civil Engineering
High School Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tu Lap High School 2. Quang Minh High school 3. Truong Dinh High School 4. Thach That High School 5. Tien Thinh High School

BASELINE CITIZEN SURVEY

The third component of the methodology to collect primary data and information on gender equality gaps and challenges was a detailed Baseline Citizen Survey in Vietnam. The survey deployed the Computer-Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) technique and was carried out by GeoPoll, an international survey firm with prior survey experience with USAID. Different stages of this intervention

included 1) a survey design, 2) enumerator training, 3) survey implementation and data entry, and 4) data transmission and delivery.¹³

The sampling for CAPI respondents included 1) male and female students aged 18 and above 2) recent university graduates, 3) parents of children aged 20 and below, 4) working professionals, and 5) other. A total of 537 respondents participated in the survey. Figure A9-1 provides the gender distribution of the respondents, and Figure A9-2 provides breakdown of the various target groups.

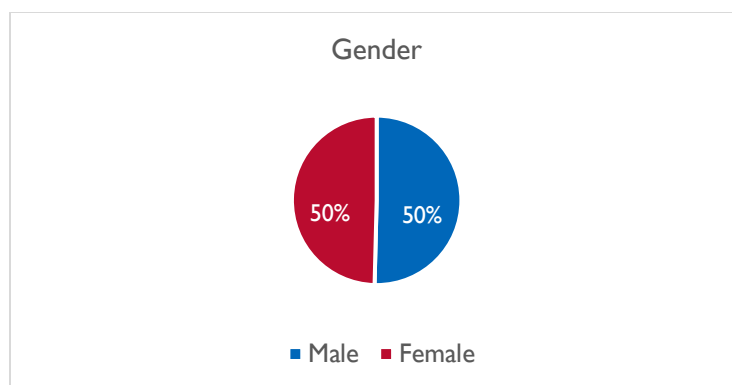


Figure A9-1: Gender Composition of the FGD Respondents in Vietnam

Figure A9-2 provides breakdown of the various target groups.

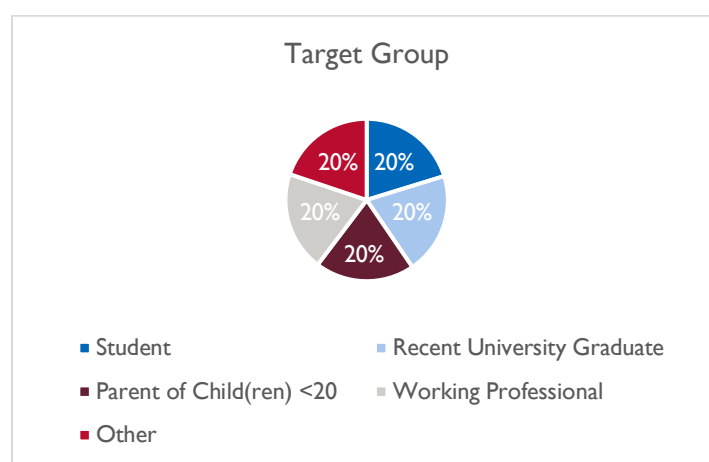


Figure A9-2: Composition of the Target Groups for FGDs in Vietnam

¹³ GeoPoll also conducted the Baseline Citizen Surveys in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand with the same methodology as that used in Vietnam with the difference that the Vietnam survey was conducted face-to-face. The survey instrument, however, and the sampling were identical for all four countries to allow for both a regional understanding and a country-by-country comparison based on a common methodology. The survey instrument is included as part of a separate stand-alone report – “Methodology and Tools” accompanying the Assessment Report.

A total of 537 respondents participated in the survey from four regions in the country. Regional coverage and the urban-rural split are demonstrated in Figures A9-3 and A9-4 respectively.

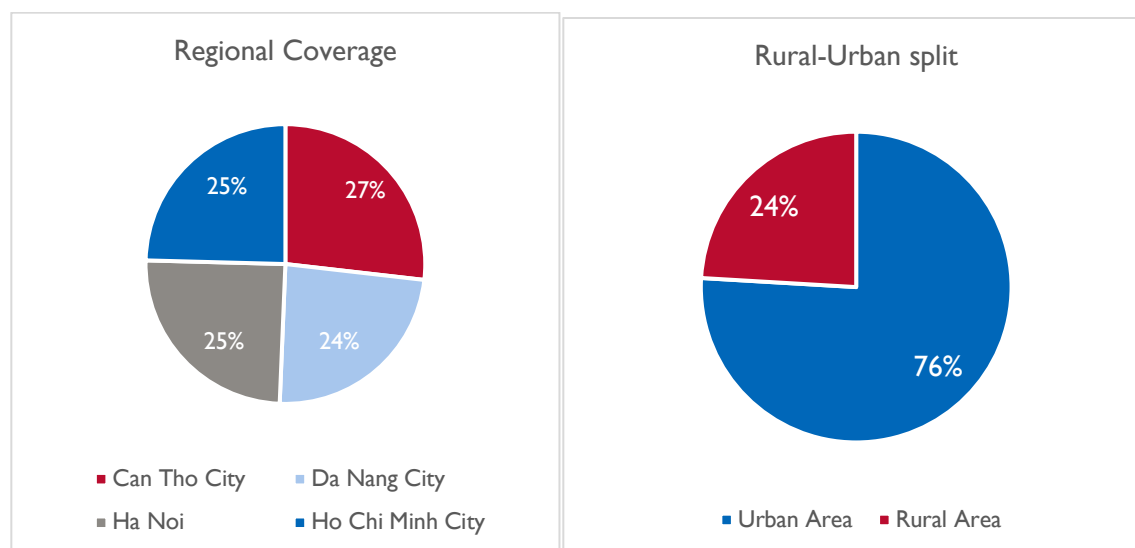


Figure A9-3: Regional Coverage of Respondents in Vietnam

Figure A9-4: Rural-Urban Split of Respondents in Vietnam

A detailed survey instrument (questionnaire) was prepared and tested prior to conducting the survey. The survey permitted follow-up questions. The insights gained from the survey were triangulated with the research findings from the IDIs and FGDs.

The survey instrument is included as part of the “Assessment Report: Methodology and Tools” report which is a stand-alone annex to the Assessment Report.

COVID-19-RELATED CHALLENGES

The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for primary data collection as travel restrictions did not permit face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders. Therefore, virtual IDIs and FGDs were conducted via online applications such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. Although this posed some coordination challenges, the quality of interviews and surveys was not compromised. In some cases, repeat interviews were conducted to clarify and/or confirm the veracity of information gathered during initial interviews. Appropriate rehearsals and trials were conducted in advance to maximize the value of the interviews.

DETAILED GESI FINDINGS

This section summarizes the detailed GESI findings in Vietnam based on the baseline citizen survey. A total of 537 individuals from various groups participated in the survey.

BASELINE CITIZEN SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Key highlights of the findings include the following:

- I. Overall Role of Men and Women:** When asked about the role of women and men at home and at the workplace, a majority of the respondents stated that men's primary role is that of breadwinners whereas the women's primary role is that of caretakers. Figure A9-5 shows the degree of belief from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" as expressed by various target groups in the survey.

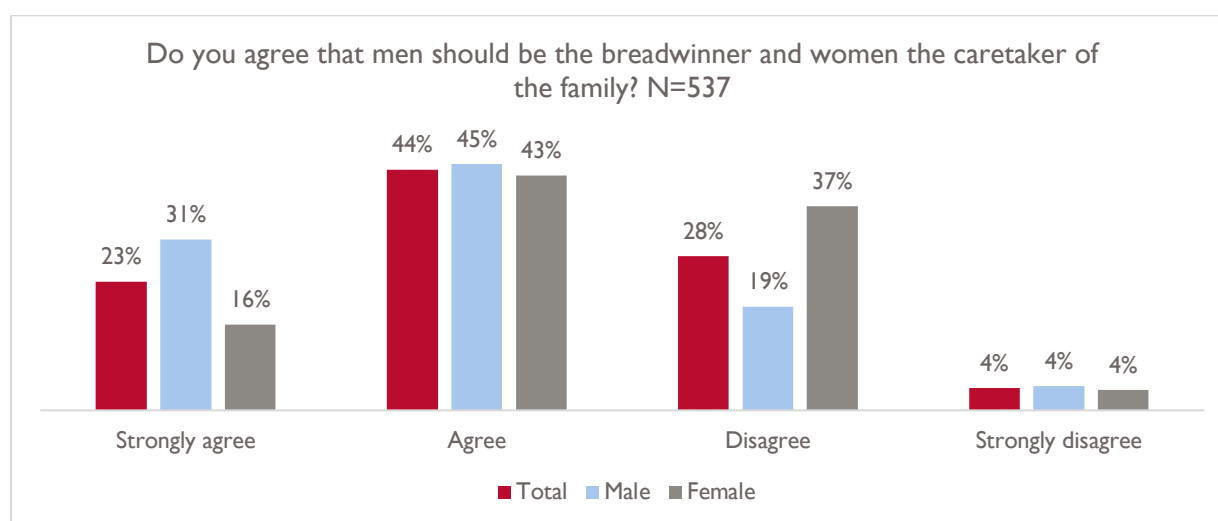


Figure A9-5: Attitude of Different Target Groups on Male Breadwinners and Female Caretakers in Vietnam

When followed up with the question for the reason for this attitude, sixty-nine (69) percent of those who agreed with this statement selected that the reason for this attitude was that men earn more income than women while fifty-four (54) percent indicated that these are traditional roles that we should conform to. However, it is notable that the proportion of women who disagreed with this perception was much higher than that of men (37 percent to 19 percent). As mentioned earlier, despite the fact that women represent approximately 48 percent of the workforce in the country, gender pay gap continues to exist; women, on an average, make 77 cents for every dollar earned by men.

- 2. Attitude on Women with Full-Time Jobs as Primary Family Caretakers:** All respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that a woman with a full-time job should still be a primary 'family caretaker.' Again, an overwhelming 56 percent agreed with an additional 16 percent that 'strongly agreed' with the premise that women with full-time jobs should still be the family caretaker.

Figure A9-6 illustrates the responses received from various target groups on their attitude on women who hold full-time jobs and have the responsibility as the primary family caretakers at their homes.

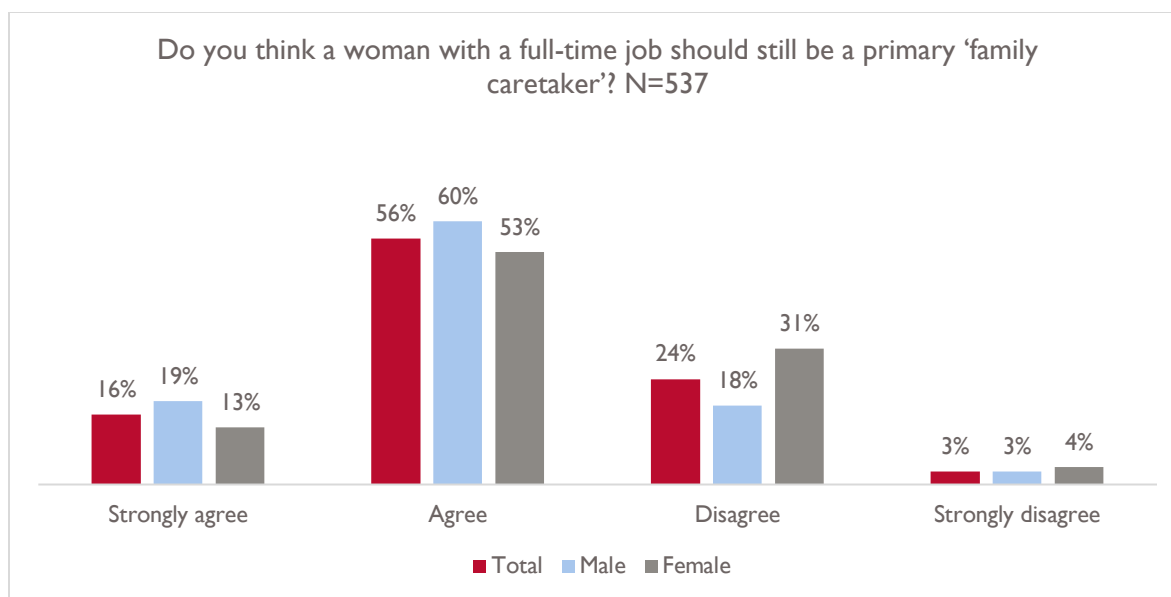


Figure A9-6: Attitude of Different Target Groups on Women with a Full-time Job as a Primary Family Caretaker in Vietnam

Of those who agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement, eighty-four (84) percent said this was because, by nature, women can take better care of the children than men. Seventy-one (71) percent said it was because women have caring and nurturing mind and that they love to take care of people around them.

