



AUSTRALIA IN VIETNAM

GENDER

EQUALITY

STRATEGY 2016 - 2020



Australian Embassy
Vietnam



Australian Consulate-General
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam



Ms Trieu Mui Pham, 90 years old from Dao Ethnic Minority, was the first person who brought the cinnamon tree from the forest and planted it in her garden. Ms Pham received support from the Women's Economic Empowerment through Agriculture Value Chain Enhancement (WEAVE) program to better process and market her cinnamon to be able to sell it at a higher price.

Credit: SNV Vietnam

Cover photo:

Ms Minh Ngan Tran, an Australian Alumnus, currently working as a producer and anchor at VTC 10 NETVIET Channel.

Credit: Peter Drought, Senior Camera & Field Operator, News and Current Affairs, Australian Broadcasting Corporation

01

Purpose

Promoting gender equality is smart economics and the right thing to do.¹

In February 2016, the Australian Foreign Minister launched the *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy*. It outlines Australia's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in foreign policy, economic diplomacy, development programs and corporate services. This *Australia in Vietnam Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2020* (the Strategy) presents Australia's priority commitments in Vietnam and our whole-of-government approach to improving the quality of life for women and girls in Vietnam.

The Strategy works across the two missions in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City, and covers all Australian Government agencies in Vietnam. Shared commitments to promote gender equality are outlined in the Australia Vietnam Plan of Action 2016-19.

1. *Australia's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy* (February 2016)



Ms Trieu Thi Mui is instructing Mr Ly A Sieu on how to grow organic cinnamon in his nursery garden. This is an activity under WEAVE, funded by Australia.

Credit: SNV Vietnam

02

Overview of gender equality progress in Vietnam

Compared to other countries in Asia, Vietnam has made good strides in addressing gender equality. Vietnam achieved all of the gender-related Millennium Development Goals.

For instance, Vietnam has effectively closed the gender gap in primary and secondary school enrolment. The proportion of women and men participating in the workforce is high, and the gender gap has narrowed over time (currently 79% compared with 86%, respectively). The percentage of women directly elected to the National Assembly is the third highest in the Asia-Pacific region at 26.7%, on par with Australia.

However, considerable gender inequalities persist. Gender discrimination in Vietnam takes subtle forms, such as women's care roles, as well as vivid forms, such as the widening sex ratio at birth that favours males. The gender gap on a range of indicators is wider still for poor and ethnic minority women.

This Strategy is designed to support the Government of Vietnam to implement its *National Gender Equality Strategy 2011-2020*. It strives to progressively close gender gaps in the three priorities areas that align with Australia's *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy*,² namely:

- Enhancing women's voice in decision-making, leadership, and peace-building;
- Promoting women's economic empowerment; and
- Ending violence against women and girls.

This Strategy aligns with the Government of Vietnam's priorities as outlined in Box 1.

The Global Gender Gap Index ranked Vietnam at 65 out of 144 countries, well above most other Asian countries at similar levels of economic development.

2. *Australia's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy* is available at <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/investment-priorities/gender-equality-empowering-women-girls/gender-equality/pages/australia-assistance-for-gender-equality.aspx>



Mr Layton Pike, Deputy Head of Mission at the Australian Embassy in Hanoi visited a women empowerment project funded by the Australian Government for H'Mong women in Lao Cai province

Credit: Oxfam Vietnam



Box 1: Relevant goal statements and targets from Vietnam's National Gender Equality Strategy 2011-2020:

1. Enhancing women in leadership and decision making: to raise the quality of human resource development for women and increase the participation of women in key leadership positions to step by step close the gender gap in politics:

- To increase the proportion of Master Degrees held by women to 50%, and PhDs to 25% by 2020.
- To increase the rate of female Deputies and provincial Deputies to 35% and above for 2016-2020 term.
- By 2020, 95% of state agencies (ministries, government agencies and People's Committees at all levels) have women in key leadership positions.
- 100% of organisations (party, government, socio-political organisations) who have more than 30% of female staff will have women in key leadership positions.