- 3. Decision-Making in the Family and Gender Roles:** When asked about who should be the primary decision maker in the family, the majority of the respondents (75 percent) said that both men and women should be able to make decisions together because men and women have different ways of looking at things and bring different perspectives which can lead to better decisions.

Sixty-nine (69) percent of the parents either strongly agreed or agreed that parents should have the final word on decisions regarding their children's choice of studies and jobs. Most of these respondents stated that it was because parents have more insight about prospects of different careers, and that they know better what is best for their children.

- 4. Gender Roles and Its Impact on Careers:** The survey respondents were asked about the impact of gender roles on women's choices of education. The majority of the respondents (63 percent) thought that social norms on traditional gender roles have an influence on a person's choice of profession to a great extent. The top five areas of study that most respondents thought are suitable for women are teaching, nursing, medicine, social work, and law. The top five study areas for men, as reported by the same respondents, were engineering, ICT, physical sciences, medicine, and home economics.

5. STEM Education. The respondents were asked a series of questions in relation to girls/women and STEM education and choice of profession. The following are the key highlights of the responses:

- Most of the respondents (71 percent) said that more female students should be enrolled in STEM-related studies. Seventy-five (75) percent of female students thought that the most influential factor for students to choose STEM education was promising career opportunities, followed by their own academic interests (73 percent).
- When asked about the factors that contribute to the lower enrolment of female students in STEM-related areas, fifty (50) percent of the respondents attributed this to a lack of career advice followed by the lack of interest in STEM studies (thirty-six (36) percent). Fifty-five (55) percent of student respondents noted that it was due to a lack of self-confidence among female students. Recent university graduates said that it was because of a lack of enabling policies and provisions in the educational institutes.
- There were split opinions about the ability of women in studying technologies and sciences. Half (50 percent) of the respondents thought that women can be as good as men in studying these subjects while the other half disagreed.

6. Women Pursuing Careers Traditionally Assumed to Be for Men. All respondents to the survey were asked what they thought about women doing jobs traditionally associated with men (engineers, pilots, etc.).

Opinions were varied with twenty-seven (27) percent of the respondents indicating that women can be as good as men, but twenty-eight (28) percent stated that they believed that there are limitations for women to advance on an equal basis to men, with most of these respondents expressing their belief that there are some tasks that women could not do well due to their physical limitations.

Figure A9-7 shows attitudes of the respondents on women doing jobs that are traditionally thought to be for men.

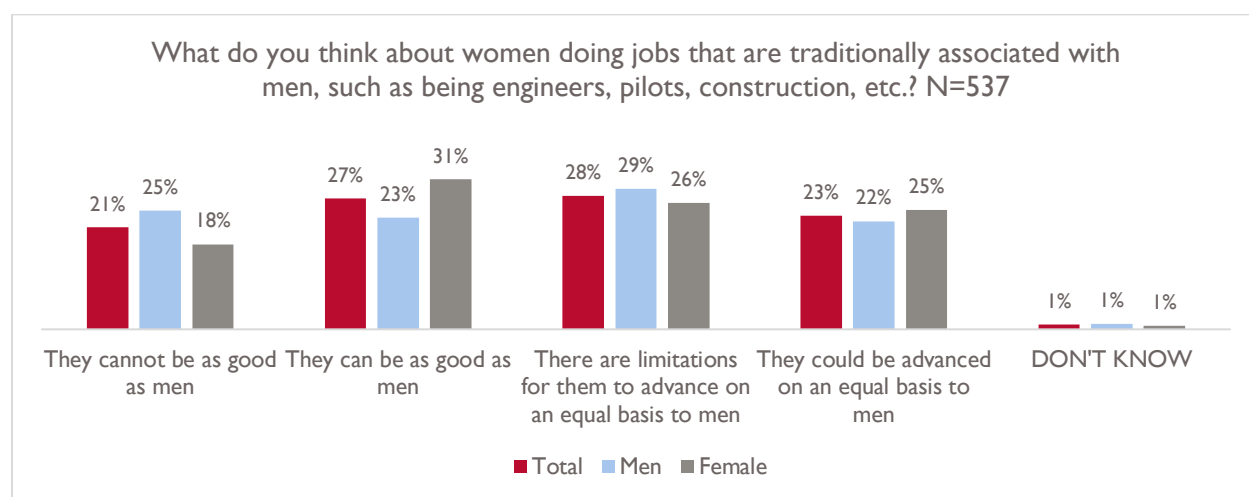


Figure A9-7: Attitudes of the Respondents in Vietnam About Women Doing Jobs that are Traditionally for Men

7. Factors Influencing Employment Choices. When asked what factors they considered when applying for a job, 67 percent of the male respondents preferred the opportunity for career growth followed by a good working environment. Women chose a good working environment as the top priority, followed by an attractive salary when seeking job opportunities.

8. Attitudes About Women in Leadership Roles. Participants were also asked how important it was to have women in leadership positions in an organization. Sixty-two (62) percent indicated that this was either important or very important to them. (Figure A9-8). The majority of the respondents believed that women leaders can bring new outlooks and perspectives to an organization.

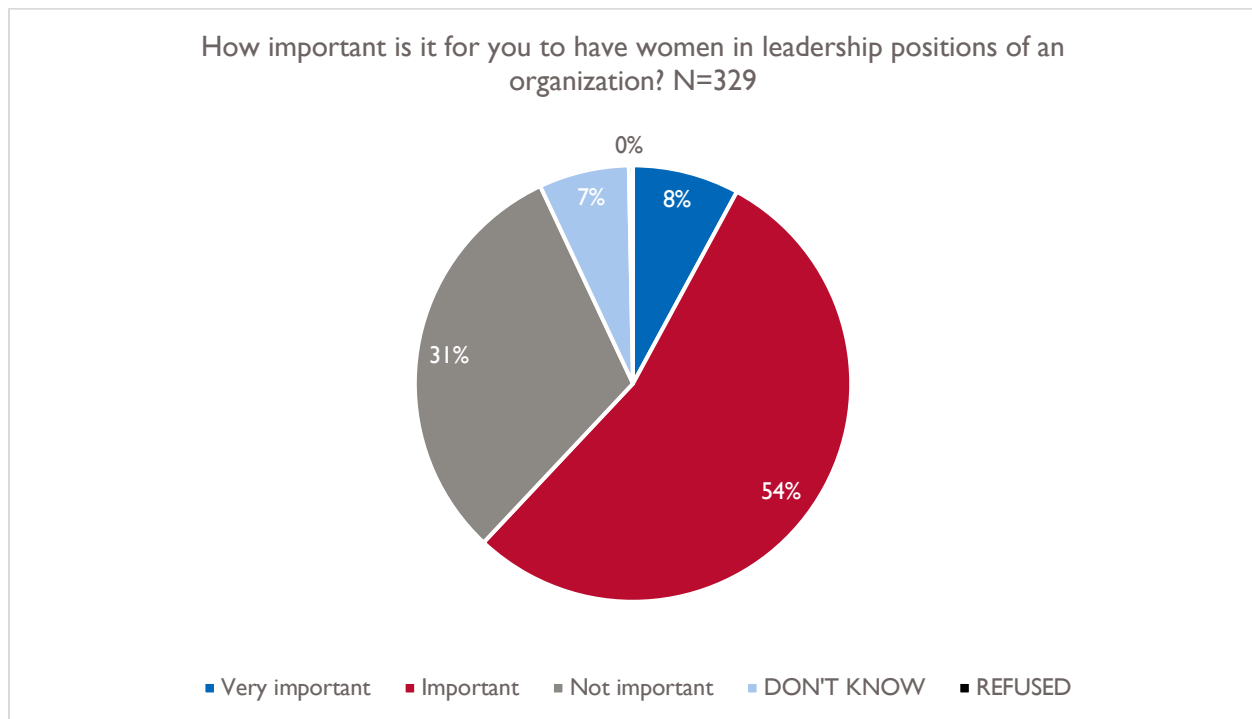


Figure A9-8: Respondents' Opinions about the Importance of Women in Leading Roles

OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table A9-4 provides a summary of the key GESI findings in Vietnam based on the research conducted under the E4SEA Activity.¹⁴

¹⁴ Table 9-4 is exactly the same table as Table 9-1. This table is purposefully repeated in the Executive Summary in order to make sure that readers who may only wish to read the Executive Summary would be able to see the key country-level findings without having to go through the entire report.

TABLE 9-4: KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS

DOMAIN	KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS
Law and Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender equality is considered both an objective and a key principle in policy formulation and implementation. Every ministry in the Government has an Action Plan for the Advancement of Women that guides policies and practices. The Constitution 2013 provides that male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields; the State shall adopt policies to guarantee the right to and opportunities for gender equality; the State, society, and family shall create the conditions for women to develop comprehensively and to advance their role in society; and gender discrimination is prohibited. Prime Minister's Decisions/Directive responding to UN's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (#5 on Gender) in 2015, including: Decision 622/QĐ-TTg, dated 10 May 2017, Directive 13/CT-TTg on 20 May and Decision 681/QĐ-TTg dated 4 June 2019. Resolution 11-NQ/TW of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam dated 27/4/2007 on Women Affairs in the Period of Accelerating Industrialization and Modernization. Gender Equality Law (2006) stipulates that men and women should be treated equally in all aspects. Gender equality is to be achieved through eliminating gender discrimination and creating equal opportunities for men and women in all development fields. It specifies criteria and measures to promote gender equality in specific sectors including politics, economics, education, health, the workplace, and family life. The government of Vietnam has issued three Decrees to support and facilitate the implementation of the national Gender Equality Law. The National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021-2030)¹⁵ sets an overall objective of gender equality and specific gender objectives and relevant targets in areas of political, economic, labor, health, education, and communication. It includes six specific strategies towards the achievement of the targets. Labor Code (2019) ensures gender equality principles, stipulating labor regimes and social policies aimed at protecting female employees, workers with disabilities, and elderly and underaged workers. It provides a strong legal framework to promote equal access to employment opportunities. It regulates special working conditions and rights for female workers, including prohibition of discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace.
Access to Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Land Law 2013 affirms that everyone has the same rights and obligations to the land allocated by the State. According to the regulations of land law, both husband and wife are entitled to the land use right certificate. Compared to men, Vietnamese women, particularly ethnic minorities, are facing some challenges and difficulties in accessing land, wages, credit, and technical training. There is a big gap in wages between men and women, in both the informal and formal sectors of the economy.¹⁶ A large percentage (42%) of SMEs are owned by women, but many of them face difficulty accessing financial support as bank decisions regarding loans are likely to be influenced by the traditional perception that businesses led by women are less profitable compared to those led by males. Women also have limitations in providing collateral as only a small percentage

¹⁵ (The Government of Viet Nam, 2021)

¹⁶ Women, in general, make 77 cents for every dollar that men earn. *Gender pay gap in Vietnam: a propensity score matching analysis*, [Gabriel Obermann, Nguyen Hoang Oanh, Nguyen Hong Ngoc](#) *Journal of Economics and Development* ISSN: 1859-0020

TABLE 9-4: KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS

DOMAIN	KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS
	<p>of them own land and other tangible assets under their names. Adequate training needs to be provided to financial institutions to implement gender-equitable financial policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the agricultural sector, women and youth have less access to land use and ownership than men especially in mountainous areas. • Female entrepreneurs of SMEs indicated that lack of knowledge, market information, trade promotion, resources, and opportunities to network are the most common barriers they faced in business development. • Women face barriers to access to resources and productive assets and technical and vocational training. Such obstacles have created unfavorable patterns in the 1) types of occupations women enter, 2) quality of the working conditions, and 3) low and insecure earnings (UN, 2015).
Power and Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022, women represented 30.26% of the National Assembly members, which is an improvement from the previous election. Yet, it is still lower than the national target of between 35% - 40% (according to the Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW of the Politburo on women's work in the period of accelerating industrialization and modernization of the country). • Women's representation in public decision-making bodies in Vietnam is also under-targeted. Women have less opportunities for professional and self-development than men and hence, less opportunity to be promoted to senior leadership positions. • The Government of Vietnam also established a twenty-five (25) percent quota for women in the Committees of the Communist Party (According to the Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW of the Politburo on women's work in the period of accelerating industrialization and modernization of the country). • The percentage of female delegates in the People's Council at the province, districts, and commune levels has also increased during the current election term. Of the sixty-three (63) provinces, eight (8) have female chairpersons and thirty-one (31) have female vice chairpersons. • In the economic sector, women account for 48.7% of the national labor force. Women's participation is the highest in the agricultural sector. A high proportion of the female workforce can also be seen in the trade and service industries and food processing. • Relevance of women's leadership is supported by findings from the Baseline Citizen Survey. Most male and female respondents (over 60 percent) said that women's leadership is important for an organization because they can bring new outlooks and perspectives to the organization and business-wide communication can be enhanced because women are effective communicators. • Male and female employee FGD participants did not express any preference over male or female leaders or indicate that they perceive men or women to differ in their performance quality and effectiveness.
Roles and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of the Baseline Citizen Survey show that general attitudes on traditional gender roles are still prevalent among the male and female respondents. More than half of the respondents believe that men are the breadwinners and women are the caretakers of the family. • Many women with full-time work have dual roles. At home, they take care of the children and do housework. IDI and FGD results confirm that married women with children have limited time for self-development which can be a hinderance to them when it comes to promotion to high leadership positions. • The Survey results also show that most respondents believed that both men and women should make decisions together because they look at things from different perspectives and that is good for sound decision-making. • Women spend almost twice as much time on unpaid care work in the family than men and have less time for relaxation or entertainment. This trend has slightly improved in recent years.

TABLE 9-4: KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS

DOMAIN	KEY COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS
Knowledge and Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SME Support Law (2017) states that women-owned SMEs or SMEs employing more women workers must be given priorities in attending training or capacity building programs organized by the State or its affiliates. • While the law mandates six months of maternity leave, many women workers are unaware of this benefit or are on short-term contracts that are terminated before giving birth. Short-term contracts may be used so that employers can avoid paid maternity leave to their female employees. • There is a perception that women usually do not like company politics which may serve as a detriment to their advancement in the male-dominated energy industry. • Baseline Citizen Survey respondents believe that key factors for lower enrollment of female students in STEM fields are 1) hardship and unsafe working environment in STEM-related jobs and 2) social norms and gender stereotypes. • FGDs and IDIs reflected that within the energy workplace, female engineers are believed to be less competent than their counterpart male engineers in machine operation and that most female engineers are often assigned to job functions involving administrative work such as record keeping, accounting, administrative support, etc. • LGBTQI persons also commonly experience stigma and discrimination in the workplace in Vietnam. The Labor Code does not include provisions to prevent discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.
Human dignity and gender-based violence (GBV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Survey on Violence Against Women in 2019 showed that 62.9% of married women have experienced at least one or more forms of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. The incidence has significantly increased from the previous survey in 2010. This is typically true among young women aged 18-24 years. • The same survey results also indicated that women with disabilities experience more forms of violence by their husbands/partners than women without disabilities. Almost 5% of girls under age fifteen (15) in the survey said they had been sexually abused, mostly by their male family members. Most women who experienced sexual abuse and violence did not report such instances to authorities. Nor did they seek any support from relevant government agencies with jurisdiction over such matters. • Among women who experienced GBV by their husbands, 61.4% said their children had witnessed the violence. They also reported that their children have behavioral problems as a result of living in such circumstances.

DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE OVERALL FINDINGS

The GESI Analysis Report, prepared at the beginning of the E4SEA Activity, highlights key enabling factors and barriers to promote greater participation of women and socially excluded persons within the energy sector in SEA countries, including Vietnam. Findings from the desk review and primary data collection through the stakeholder consultations (IDIs and FGDs) and Baseline Citizen Survey reinforce some of these comments, but new findings also emerge. The following is a summary of the findings organized under the six GESI domains.

LAW AND POLICY

Gender equality is considered both an objective and a key principle in policy formulation and implementation. This strong commitment of the Government of Vietnam was shown in the Constitution of Vietnam. **The Constitution 2013** affirms that “Human rights and citizenship rights in political, civil,

economic, cultural, and social terms are recognized, respected, protected, and guaranteed according to the Constitution and laws (article 14).” Key provisions related to gender equality are as follows:

- Everyone is equal before the law, and no one shall be discriminated against in the political, civil, economic, cultural, or social life (article 16).
- Male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields. The State shall adopt policies to guarantee the right to and opportunities for gender equality.
- The State, society, and family shall create the conditions for women to develop comprehensively and to advance their role in society.
- Gender discrimination is prohibited (article 26).

These legal provisions are the guiding principles for protecting the equal rights of men and women in political, economic, cultural, and social areas¹⁷.

The Law on Gender Equality (2006) ¹⁸ stipulates that men and women should be treated equally in all fields and the objective of gender equality is to 1) eliminate gender discrimination, 2) create equal opportunities for men and women in socio-economic development and human resource development, 3) move towards substantive gender equality between men and women, and 4) establish cooperation and support between men and women in all areas of social and family life (article 4).

The Law also specifies gender equality criteria and measures to protect gender equality in some specific areas. For example, in the political area, “women and men are equal in participating in state management and social activities. Men and women are equal in self-nomination or to be nominated by anyone to become candidates for the National Assembly, People’s Council, or any other leadership position” (article 11).

In the economic area, “men and women are equal in establishing businesses, conducting production and business activities, and managing enterprises, and they are equal in accessing information, capital, markets, and labor resources” (article 12). In the labor force and workplaces, “men and women are equal in recruitment, wages, payment and bonuses, social insurance, working conditions, training, and promotion” (article 13). In education, “men and women are equal in accessing and applying science technology, education, and training opportunities” (article 14).

In the area of information, culture, and sports: “men and women are equal to access and benefit from these activities” (article 15). The same also applies in health: “men and women are equal to participate in health education programs and receive health care services” (article 16). In the family setting: “husband and wife have equal rights for making all decisions within the family” (article 18).

Additionally, the Law on Gender Equality also affirms the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in protecting gender equality, and detailed solutions need to be implemented to promote gender equality in all areas of life.

¹⁷ (The Government of Viet Nam, 2009)

¹⁸ (The Government of Viet Nam, 2009)

To provide specific guidance for the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality 2006, the Government of Vietnam issued three Decrees. The Decree No 70/2008/NĐ-CP¹⁹ dated 4 June 2008 on guiding for implementation of some articles of the Law on Gender Equality; and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in implementing state management provisions for ensuring gender equality. The Decree No 48/2009/NĐ-CP²⁰, dated 19 May 2009, addresses practical solutions to protecting gender equality; conducting information, education, and communication on gender equality; facilitating gender mainstreaming into the formulation of legal documents; and financing for gender equality activities. The Decree 55/2008/NĐ-CP²¹ provides penalties for administrative violence and gender equality. This Decree provides for administrative violations, sanctioning forms, levels, and competence to sanction administrative violations of gender equality.

The National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021-2030)²² sets an overall objective of gender equality and specific gender objective and relevant targets in areas of political, economic, labor, health, education, and communication. For example, in the political area, by 2025, sixty (60) percent and by 2030, seventy-five (75) percent of state management agencies and local governments at all levels will have female key leaders. Additionally, in the economy and labor, the targets are to increase the proportion of female wage workers to fifty (50) percent by 2025 and about sixty (60) percent by 2030. This national strategy also includes six (6) key groups of solutions to achieve the objectives and targets including 1) strengthening political will and leadership of local authority; 2) completing the legal system and policies; 3) implementing the national strategy on gender equality; 4) strengthen communication and information; 5) building capacity of the state management agency on gender equality; and 6) strengthening international cooperation for gender equality.

Labor Code 2019 ensures gender equality principles by stipulating labor regimes and social policies aimed at protecting female employees, workers with disabilities, elderly workers, and underage workers (Article 4). This law provides a strong legal framework to promote equal access to employment opportunities. The law also regulates some special working conditions and rights for female workers. Article 5 on “Rights and obligations of employees” prohibits discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. Also, Article 169 “Retirement age” under this law has changed the retirement ages of employees in normal working conditions to be gradually increased to 62 for males by 2028 and 60 for females by 2035. Further research is needed to better understand if the public and private energy companies comply with this Code.

The Civil Code 2015, effective from 1 January 2017, includes the right to change sex. Article 36 affirms the right to re-determinate sex, but this right is only applied to intersex cases and to those who need health intervention to re-determine their sex. Article 37 applies to individuals who have surgery to change their sex. However, the right to change sex must follow the current regulations. All individuals who have a sex change are requested to register with the local authority to receive full citizen rights. Sex change is prohibited for a person who is not inter-sex. But individuals who change their sex for any reason can register with local government agencies if they want to receive full citizen rights.

¹⁹ (The Government of Viet Nam, n.d.)

²⁰ (The Government of Viet Nam, 2021)

²¹ (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.)

²² (The Government of Viet Nam, n.d.)

The GESI report completed under the E4SEA Activity presented the strength of legal, policy, and institutional frameworks for GESI rights across the E4SEA focus countries, including Vietnam, as well as drew regional implications. The report concluded that most countries in the region have policies and laws related to gender equality. However, GESI-related laws and policies specific to the energy sector vary widely across SEA, and so do the perceptions, biases, and the status of girls and women in the energy sector.²³ The IDIs and FGDs with selected stakeholders, and the Baseline Citizen Survey in Vietnam, confirmed these initial findings.

As mentioned earlier, the Vietnamese Constitution provides that female and male citizens have the same rights in every aspect of politics, economy, society, and family. Article 13 of the Gender Equality Law further provides that men and women are equal in recruitment, wages, payment and bonuses, social insurance, working conditions, training, and promotion. This applies to all employment sectors including energy production and distribution. Three different Decrees have been issued to guide implementation of the Gender Equality Law in every aspect.

Under the National Strategy for Gender Equality, overall and specific objectives as well as sectoral gender equality targets have been specified. Politically, by 2030, 75 percent of state agencies and local governments will have women in key leadership roles. The economic sector will increase the proportion of female workers to 60 percent by 2030. Article 4 of the Labor Code 2019 stipulates labor regimes and social policies aimed at protecting female employees, workers with disabilities, elderly workers, and underage workers. The law provides a strong legal framework to promote equal access to employment opportunities. However, women are restricted from working in some industries such as mining as the law does not permit women to work underground.

Findings from the baseline citizen survey indicate that most of the respondents believe that women could advance on the same basis as men in undertaking jobs traditionally associated with men (such as engineers, pilot, etc.) if they are given the right opportunity. Those who believe women could be as good as men in this regard justify that capability is not determined by biological sex but by one's professional training, the quality of that training, and demonstration of work outputs. These attitudes need to be further strengthened among executives and employees of the companies.

Findings from the IDIs with executives, and the FGDs with engineers (women and men) of leading energy companies in Vietnam provided valuable insights into how laws and regulations related to employment and employee management are implemented in the workplace. Although there is no explicit gender discrimination in job advertisements, in practice, most employers in the energy sector prefer male candidates. According to Law No. 73/2006/QH11 on Gender Equality (2006), during recruitment, men and women with the same qualifications must be paid equally for undertaking the same kind of jobs. However, in the long run, men have better access to career advancement. Female engineers are usually assigned to the tasks that are less physically demanding and dangerous such as jobs in the office environment rather than in the field and at plant sites. The women typically work in supporting roles such as designing or monitoring the systems. Many other women employees are in non-STEM functions such as HR, finance, accounting, billing, procurement, health, safety, and environment. This area needs further assessment through a more comprehensive study.

²³ (USAID/RDMA Enhancing Equality In Energy For Southeast Asia Activity, 2020)

Measures 132 to 145 of the Labor Code 2019 provide frameworks to protect rights of female employees such as rights related to their maternity functions, safety, health, and hygiene conditions. From the IDIs and FGDs, it is found that most of the companies comply with these measures. Women can take paid maternity leave for 6 months, with an extension of another 6 months of leave without pay if they wish. Some companies allow new mothers to work less hours so they can go home earlier. Some companies provide facilities for new mothers, such as childcare services and breast-feeding rooms at their workplaces.

The Vietnamese government has put effort into improving the status of LGBTQI+ through a recent legal framework. Effective 1 January 2017, the Civil Code 2015, article 36, grants rights to persons who have undergone a transgender process for people born as intersex to re-register their citizen information under the new sex so that they are entitled to full citizen rights. Moreover, Article 37 of the same law protects the right of transgender persons by allowing legalization of sex reassignment surgery and subsequent change of their gender marker on their official documents²⁴.

In summary, Vietnam has robust legal frameworks to promote gender equality at all levels and sectors in the country. However, these legal frameworks are not translated into practice in the energy sector. Due to a lack of gender awareness, particularly in the energy sector, Vietnam has not yet developed practical guidelines for private and public agencies to direct implementation of gender equality policies and programs in the energy sector.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

In the economic sphere, Vietnamese women, particularly ethnic minorities, are facing some challenges and difficulties in accessing land, wages, credit, and technical training as compared to men. For example, only 20 percent of women are single landholders as compared to 62 percent of men.²⁵ Currently, there is a big gap in wages between men and women, in both the informal and formal sectors. In the formal sector, the wage gap between women and men is about 12 percent, while this percentage rises to around 50 percent in the informal sector.²⁶

At present, around 42 percent of formal enterprises are small and medium enterprises (SMEs) run by women entrepreneurs.²⁷ However, women entrepreneurs generally lack access to financing for their businesses. Although there is no legal barrier for women to access credit,²⁸ bank decisions regarding loans may be influenced by the perception of traditional gender roles associating businesses led by women as less profitable compared to their male counterparts.²⁹ If these perceptions do not come into play, women may still face a barrier to accessing loans because of the difficulty to provide the collateral typically required by the financing institutions.

The Land Law 2013 affirms that everyone has the same rights and obligations to the land allocated by the State. According to the regulations of land law, both husband and wife are entitled to the land use

²⁴ (Human Rights Watch, 2015)

²⁵ (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.)

²⁶ (International Labour Organization, 2018)

²⁷ (World Bank, 2011)

²⁸ (Ray-Ross, 2012)

²⁹ (USAID, 2013)

right certificate. However, the latest UNDP (2013) report on women's access to land in 10 cities and provinces in Vietnam shows that eighteen (18) percent of women are solely named in the certificates of land use rights. Certificates with both the names of the husband and the wife amount to only twenty-two (22) percent while the proportion of certificates of land use rights is doubled for men (UNDP, 2013). The most vulnerable women are daughters-in-law and those who live in rural and mountainous areas.

As of October 2019, there are 285,689 enterprises owned by women nationwide, accounting for 24 percent of the total number of enterprises nationwide. Among enterprises owned by women, distributed by the main production and business sectors, the number of enterprises is the highest in the field of trade, with services (75 percent), construction sector (12 percent), industrial sector (7 percent), and seven (7) percent in the field of agriculture, forestry, fisheries (Government of Vietnam, 2020). Women-owned SMEs in Vietnam are primarily micro and small enterprises and operate mainly in the services sector. In total, 98.8 percent of women's enterprises are micro and small enterprises, and 61.4 percent operate in the services sector. These characteristics are the same for women-owned SMEs in other countries (IFC 2014), and they suggest that there are considerable disadvantages facing women-owned enterprises and that they need special support (ADB, 2016).

The most commonly cited obstacles to establishing and maintaining SME's by women entrepreneurs are 1) lack of knowledge, 2) inadequate market information, 3) lack of trade promotion, 4) limited resources, and 5) few opportunities to network for business development. For example, 55 percent of women business owners state that they need training and other support to develop their knowledge to run their business, even though 33.8 percent of the women owners of SMEs have a college education. In addition, women entrepreneurs have other challenges such as balancing work and taking care of their families. Meeting family needs can be quite challenging for a woman entrepreneur (ADB, 2016).

Essential resources to achieve gender equality in the energy sector are education and entrepreneurship opportunities. The basic education in Vietnam includes five (5) years of elementary schooling, four (4) years of lower secondary school, and three (3) years of high school. By law, elementary education is free, but in practical terms, parents have many extra costs to cover, including costs of textbooks, uniforms, transportation, food, etc. Thus, many children, especially disadvantaged girls, miss out on schooling as their families are unable to afford these extra costs. Gender gaps in education are also found among other less privileged populations such as people with disabilities (PWD) and ethnic minorities. Although most households, even in the rural areas, are electrified, many of them cannot afford to pay the electricity bill, especially those living in apartments for low-income families.

While, in principle, female students have equal access to STEM education as their male counterparts, their enrollment rate, in reality, is much lower. Traditional social norms on gender roles are influential factors for a lack of participation by women in STEM education. The FGD respondents indicated that there are several other subjects that were more suitable for women such as accounting, teaching, nursing, etc. While percentages of female students in STEM have increased in recent years, most of them are in fields that do not require physical strengths, such as environmental engineering, ICT, engineering management. However, it was highlighted in the IDIs that parents have increasingly invested in quality education for their children and perceptions about women pursuing STEM studies have gradually changed among parents with advanced education.

Regarding women's entrepreneurship, Vietnamese women, particularly ethnic minorities, are facing some challenges and difficulties in accessing land, credit, and technical training as compared to men. Although the gender wage gap has narrowed down in Vietnam, men earn fifty (50) percent more than women for the same job in the informal sector.

According to interviews with gender experts from NGOs, there is a significant wage gap between men and women, in both the informal and formal sectors. Especially in the informal sector, women are 34 percent less likely to acquire a working written contract and 41 percent less likely to have stable income. For the formal sector, the wage gap is also favoring men at the rate of 13.7, according to the Vietnam Country Gender Equality Profile 2021.³⁰

In 2018, women owned 26.5 percent of SME business, and women-owned SMEs employed a higher percentage of female workers in Vietnam than those owned by men (43.4 percent versus 36 percent), according to VN Express International.³¹ Even though Vietnamese women own over a quarter of SMEs in the country, their access to credits or loans is limited by the fact that most banks tend to believe that women-run businesses are less effective compared to those run by men. Financial institutions need adequate training in order to implement gender-equitable financial policies. Moreover, many women do not have assets under their own names to use for loan collateral required for debt financing of their businesses.

With respect to career advancement opportunities, findings from the IDIs and FGDs indicate that women and men employees have equal access to services and resources such as professional training, scholarships, and other facilities within the energy sector workplace. However, women tend not to fully take advantage of available professional development opportunities. Many married women with children have taken double roles by being primary caregiver and a working professional. These burdens do not allow them to have extra time for self-development. Those who can manage the double burden are considered to be excellent at time management and typically have an understanding husband who helps with childcare. There is some evidence that unmarried women often do take advantage of available resources. This needs to be assessed further.

External factors hindering women from getting additional training or scholarships from the workplace can be regarded as a 'glass ceiling' as these factors are not explicitly communicated in the company policy, but they are unconsciously passed on in the organizational values and practices. Most of these factors are related to unconscious gender biases or lack of gender-responsive considerations. Training programs are not based on gender disaggregated data or needs. For example, if the training is run during evening hours or the application criteria for a scholarship are not gender sensitive, it can be a detriment to female applicants, according to interviewees. Unconscious Bias Training provided under E4SEA to its energy employer partners provides a toolkit to systematically remove the bias that denies equal opportunities to women desirous of entering the energy sector workplace. Interventions under E4SEA are helping to raise awareness on the needs to integrate gender-sensitive principles to establish organizational enablers throughout the employee life cycle within the energy sector workplace.

³⁰ (UN Women, 2010)

³¹ (Nga, 2021)

POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

In the political area, 30.26 percent of the National Assembly members in Vietnam are women. While the new government interventions increased female representation by 3.5 percentage points as compared to the previous tenure, it is still short of the target set in the National Strategy by 4.7 percentage points. Also, the proportion of government agencies having high-level female leaders fell considerably short of the target in the National Strategy. The Government of Vietnam also established a 25 percent quota for women in the Committees of the Communist Party (party committees).³² While the country has achieved a relatively high rate of women's representation in the political sphere compared to many Southeast Asian countries, women are still low in leadership positions. Women face a particular challenge as their capacity development opportunities are limited, but they are required to obtain such certifications for promotion. This remains the primary barrier for women to advance in the public sector despite the targets set by the government in increasing women's representation.

During the period 2016-2021, the National Assembly Vietnam had a chairwoman and 3 members of the politburo who were also women. At the provincial level, the participation of women stood at six (6) Secretaries, thirteen (13) Deputy Secretaries, eight (8) Presidents, thirty (30) Vice Presidents of the People's Councils, nineteen (19) Vice Presidents of the People's Committees, and sixteen (16) Deputy Heads of the National Assembly Delegation. In addition, there were many female officers. During the same period, the percentage of female delegates in the People's Council at all levels increased compared to the 2010-2015 term at all three levels of provinces, districts, and communes. During 2010-2015, the percentage of female delegates was 25.17 percent at provincial people's councils, 24.62 percent at the district level, and 21.71 percent at the commune level. During 2016 - 2021, the participation level was 26.54 percent, 27.85 percent, and 26.59 percent, respectively (Government of Vietnam, 2020).

There were sixteen (16) out of sixty-three (63) provinces and cities with a proportion of female delegates at provincial people's councils of thirty (30) percent or more; twenty-six (26) out of sixty-three (63) provinces and cities had a proportion of female delegates at provincial people's councils between twenty (20) to thirty (30) percent; particularly, there were seven (7) out of sixty-three (63) provinces and cities with a female delegate rate of provincial people's councils below fifteen (15) percent. Currently, there are eight (8) female chairpersons and thirty-one (31) vice chairpersons out of sixty-three (63) at the provincial people's councils. There are eight (8) provinces and cities out of fifty-three (53) (except 10 pilot provinces and cities that do not organize district-level people's councils) with thirty (30) percent female delegates at district-level people's councils. Thirty-seven (37) out of fifty-three (53) provinces and cities have 20-30 percent female delegates. Forty-three (43) out of sixty-three (63) provinces and cities also have 20-30 percent female delegates of commune-level people's councils (Government of Vietnam, 2020).

In the economic sphere, women play an important role in the economic development of Vietnam. Seventy-three (73) percent of women work (UNDP, 2016) in various economic sectors and women account for 48.7 percent of the national labor force (GSO, 2015). There is high participation of women in the areas of agriculture. Women's contribution can be also seen in the industry, representing nearly seventy (70) percent of the workforce in garments and textiles, footwear, and electronics. A high proportion of the female workforce can be seen in trade, services industries, and fish and food

³² (UN Women, 2010)

processing. However, some challenges remain for women's participation in economic development at both the household and community levels.

In the family setting, men play a leading role in the family-marriage relationship. In Vietnam, there is only one household of four (4) households with a female head of household (GSO, 2019). Traditional gender roles are still common in family decision-making where the woman decides on "unimportant" issues and the man makes decisions on "important" issues. According to research by the Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS), more women than men make decisions on healthcare and medical treatment for household members (19.9 percent of females against 7.5 percent of males). Men generally make decisions on household income and assets such as on the purchase, sale, building, and repairing of homes (34.4 percent of males against 11.7 percent of females) as well as on the purchase of valuable commodities (25.7 percent of males against 15 percent of females) (UN Women, 2016).

In addition, women still lack the power to make decisions on investment. In the family, women are expected to play the role of caregivers rather than breadwinners. Taking on heavy roles of caregivers and domestic work creates more challenges for women to participate in economic activities. At the community level, female leadership in economic development, for example, taking leadership positions in cooperatives or enterprises, is often not respected and/or trusted by men and the community due to gender stereotypes. This fact affects the efforts to promote the participation of target women in capacity-building programs and job promotion efforts in the energy sector.

Generally, Vietnam has made good progress in promoting women's decision-making roles in the public sector. As of 2021, women represented 30.2 percent of the National Assembly members, which is an improvement from the previous election, but it is still lower than the national target³³. On a positive side, the percentages of female delegates in the People's Council at the province, districts and commune levels have increased during the current election term, but they are still under targeted.

The importance of women's leadership is supported by findings from the Baseline Citizen Survey. Most male and female respondents, over sixty (60) percent, said that women's leadership is important for an organization because they can bring new outlooks and perspectives to the organization and business-wide communication can be enhanced because women are effective communicators.

A majority of the Baseline Citizen Survey respondents (75 percent) said that both men and women should be able to make decisions together because men and women have different ways of looking at things, and it is best to have a joint decision acceptable to both. However, a smaller percentage of respondents thought that the family's breadwinner should have a final say in family-related decisions because some of the decisions required financial consideration.

In general terms, however, decision making roles in most families are clearly defined for both men and women. According to research by the Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS), more women than men make decisions on health care and medical treatment for household members, while men generally make decisions related to household income and assets.³⁴

³³ (Viet Nam Women's Union, 2021)

³⁴ (Our Body Ourselves Today, 2014)

Regarding children's education, most of the parents in the Baseline Citizen Survey agreed that parents should have the final word in decisions regarding their children's choice of study/jobs because parents have more insight about prospects of different careers and understand their children's interests and potential best. A smaller percentage of parents, however, stated that children should be encouraged to make their own decisions about their future. Family members often influence female students to study non-STEM subjects and male students to study STEM.

While women also play an important role in the economic development of Vietnam, their representation in the business top management or board is relatively limited. The importance of women's leadership is supported by findings from the Baseline Citizen Survey. Most male and female respondents, over 60 percent, said that women's leadership is important for an organization's overall productivity and working environment. A majority of male and female respondents said that it does not matter whether their supervisor/manager is male or female because *"we should not be prejudiced about their gender but should consider their performance as a capable manager."* Female leaders in the IDIs mentioned that the first step is important. More women should be encouraged to be part of decision-making bodies at every level within an organization.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In the economic sphere, according to the 2019 Population and Housing Survey, men make up 52.7 percent and women make up 47.3 percent of the workforce. From 2010 to 2019, 1.7 million female workers received vocational training from vocational education institutions and various Associations. In 2019, there were 12,142 rural female workers with primary vocational training (Government of Vietnam, 2020). Although women have a high labor participation rate, they work in sectors where they are poorly paid and undervalued. At the same time, they are responsible for running the household and caring for the family. Holding the main responsibility for household work often forces women to take informal jobs that pay little and are insecure but have flexible hours. Women are likely to work in agriculture or a small business run by their own families. In such work, health and social insurance are not covered and employees must cover it themselves if they choose to. The result is that few women working in this type of work have any form of social security or employee benefits. Women face barriers to access to resources and productive assets and technical and vocational training. Such obstacles have created unfavorable patterns in the types of occupations women enter, the quality of the working conditions, and the low and insecure earnings (UN, 2015).

Women-owned SMEs in Vietnam operate mainly in the services sector (61.4 percent), which is a more "green" (environmentally friendly) area of the economy. They employ a higher percentage of female workers than is the case with SMEs owned by men (43.4 percent vs. 36 percent). Generally, women-owned SMEs spend less per individual worker on wages than is the case with SMEs owned by men (1.2 billion VND vs. 1.7 billion VND/worker). However, they contribute slightly more to the national budget in taxes per worker than is the case with SMEs owned by men (24.9 million VND vs. 24.2 million VND/worker/year). Finally, they spend slightly more on social insurance than is the case with SMEs owned by men (social insurance contribution: 36 percent vs. 35 percent) (ADB, 2016).

In the family setting, the research conducted by Action Aid in Vietnam in 2016 shows that women perform four more years of unpaid care work than men in their lifetime. Every day, women spend five hours performing unpaid care work while men spend only 189 minutes (approximately three hours).

Every day, men perform paid jobs for 60 minutes more than women and enjoy entertainment and relaxing activities for 76 minutes more than women (ActionAid Vietnam, 2016). The same survey conducted by Action Aid in 2017 showed that women reduced their time in unpaid care compared to 2016 after both men and women participated in awareness raising and training activities on unpaid care work. However, women still spend an average of 4.5 hours in unpaid care work, equivalent to 32 hours in a week and 207 working days in 1 year for which this job is not recorded. Women's household time is 1.62 times that of men (ActionAid Vietnam, 2017). Female engineers in the FGDs also reflected that if they had to choose between professional and family roles, they would go for family responsibilities because they can take better care of the children and households than their husbands.

According to the Population and Housing Survey (2019), men make up 52.7 percent and women make up 47.3 percent of the workforce in the SME sector. Although women have a high labor participation rate, they work in sectors where they are poorly paid and undervalued. As most women have to take care of their kids and household chores, they do not have many choices about work. Many have taken insecure and low pay jobs in the informal sector, which allow them to have flexible working hours. Many women work in agriculture or a small family-run business with no social insurance coverage.

Based on a study from the Asian Development Bank (ADB 2016), women-owned SMEs in Vietnam operate mainly in the services sector. Compared to SMEs owned by men, women's owned SMEs 1) employ a higher percentage of female workers, 2) spend less per individual worker on wages, 3) contribute slightly more to the national budget in taxes per worker, and 4) spend slightly more on social insurance.

The majority of the respondents in the Baseline Citizen Survey believed that men's primary role is that of breadwinners whereas the women's primary role is that of caretakers. Respondents provided two reasons. First, men usually earn more than women and second, this is a traditional norm that men and women should just conform to. Most of them also reflected that a woman with a fulltime job should continue to serve as primary caretaker of the family because women can take better care of the children than men and they have a caring and nurturing mind.

One female manager of the RE company pointed out that the growing demand for renewable energy in Vietnam in recent years has opened up more employment opportunities for women in the renewable energy (RE) business. Women must try to overcome barriers, i.e., the stereotypical mindset that women cannot be as good as men in STEM work. As long as they get opportunities to learn, women can be capable engineers although the female manager felt that women need to put in extra effort in some tasks.

Another female CEO informed E4SEA that within her existing energy efficiency network, 20 females in the leadership group are helping female STEM students by being their mentors. This is a good practice to establish a women's network in the energy sector to provide space for students and early career women entering the sector. This responds directly to the E4SEA's Assessment Report that identified a lack of mentorship as a key barrier to the entry and promotion of women in the energy sector.

A vocational training institute participating in the IDI has demonstrated some good practices in promoting gender equality among teachers and students. The institute was led by a female president. Forty (40) percent of their senior level leaders are women. Strategies to promote women leadership include 1) encouraging female staff to overcome stereotype barriers, 2) have special development

programs for women staff, and 3) empower female staff to work at their fullest potential. Activities for students include 1) special events to talk about gender equality with external guest speakers, 2) reducing tuition fee for female students who get recruited into the most difficult fields of study, and 3) providing special training for students with outstanding performance.

KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

Regardless of Vietnam's development on gender related laws and policies, gender equality still lacks in practice primarily because of traditional beliefs and gender norms that favor males. These beliefs play a detrimental role for women's empowerment and their participation in productive sectors of the economy including the energy sector.

The Law on SMEs Support (2017) (Article 5), states that "if there are many SMEs meeting conditions for support according to the regulations of this Law, the priority will be given to women-owned SMEs or SMEs employing more women laborers". The Land Law (2018) also establishes joint titling when land or property is jointly owned, which is helpful for women seeking loans or collateral for business activities.³⁵ While the law mandates six months of maternity leave, many women workers are unaware of this benefit or are on short-term contracts that are terminated before they give birth. This way, the employers are not required to provide the mandated maternity leave. In addition, women applicants may be asked about their marital status or family plans or may even be subjected to a physical test during recruitment.³⁶ Female SME owners face gender biases that prevent them from reaching their full potential. Two main recurring gender norms are as follows:

1. "Businesswomen should be the main caregiver, rather than the man"
2. "Men should be the breadwinners of their families, rather than businesswomen"³⁷.

These beliefs put pressure on female entrepreneurs who aim to succeed in business because they must take the burden of caregiving at home in addition to their outside work in their jobs. Society does not expect men to take a primary caregiver role which unfairly leaves gender gaps between men and women in SMEs.

Ethnic minority rights for Vietnam's fifty-three (53) ethnic minority groups are recognized in the constitution, however, there are no specific legal provisions related to participation in civil service that impact economic opportunities, such as land rights or the language of instruction in the education system.³⁸ According to the UNDP, approximately fifteen (15) percent of the Vietnamese population includes people with disabilities, and seventy-five (75) percent of them live in rural areas.³⁹ Vietnam's constitution calls for "favorable conditions for the disabled and poor to access education and vocational learning." However, people with disabilities still face stigma and discrimination that impacts their ability to participate in the country's economy.

³⁵ (World Bank, 2018)

³⁶ (Kenan Foundation for Asia, 2019)

³⁷ (OCHA, 2022)

³⁸ (Minority Rights Group International, 2018)

³⁹ (UNDP, 2018)

LGBTQI+ persons also commonly experience stigma and discrimination in the workplace in Vietnam. The Labor Code does not include provisions to prevent discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.⁴⁰ Promoting gender equality is about changing attitudes of people. Therefore, there is a need to raise people's awareness about gender equality and gender diversity from a very young age so that it is internalized within each individual person. In Vietnam, knowledge about gender equality is not yet widely introduced and even when it is introduced, it is often misinterpreted or rejected. Knowledge about gender equality should go beyond men and women and include people with other gender identities such as LGBTQI+ groups, who are still facing gender discrimination and lack of opportunities, hindering them from fully participating in the development process.

FGDs and IDIs reflect that many companies are interested in the issue of gender equality and inclusive workplace, but they have limited knowledge on how to promote it. At higher leadership levels, there is generally a stronger commitment to the advancement of women within the company. However, very few concrete interventions/activities related to gender equality are implemented by the companies. This is due to a lack of knowledge and motivation and scarcity of resources. The E4SEA Activity is working with its energy employer partners on change management to enhance and reform their policies through individualized Gender Action Plans (GAPs).

In the public sector in the country, every ministry has an Action Plan for Advancement of Women. This plan is quite general. It is written as a political document rather than a technical implementation guide. To educate the public about the needs and advantages of an inclusive and gender responsive development approach, a gender-disaggregated database on the country's workforce is needed. It needs to be further explored to what extent the data system in Vietnam is disaggregated by gender, age, status, ethnicity, etc. With greater data related to gender there can be better targeting to remove barriers.

From the interviews with female engineers conducted as part of the FGDs, it appears that women themselves must have passion for change. Without that passion they will not be able to overcome all the challenges they still face when trying to enter various economic sectors on an equal footing with men. Generally, people tend to think that gender equality is a technical issue and many Government agencies in the country feel this way as well. Therefore, promoting gender equality must start from changing people's mindset. Gender responsive policies and interventions must have clear indicators to reflect changes. Men too need to advocate changes in women's perception and attitude towards gender equality.

Unconscious gender bias and discrimination are caused by a lack of knowledge about gender equality as related to human rights. Unconscious bias in the workplace can be seen in many ways, such as through the unequal opportunities for promotion or biased judgment based on stereotypes. For example, an HR manager who decides not to promote women candidates to senior positions because he believes "*women cannot be good leaders because they are sensitive to comments.*" E4SEA has developed and implemented state-of-the-art Unconscious Bias Training to HR managers and senior leaders from seven (7) energy employer partners with whom E4SEA has signed letters of collaboration. USAID should consider widely providing this training in Vietnam and across the SEA region.

⁴⁰ (Ministry of Labour Invalid and Social Affairs)

HUMAN DIGNITY INCLUDING GBV

Human dignity may be defined as the ability for every individual to be respected and honored, and be a valued member of the society able to pursue her/his/their goals and experience well-being, including the prevention of gender-based violence.⁴¹ The National Survey on Violence against Women in 2019⁴² shows that 62.9 percent of married women have experienced at least one or more form of physical and sexual violence in their lifetime, and 31.6 percent of married women have experienced violence in the last 12 months. Compared with the national survey in 2010, the percentage of women who have experienced violence has increased (nearly 4 percent), from fifty-eight (58) percent in 2010 to 62.9 percent in 2019). Excluding sexual violence, the rate of violence against women perpetrated by husbands in 2019 was lower than in 2010. For example, the women who experienced physical violence by their husbands during their lifetime in 2019 is 26.1 percent, while this percentage in 2010 was 31.5 percent. The survey result also shows that the proportion of women experiencing sexual violence by their husbands in their lifetime in 2019 is higher than in 2010 (13.3 percent in 2019 compared to 9.9 percent in 2010). This is especially true among young women aged 18-24 years (13.9 percent in 2019 compared to 5.3 percent in 2010).

The National Survey on Violence against women also shows that women with disabilities experience more forms of violence by their husbands than women without disabilities. At least 4.4 percent of women said they had been sexually abused before the age of 15. Women experience more violence from their husbands than from other people and the perpetrators are mainly male family members (60.6 percent). Especially half of the women who suffered from violence never reported such incidences nor did they seek any support from authorities.

Children are also victims when living in a violent environment. Among women who experienced physical violence by their husbands, 61.4 percent said their children had witnessed or heard the violence. Women who experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their husbands reported that their children (5-12 years old) often had behavioral problems.

According to the Government's report, from January 1, 2015 to June 30, 2019, the whole country discovered and dealt with criminal and administrative penalties involving 8,442 detected cases of child abuse. Violations of child labor laws are widespread. There are some 790,518 children working in contravention of the Vietnam Law on Labor; some 156,932 children are abandoned and neglected; and about 13,489 children are in child marriage at the age of fifteen.

GBV not only impacts personal life but also affects the victims at the workplace. To acquire a straightforward report on sexual harassment or any GBV incidents at the workplace is challenging. Within the energy sector, male domination permeates into organizational culture resulting in a lack of knowledge and awareness on various forms of GBV. The findings suggest the following gaps in GBV in the energy sector:

1. Under a strong male-dominated organizational culture the majority of interviewees were not aware of the various forms of GBV. During interviews and focus groups with energy companies, the

⁴¹ (USAID/RDMA Enhancing Equality In Energy For Southeast Asia Activity, 2020)

⁴² (UNFPA, 2020)

interviewees demonstrated a lack of understanding on the subject, which indicates the lack of reporting does not merely mean lack of incidents.

2. There are no clear instructions and mechanisms for GBV victims to report incidents to management or HR in the workplaces. Safe and confidential processes needs to be established to create a safe space for victims.
3. Female professionals do not have connection with other females in the sector which makes it difficult for them to voice their concerns related to GBV at the workplace to their male colleagues.

GENDER ISSUES IN THE STUDENT LIFE CYCLE

Education in Vietnam is a state-run system of public and private schools under the oversight by the Ministry of Education. It is divided into five levels: preschool, primary school, secondary school, high school, and higher education. Basic education consists of five years of primary schooling, four years of secondary education, and another three years of high school education. The core subjects include (1) Vietnamese (2) foreign language (3) mathematics (4) natural sciences (5) civics (6) history (7) geography (8) technology (9) computer science (10) arts, and (11) physical education. A second foreign language and minority languages are offered as elective subjects.⁴³

Vocational and technical education in the country is conducted at three levels for secondary school graduates: 1) elementary TVET (3-12 months), 2) intermediate TVET (1-2 or 3-4 years depending on qualifications at entrance), and 3) higher TVET (3 years). Some technical secondary schools also provide technical training.⁴⁴

Higher education is predominantly provided at the universities and colleges. Vietnamese Government decree (decree 43/2000/ND-CP, dated August 30, 2000) identified three types of higher education institutions: (1) university, which is a multidisciplinary institution offering fields of study and which has research capacities, (2) senior college, which is more narrowly focused on its curriculum, sometimes on a single study area, and (3) institute, which is also narrowly focused in terms of study areas, but which may have a specialized research capacity.⁴⁵

FGDs conducted with students in high schools, vocational colleges, and universities in Vietnam were structured to include four (4) student life cycle stages as follows:

1. Enrollment
2. Curriculum
3. Internship and Higher Education
4. Career Opportunity and Challenges

⁴³ (Trines, 2017)

⁴⁴ (Asian Development Bank, 2020)

⁴⁵ (Asian Development Bank, 2020)

During the FGDs, the students indicated their own experience in the country's education system regarding gender equality. Based on the FGDs, the following are the key insights from the data and information gathered in the four (4) student life cycle stages.

Enrollment:

- Students from high schools, vocational colleges, and universities shared that receiving guidance in both education and career is very important. They expressed that it would be useful if students could receive the guidance as early as possible (i.e., at the primary school stage) since it will help them to form ideas on future education and career paths. Only some high school students received guidance about higher education from their elder family members, but rather limited advice from their teachers.
- None of the female students in the high school FGD planned to study in STEM fields, and only two male students wanted to study in the field of electricity and information technologies. The rest were interested in studying non-STEM subjects, such as economics and marketing, which are in high demand in Vietnam's labor market.
- Most of the vocational school students in the FGDs studied information technology, accounting, and Chinese language. Only one female and one male student studied mechatronics engineering. The female student chose this subject because of her own interest. In her opinion, male students perform better in this field because they are more intelligent.
- Male students in the FGDs were mainly from STEM fields, i.e., automotive, electricity, and information technology. The reason they selected STEM subjects was because there were more opportunities for a decent job. Female students selected non-STEM subjects because they were more suitable for women in terms of job opportunities and the working environment.
- Findings from the Baseline Citizen survey further supported that social norms on gender roles have influence over parents' decision about their children's education. The top five areas of study that the majority of respondents thought were most suitable for girls were teaching, nursing, medicine, social work, and engineering. The top five most suitable study areas for boys were engineering, computer technology/ICT, physical sciences, medicine, and home-economics.
- The survey respondents indicated that the primary reason for low enrollment of female students in STEM was a lack of career advice. Often girls and women felt that there were career opportunities for them in STEM fields.

Curriculum:

- During the FGDs, most of the students indicated that the curriculum in their selected programs met their expectations. Vocational students said that their teachers were supportive, and the schools provided excellent learning facilities. However, some of them felt that the curriculum was eighty (80) percent relevant to their learning needs. They suggested that some parts of their curriculum be adjusted to meet emerging needs of the new generations. Some students were worried that the prevailing curricula would not fully correspond with the requirements of the employment market.

- In high schools, the ratio of female to male students was almost 50:50. Male students usually take the leading role in classes because they are presumed to be more decisive and have more time for schoolwork. However, there are some cases where women outnumbered men in leadership positions in schools. It was explained that women have a caring nature. They pay attention to details and are generally more responsible in their assignments.
- In vocational schools and universities, the ratio of female and male students depends on the nature of the subject. Not surprisingly, in STEM fields, there are more male students than females. In non-STEM fields, however, women outnumber men. Factors that were believed to discourage women from selecting STEM subjects were hardship in the study, especially in fields that require physical strengths and long hours of study.
- Large international companies often believe that technical competence of both male and female students needs to be improved to suit the current market needs, both in hard skills and soft skills. Knowledge about energy, especially renewable energy should be integrated into the educational system in languages and styles that are suitable for both males and females.
- The Baseline Citizen survey indicated respondents' perceptions of women in STEM studies. About half of the respondents disagreed with the statement that women cannot be as good as men when it comes to studying technologies and sciences. About seventy-five (75) percent of the respondents stated that more female students should be enrolled in STEM-related studies. Student respondents believed that the most influential factor for female and male students to select STEM education was the prospect of promising career opportunities, followed by their own academic interests.
- The survey also indicated that the majority of the parents (70 percent) would support their daughter's decision to study engineering if she were academically qualified and had a strong interest in STEM. The percentage of mothers who supported this idea was higher than that of fathers (82 percent and 58 percent respectively).
- The survey results on gender role and its impact on career choice indicated that seventy-three (73) percent of parents either strongly agreed or agreed that parents should have the final word in the decisions regarding their children's choice of study and jobs. They believe that parents have more insights about the prospects of different careers and that they know better what is best for their children.

Internship and Higher Education:

- Most of the students reflected that internships offer a great opportunity for them to 1) gain direct experience working in the real workplace, 2) get to know the organization and its culture better to see if it is a good fit, 3) expand their networks, and 4) obtain the opportunity to work in the company/organization in the future. However, some student interns faced difficulties in performing adequately, perhaps as a result of a mismatch of the intern's qualification and interest and the job requirements and expectations of the employer receiving the intern. In some cases, there were schedule conflicts between the students' study schedule and the hours of the job requirements.
- Some students expressed interest in internships and work in the energy sector, even in non-STEM positions, such as HR and accounting. In their views, working in the energy sector has several

advantages. Yet, for women, engaging in technical operations may be difficult because they believed most of those positions require considerable traveling and working in physically difficult circumstances. To encourage more female students to choose STEM education, the FGDs indicated a number of interventions including the following:

- Effective communication to raise awareness among female students and parents
 - Scholarships for female students
 - Demonstration of success cases such as role models of female engineers or women in senior positions in the energy sector
 - Systematic campaigns to change stereotypical mindsets on traditional gender roles
 - Passion of the women themselves to overcome gender-based barriers.
- A vocational training college led by a female director has a strong policy on gender equality. According to the female director, women make up forty-seven (47) percent of the school's staff and forty (40) percent of its leadership positions. More male students study STEMs and female students study accounting, tourism, communication, and marketing. The school develops collaboration with companies on internship programs for female students and makes an extra effort to make sure that their female graduates get attractive jobs.
 - Most of the survey participants (63 percent) stated that to some extent the gender roles influence their choice of profession. They believed that most people prefer to follow social norms to be accepted by others. The findings on perception about traditional gender roles reflected that the majority of the respondents agree with the statement that males are breadwinners and females are caretakers of the family, with a higher portion of male respondents showing stronger sentiments.

Career Opportunity and Challenges:

- Career opportunities vary across different fields of study. Most students indicated that they did not receive enough guidance from their colleges/universities about future job opportunities. As competition in the job market is very high, many of them felt that they needed to have other skills in addition to the knowledge about their subjects. Many students mentioned that soft skills such as communication, creativity, collaboration, listening, decision making and problem solving are also important skills in addition to technical, engineering and STEM study areas. Some students mentioned second and third languages as very desirable for future employability. These additional skills are not sufficiently included in formal schooling curriculum and are generally included as part of extracurricular activities or elective subjects.
- While many of the participants have interest in STEM areas and the energy sector, they felt the need to be able to learn more about the jobs and careers in this sector from their senior alumni as well as the companies' websites. The opportunities available in the energy sector workforce for male graduates was seen as much higher than that of female graduates. The Vietnamese government has a policy to promote renewable energy in the country's energy sector transition. Potentially, there will be many more opportunities for women to get jobs in the RE sector. Earlier,

it was difficult for students to access information on RE as it was mostly in English. The situation has gradually improved in recent years. For example, some RE companies are working with some universities to allow students to learn at their solar energy sites.

- The Baseline Citizen Survey results showed that recent university graduates and working professionals look for an opportunity for career growth followed by a good working environment when determining their choice of employment. Most of them felt that women and men with similar qualifications and experience should receive the same salary for the same kind of job.
- When asked what they thought about women doing STEM jobs traditionally associated with men, only twenty-seven (27) percent of the female respondents indicated they can be as good as men. The exception to this belief is jobs that require working with heavy machinery which may pose physical challenges to women.

GENDER ISSUES IN THE EMPLOYEE LIFE CYCLE

The following provides a summary of gender issues in the employee life cycle as analyzed based on information gathered during the IDIs, FGDs, and the Baseline Citizen Survey.

Attraction and Talent Outreach:

- In general, the energy companies surveyed did not see the need to provide special incentives to attract the brightest women as they vocalized that they preferred male candidates over females. It is generally understood that the energy sector is male dominant, although it is not explicitly mentioned in job advertisements.
- Even when some companies look for talented women, the companies reported that it is not easy to find them because the percentage of female graduates in STEM fields is much lower than males. The companies also believe that many women prefer to work in more convenient workplaces rather than in power plants in remote locations and sites involving hardship conditions.
- With rising demand for transitioning to RE and increasing the application of digitalized technology for managing new energy systems, there are more opportunities for women to be employed in the energy sector. Some RE companies have collaborated with technical colleges and universities to provide scholarships for female students and offer them R&D and internship opportunities in the companies. E4SEA has launched a regional energy internship program, a first-of-a-kind internship program exclusively devoted to increasing opportunities for women in the energy sector in both STEM and non-STEM areas. E4SEA is implementing this program in collaboration with the Thammasat University, a leading academic institutions in the SEA region.
- When the Baseline Survey respondents were asked what they thought about women doing jobs traditionally associated with men (engineers, pilots, etc.) opinions were varied with twenty-seven (27) percent indicating that women can be as good as men but twenty-eight (28) percent believing there are limitations for women to advance on an equal basis with men.

Recruitment and Hiring:

- During the FGDs, junior and mid-career engineers indicated that female and male candidates with the same qualifications are employed at the same salary for the same job, based on academic performance and experience. There are no gender pay gaps observed during the recruitment.
- The Labor Law prohibits women from working underground, for example at underground mining sites. Thus, no women are recruited for such jobs. Female engineers in mining companies are usually assigned to jobs that involve administration, marketing, accounting, communications, etc. and not to jobs involving machine work and potential dangers in underground work. Restricting a woman's ability to perform all functions in an industry can also translate to a restriction in her promotion to management and leadership. Some male engineers in the FGDs believed that women could do more physically demanding tasks if they are properly trained to do so.
- Some new graduates are recruited because of their performance during internships with the prospective employers. Many talented graduates obtained their first employment through the connection of their professors and their employers.
- Some technical universities have a policy to promote gender equality by setting quota to recruit female lecturers. In some institutes, female teachers are encouraged to teach subjects that are predominantly taught by male teachers.
- As per the Baseline Citizen Survey, the most important factors for new graduates when applying for a job included: opportunities for career growth, followed by a good working environment, and then attractive compensation. Men placed opportunity for career growth as the top priority whereas women put a good working environment as their top consideration when deciding to accept a job.

Onboarding and Training:

- Formal orientation/training includes introduction to the organization's core values and code of conduct which are generally inclusive and non-discriminative. In most cases, the new employee orientation focuses on inclusive and diversified workplace arrangements, which includes gender equality.
- A few companies that participated in the IDIs have mainstreamed gender equality principles in their policies and management systems because it is required by their financial partners (banks).
- Most companies offer equal training opportunities to men and women employees, but women are less likely to pursue these opportunities due to their household and family responsibilities. Women feel more comfortable to participate in training conducted via online platforms, in-house, and in-country. Men have more formal training and learning opportunities than women and typically do not hesitate to receive training outside of their home country or at an outside institute.
- A vocational training institution which has strong gender equality policy adopts several practices to help women overcome gender-based barriers such as training on unconscious gender bias, assigning

them to tasks that are non-traditional to women, and empowering them to maximize their capacity to achieve the best results.

Performance Management, Compensation and Benefits:

- Typically, job descriptions for men and women employees for the same position are not different. But, when it comes to promotion opportunities, men have several advantages over women. Performance management is tied to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of staff regardless of where they are located in the corporate organization. Operational work at power plant sites often weighs more heavily toward dictating advancement and raises in companies than positive financial performance and customer relations. Due to this, men can have a greater advantage over women in terms of raises and promotions as they tend to serve in the positions available at generation facilities. Male energy sector employees confirmed that they network at their workplaces in order to position themselves for management and leadership roles. They reported that they see women in the workplace do less networking.
- As most women have less job-related training experience than men, promotion chances for them are also more limited.
- All companies comply with the Vietnamese law on maternity. During their pregnancy period, women are entitled to take a six-month paid maternity leave and periodical checkups with pay. If they wish, they could have another six-month leave without pay. Women with newborn babies will not be assigned to travel or reside at remote locations. Some companies have special arrangements for new moms such as offering a day care facility and breast-feeding rooms. Also, during the red-line period, women are provided with an allowance to buy sanitary pads.
- Other practices adopted by some companies to promote gender equality include 1) setting up a committee for women's advancement, 2) annual rewards for women with outstanding performance, 3) and social events to promote the importance of women's contribution to the family and society on special occasions, such as International Women's Day, National Women's Day, etc.

Talent and Leadership Development:

- In principle, women and men have equal opportunities to be promoted to leadership roles based on performance. However, there are several factors that are considered as constraints for women to advance to leadership positions. Time allocation, outside training and leadership development classes, internal networking and relationship building, tend to benefit men over women in the energy sector workforce.
- Women employees usually work beyond expectations to rise to leadership roles. Being in a male-dominated organization, women must work harder and often beyond expectations to prove themselves worthy of upward movement to executive and leadership positions. They have to balance their time as a professional working woman, a wife, and a mother. It is not easy, but it can be done if wisely planned and managed.
- Most employers do not have a policy against promoting women into leadership roles, but they do not have specific leadership development programs for women employees. Some of them, however,

do have ideas on how women can be better promoted to senior leadership positions. Among others, it is believed that companies should have explicit gender equality policy, plan, and support systems with clear gender sensitive indicators.

- Some organizations do have initiatives to facilitate women's self-development efforts, such as 1) scholarship for extra training, 2) flexible working hours arrangement so they can better manage a work-life balance, and 3) e-learning programs.
- Most IDI and FGD participants agreed that women are less suitable for physically demanding work or work that involves safety risks. But when it comes to intellect, women are not inferior to men. They could be better than men in many ways because of their soft skills. Women are said to be more people oriented as leaders. The majority (62 percent) of the survey respondents indicated that women leadership is important as it can bring new outlooks and perspectives to the organization.

Retention and Employment Engagement:

- Several measures are adopted by energy employers to retain their employees but there are no gender-sensitive retention policies and systems in place. Given women's dual responsibilities at the workplace and in the family, employers may need to consider designing retention policies that are specific to women.
- One effective retention and employee engagement strategy adopted by a renewable energy company with a staff with a majority that is female was to engage with remote communities. Through community service arrangements, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program of the firm is viewed by the employees as a value added and is a demonstration of shared values to help the underprivileged.
- A majority of the Survey respondents (71 percent) think that a woman with a full-time job should still be a primary family caretaker as women can take better care of the children than men because of their caring nature, and men can make more money than women. Many women leave their jobs after they have children. When the children grow up and they want to return to work, the positions are already taken. To avoid losing competent female staff in this circumstance, employers may need to arrange flexible working conditions which facilitate women to carry out their dual roles without having to quit their jobs.

Succession Planning and Promotion:

- Most companies prioritize qualifications rather than gender in their succession plan. In the energy sector, however, it seems that there are not always an equal number of male and female candidates for high-level positions. The notion that a woman with a fulltime job is still the primary family caretaker is repeatedly reinforced during the IDIs and FGDs. This explains why there is not a large percentage of women being promoted to high-level senior positions.
- In the public sector, every ministry has an action plan for the advancement of women but most of them are generally written as a political commitment rather than as an action plan to be implemented by the ministry or agency.

- Most respondents felt that there were very little inhibitors to their reaching mid-level management positions. In addition, many of the women felt that the mid-level management position was the level that they wanted to reach and were fine with male counterparts taking on the higher-level positions. Not many women that participated in the survey were enthusiastic to be in top management positions.

Organizational Enablers:

- **Policy and Grievance Management:** From discussions with junior and mid-level engineers, it appears that most companies do not have explicit policies on gender equality, except those required by their development or financial partners. Although there is little evidence of concrete policies to address gender discrimination, many companies prefer men in key operational and management functions and women in supporting functions. This is particularly true in companies that place generation output over financial performance and customer relations. Most companies have grievance mechanisms where gender-based discrimination can be addressed along with any other grievances. Some companies have committees to Protect Women's Rights and mechanisms to ensure safety in the workplace for women such as assigning people to work in a group or having separate offices for women and men.
- **Company Performance and Reporting:** International companies listed in stock markets follow international reporting guidelines where gender equality is a key priority area. Most local companies are less conscious to include gender equality in their business reports. Firms not gathering gender disaggregated data should reconsider and begin the process of tracking their performance on gender equality. This can be done by tracking equitable pay, salary increases, promotions and associated responsibilities, and training and professional development - all by gender. It is also recommended that firms do this by age and education/certification levels as well.
- **Corporate Communication and Branding:** In most cases, corporate core values are reflected in the branding. The branding of most companies engaged in the IDIs have no specific reference to gender equality. RE companies communicate corporate values through special programs to engage the staff in collective actions towards a shared value through community service or other form of community engagement.
- **Corporate Culture and Leadership:** Promoting gender equality in the energy sector needs strong political will and leadership. Companies with women in the highest positions are especially proactive towards desired changes. Gender equality is incorporated into the corporate values and operational systems and communicated through various internal channels, leading to collective actions towards the desired changes. Many companies expressed their interest to promote gender equality in their workplace but needed more information in terms of best practices and what works best.

GENDER CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN VIETNAM

Table A9-5 summarizes gender challenges and opportunities in Vietnam grouped under each of the GESI domains as per the ADS-205. The opportunities provide a basis for recommendations for future activities that are summarized at the end of the Executive Summary.

Different analysts and researchers use different conventions with respect to GESI domains. While ADS-205 lists five (5) GESI domains and does not include GBV as a domain, more recently, it is a generally accepted best practice to include GBV as the sixth domain in a GESI analysis. However, in conformance with the ADS-205 framework and because of the high significance of GBV in the region and in Vietnam, the GBV challenge and opportunities are discussed separately outside of the five (5) GESI domains.

TABLE A9-5: COUNTRY-SPECIFIC GENDER CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN VIETNAM

DOMAIN	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Access to Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of players in the energy sector e.g., state management agencies, companies, leaders, etc. on gender equality and mainstreaming (especially gender analysis skills) is limited. • There is a lack of disaggregated data (sex and age) and gender analysis information/report, and status of women in the energy sector. • There continue to be challenges for women in the conventional and renewable energy sectors. • There is limited knowledge about RE and solar/wind energy. Most RE knowledge information is in the English language and is often not available in the local language. • Despite increasing employment opportunities in the RE sector, there are no specific policies and measures to promote women in RE jobs. • Most people think the energy sector workplace is for men, so women are not encouraged to apply for jobs in the energy sector. • Compared to men, it may take women more time to learn the mechanics of operating heavy machinery in power plants. • Many women have internalized the idea that women are not as capable as men of doing work in the energy sector. • There is limited knowledge shared or attention paid to renewable energy or energy efficiency in school curriculums at all levels. There are programs on renewable energy initiatives promoted by students, but they are very limited. • Large international energy companies indicate that technical competence of students in the energy sector needs to be improved both in hard skills and soft skills. Capacity building support could be provided by universities or professional associations. • While there are some communication programs on the importance of RE, public awareness on the benefits of RE is still very limited. No gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vietnam has high demand for RE jobs and there are many more opportunities in the market for female candidates. This offers an opportunity to enhance approaches to the recruitment and promotion of qualified women in the country's transitioning energy sector. • Vocational training/education orientation was conducted on an annual basis, which are required as compulsory for high school students. All high schools have developed an implementation plan to implement this. Under this program, students must be advised on study and job opportunities in the energy sector under vocational training/education orientation by high schools and universities. This process is still evolving and needs to be strengthened. • Currently, 20 female leaders in the Energy Efficiency Network of Vietnam are helping female university students prepare themselves for jobs in the energy sector through mentorship programs. Last year, it implemented a program called 'future engineers' and invited senior female leaders in STEM to meet with young female STEM students and jointly figured out barriers in daily work for women in STEM fields. Additional role models need to be identified and included in the women's networks. Matching and pairing of female role models with prospective female applicants and employees in the energy sector is needed. • The young generation cares a lot about society and social networking. Having platforms for them to discuss social issues, including gender equality, is an effective strategy to mobilize young people's interest and participation in promoting GESI.

TABLE A9-5: COUNTRY-SPECIFIC GENDER CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN VIETNAM

DOMAIN	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
	aspects are discussed in the communications topics and messages related to energy sector transformation to RE.	
Power and Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender stereotype mindsets at individual, family, and community level require women to be caregivers, and men to be breadwinners. As caregivers, women traditionally do not have experience in making the major decisions in families such as financial decisions compared to their husbands as breadwinners. These stereotypes and perceptions still affect female professionals in the energy sector as women need to take on dual roles (at home as caregivers and at workplace as employees). The workplace hierarchy structure favors men to take on leadership positions in most areas. Men are considered to have more experience at work, especially in the energy sector. Also, women often step back and forego leadership opportunities as they feel that they would most likely not be selected for such positions. Female engineers mentioned that many of them are struggling with reproductive / domestic roles that prevent them from working hard to achieve leadership roles. Furthermore, misconceptions about the professional suitability between physical power and decision-making ability act as hurdles for women to advance in their careers. Many women expressed a preference to support their husbands to be promoted in leadership positions rather than trying to be in those positions themselves. This complies with traditional gender norms that 'men are the pillar of the house.' As consumers of energy, women's needs are not considered in decision making related to energy production and distribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy efficiency is a big initiative in Vietnam. As energy consumers, women have an important role in planning and making decisions about energy efficiency in their family and community. They can also engage in decisions about energy infrastructure maintenance. Relevant educational or training programs will be needed for women to enhance their participation in this market segment of the energy sector. Also, unconscious bias training is needed for both women and men on stereotype roles. There is a good opportunity for women to be employed in IT-based smart grid projects as they do not require physical strength but knowledge about digital ICT. Both qualified women and energy employers need to be made aware of this enormous opportunity for women to contribute to the transitioning energy sector. Every ministry in the country has its GE Action Plan for Advancement of Women and Gender Equality and has assigned a gender focal point to monitor and report the results. This existing mechanism could be further strengthened by Activities such as the E4SEA. The government has set a quota of twenty-five (25) percent of the seats in the Communist Party Committee for women. More proactive implementing actions are needed to achieve or exceed this quota. Vietnam has a Women Union with more than 19 million members across the country. Its key mandate is to care and protect the rights and benefits of women as constituted. It sits in every drafting committee of national policies to ensure that gender equality principles are mainstreamed. The Women Union is a strong peoples' organization, at all levels starting at the grassroots up to the national level. Its committee members are elected. With a lot of women in the organization, it can make strong voices about women's needs and rights. Many companies use digitized technologies in power production and distribution. Thus, women have greater opportunities to participate as long as they receive proper education and training in ICT and smart grid technology.

TABLE A9-5: COUNTRY-SPECIFIC GENDER CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN VIETNAM

DOMAIN	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Roles and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional women in Vietnam still have to carry dual roles, at work and at home. Women spend more time doing domestic work than men and have less time for self-development or professional training. This can limit their ability to be promoted to management and leadership positions within the companies. To be able to climb up to senior level in the energy sector, one needs to have (1) hands-on experience and technical expertise, (2) a lot of contacts outside the company, and (3) support from family members, especially husbands. Most women do not have such support, another reason for a lack of advancement of women to higher-level positions at their workplaces. Vietnam has a list of tasks not assigned to women by laws to ensure the safety of women at workplaces. While this is a good thing, it affects the perception of employers that women should be assigned to light and easy tasks. That is how most employers perceive women instead of providing them with suitable equipment, facilities, and working conditions so that they can take on some of the harder jobs traditionally reserved on to men. At the workplace, women do not have opportunities to work in technical areas and at field sites outside because of their belief (both men and women) related to hardship, not related to their ability or willingness. As a result, they receive less salary, do not have good experiences, and lose their networking opportunities for job promotion. Even the leaders believe that they are treating their staff equally because they keep their female staff safe at the office. The percentage of female leadership positions in the energy sector is very low. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of available analysis on gender roles in the energy sector suggests a need for a study on female professionals' competing reproductive and productive roles in different stages of their career. This research would shed light on the nuances of gender roles at households and workplaces which will help inform retention and promotion strategies for companies. Donors may consider funding sound programs to promote the adaptation of state-of-the-art retention strategies with proven track records. Women are often seen as a primary consumers of energy but not as producers or planners. There is a gap to explore gender aspects of the energy value chain to better understand women's role in energy production and consumption to identify how closing gender gaps in the value chain can have a positive impact on the business. Providing options for flexible working hours for female professionals, especially those with children to accommodate their domestic responsibilities without sacrificing promotion allows women to progress in their career path. Companies should consider providing subsidies to families to pay for childcare or provide onsite daycare systems, etc. Working with line managers to encourage women to take up assignments that challenge gender roles helps energy companies to realize advantages women bring to the job. There is direct evidence of enhanced productivity if women are deployed across the energy value chain. Female engineers often miss opportunities to learn field-based functions due to gender biases. The energy employers should consider providing a combination of off-site and on-site assignments for female engineers or scientists to ensure that both women and men employees can develop expertise and skills necessary for leadership positions.
Knowledge and Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of female graduates in STEM education getting jobs in their respective fields of study are lower than men's. Social norms/gender stereotypes make it more difficult for women to enter STEM studies and STEM-related work. In consultancy work, qualified women could earn a lot more than in regular companies, but it requires a lot of travelling. Many women tend to prefer working in city centers which is more convenient and allows them more time with their family and children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering gaps in gender norms in the energy sector, collaboration with gender experts to investigate gender norms can help identify an entry point for attitude reform/change and gender awareness campaigns. Given the lack of gender mainstreaming in HR policies in the energy sector, there is a need to provide capacity building and knowledge sharing sessions for staff and leaders of the energy sectors on the

TABLE A9-5: COUNTRY-SPECIFIC GENDER CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN VIETNAM

DOMAIN	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender neutral practices are the most popular approach in planning and implementation of programs and activities in the RE sector. Not many women are working in this sector. They are not aware of gender equality, and do not recognize the different struggles that men and women are going through as a result of gender discrimination. It is generally perceived that women lack the knowledge and understanding of the energy sector. This perception hurts women in both entering the sector and promotion in their jobs once they are already working in the sector. Men always believe that they are taking heavy jobs and women are taking light jobs. They do not encourage women to take jobs involving heavy work. This persistent bias is a major inhibitor to women's entry and advancement in the energy sector. A key perception of gender norms is that women can do anything and work better in the family. A contrast to this perception is that men and women are equal in every sector. Another perception is that women should balance their time for family and professional work and even forego opportunities for leadership roles in favor of family care. Yet, another perception is that men are better at leadership than women. All of these perceptions need to be addressed as they individually or in concert adversely affect women in growing and advancing in their jobs. In the family setting, women are burdened with domestic work, often not receiving equal help from other family members. They often end up spending time on taking care of children and doing domestic work, leading them to lose social and career networking opportunities. Networking opportunities are significant in Vietnam, but women are not able to take advantage of such opportunities. Parents and relatives – have a big influence on their children's selection of jobs and education based on gender norms/stereotypes. However, there is a lack of relevant knowledge and information available for the parents and children to make better-informed decisions regarding the jobs of the future. 	<p>benefits of gender mainstreaming in the energy sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an opportunity to work with male professionals since they make up a majority of the workforce in the energy sector. Programs such E4SEA could provide capacity building on male engagement in gender equality for HR practitioners and line managers to encourage positive masculinity and alter gender norms. During data collection, E4SEA identified several female leaders in the energy sector. Engaging with these groups of individuals can inform communication strategies on gender equality and the potential roles of women in the energy sectors. The success stories of women working in the energy sector should be used as a way to motivate women to participate in the energy sector and to challenge biases toward women in the industry. There are gaps in curriculum in environmental science and engineering that do not incorporate inclusive clean energy into curriculum. Working closely with faculties to update them on just transition can help delivery of the knowledge needed to prepare the next generation of energy sector employees. The faculties will potentially benefit from learning about the industry demand and the changing workforce requirements which will be useful in developing targeted programs. More efforts need to be invested to understand parents' decision making relevant to their children's education and careers. Conducting studies on women role models in the energy sector and using the knowledge to influence parents of female students aged under 20 to pursue study in STEM fields would significantly enhance opportunities for women in the energy sector.

HUMAN DIGNITY AND GBV CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGES

- In Vietnam, the numbers of women migrants from rural to urban areas and women victims of human trafficking and GBV are constantly rising.
- Considerable challenges are faced in addressing GBV in the workplace because of lack of understanding of what GBV is and policies and practices to identify and report incidents.
- Women are not aware of their own rights. Often when they are victims of harassment, they do not speak out nor do they seek assistance from the authorities.
- People have low awareness about sexual harassment. Vietnam has extensive law/legal frameworks on gender harassment, but enforcement is not strong and is lacking.
- Many women do not know how to protect themselves because of stereotypical attitudes that trend toward 'fitting in' rather than 'standing up.'
- Structural violence in the working environment prevents women (e.g., difficulty in engaging in male-dominated networking opportunities, and no measures or facilities to support female professionals in offshore sites) from taking on hard energy sector jobs and thus, often, denies them advancement opportunities.
- There is not a high standard for reporting sexual harassment incidents in companies which leads to the erroneous conclusion that there is no sexual harassment at the workplaces. Also, there are no mechanisms for reporting and redressing such incidences.

OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING GBV

The following are some of the recommendations offered to address the human dignity and GBV challenge in Vietnam:

- Given the low number of female students enrolled in STEMs and vocational institutions, there are opportunities to work with STEM related faculties to mainstream gender into their recruitment practices as well as enable a more gender-aware environment in educational institutions. Integration of extracurricular subjects and soft skills like prevention of sexual harassment and discrimination at the high school and university levels can increase the number of female students interested in the energy sector.
- Findings suggest there is high demand for female engineers from energy companies, particularly in renewable energy. This is a good entry point to work with energy employers on gender-sensitive change management. It is important to build the capacity of HR practitioners in the energy sector on different types of sexual harassment specific to the sector (e.g., nightshift, and remote and isolated field sites) to establish reporting mechanisms that are confidential and safe for victims of sexual harassment.

- There is an opportunity to educate women and men at energy companies and energy entities about the hidden injuries of sexual bias and harassment. When stopped, the opportunities for women to excel in the energy workforce rises exponentially.
- Establishing female networks within companies and energy entities has proved to be an effective way to decrease incidents of harassment and simultaneously empower women to vocalize grievances.
- Technology advancement in all productive sectors of economies is changing the world view on traditionally male-dominated industries such as the energy sector. The possibilities for women to work in the full chain of the energy sector based on these advancements is increasing and the modern workforce will reflect this change.

CONCLUSIONS

The workforce in the energy sector plays a pivotal role in economic development since energy is a basis for most business activities everywhere and in Vietnam. Given the complex and sector-specific knowledge one needs to attain, the demand for skilled labor is always on the rise. Addressing gender biases which prevent women and non-binary professionals from prospering is a way for the sector to achieve its full potential.

Vietnam put much effort into improving gender-related laws and establishing a legal framework to protect women and minorities. The policies and practices to ensure that government entities and companies are adhering to them has been lacking. Integrating gender into the energy planning and HR policies is key to securing a quality workforce and improving the status of women in the industry. It is also the most effective way to enhance the productivity of the energy sector benefiting all consumers.

Even though Vietnam is an important base for manufacturing as well as clean energy production, female entrepreneurs struggle to secure loans and funding for their businesses due to negative gender norms. Strikingly low female enrollment in STEM and vocational schools also poses a threat to an inclusive energy transition. Welcoming and promoting women in technical and leadership roles in clean energy is essential to diversity, equality, and inclusion for an innovative transitioning energy sector in Vietnam, regionally, as well as globally.

The findings suggest that the general public see Vietnamese women as capable of attaining similar leadership positions as men. However, organizational and sector specific gender norms that favor men still influence beliefs. Biases in the recruitment and selection of first jobbers and the criteria for promotion favor men over women and should be addressed. Increasing the number of female leaders in the industry will help alter the direction of the industry to become gender aware.

The traditional perception of “men as breadwinners” and “women as caregivers” is heavily ingrained in the mindset of the energy sector. These perceptions are an obstacle preventing women who aspire to progress in their career in the sector since it allows for women to be viewed as “supporters” rather than “leaders.”

Research findings under this effort reveal that students are reluctant to enter STEM and energy sector related subjects due to the perception of an unsafe working environment. It also prevents them from fully performing the perceived difficult tasks which are critical for building an expertise to become a leader in the field.

Seeing gender-based violence as merely a physical or visible incident is not an effective way to improve women's status. On the contrary, gender-based violence is rooted in a structure such as unfair HR practices or a dangerous working environment. The term ‘safety’ as an occupational hazard revolving around machine operations and equipment may not be adequate to address gender in the energy sector. The work environment itself should be conducive for all genders to perform the job functions and perform them well.

Overall, claiming to give women equal opportunities in the energy sector is easy on paper. However, taking a different aspect to ensure how to support women to step up in the same playing field as men should be an approach to gender equality. This effort should include strengthening the motivation of

women and building their capacity to participate in the energy sector. Public awareness raising on gender equality and its benefits in the energy sector should be undertaken to build a common understanding of gender mainstreaming in the energy sector and eliminate gender stereotypes against women in this area.

Capacity building on gender concepts, gender analysis and gender mainstreaming skills for leaders and technical staff should be considered as an effective approach to fill the gap in knowledge and skills of gender mainstreaming, and to raise their attention to promote gender equality in the energy sector.

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