2. Promoting women's economic empowerment: to reduce gender gaps in the economy, labour and employment, improve access to economic resources and the labour market for poor women in rural areas and ethnic minority women:

- To increase the rate of women-owned enterprises to 35% by 2020.
- To increase the rate of rural and ethnic minority women having access to credit to 100% by 2020.

3. Reduction and prevention of gender based violence: to ensure gender equality in the family, and to step by step eliminate gender based violence:

- Reduce the time spent on housework by women in comparison to men to 2 times by 2015 and 1.5 times by 2020.
- By 2020, 50% of victims of domestic violence have access to legal and health counselling, support and care at Peace Houses. 85% of domestic violence perpetrators detected and provided counselling services.



03

The gender equality 'change state' that Australia is committed to supporting

During the life of this Strategy, Australia will strive to achieve the following outcomes collectively through its aid, foreign policy and economic diplomacy efforts. The top four priorities have a star next to them:

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



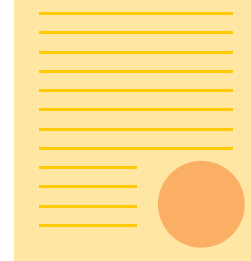
Increased representation of **women** in political leadership and **decision making** positions at all levels



VOTE!



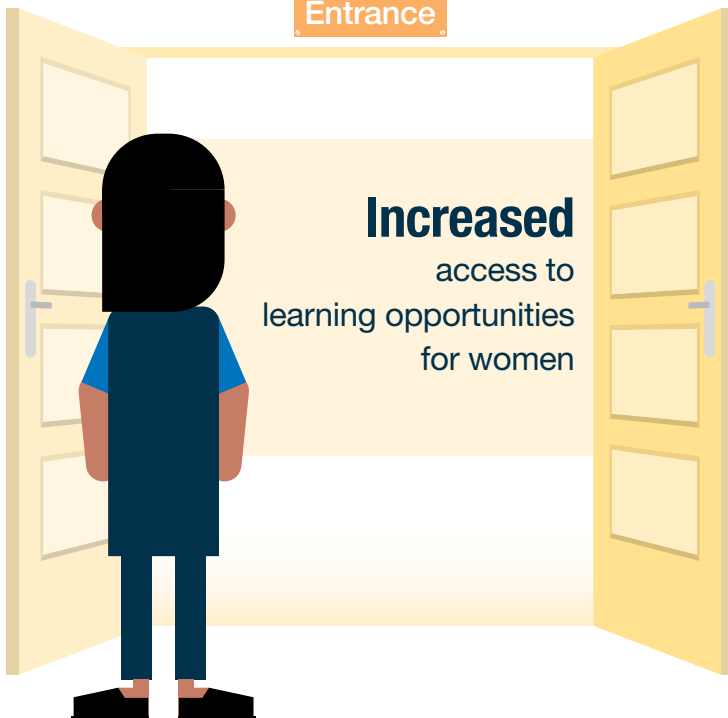
Master



Increase in percentage of

Master Degrees held by women

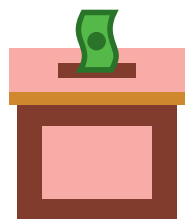
Entrance



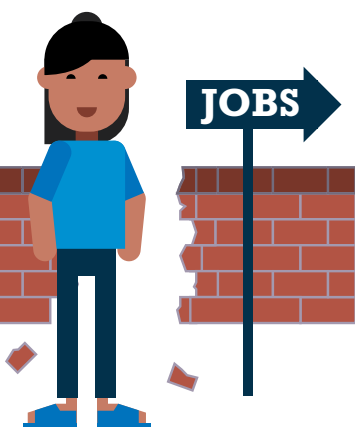
Increased access to learning opportunities for women

ENDING VIOLENCE

Support Government of Vietnam allocating budgets to **National Gender Equality** and Gender Based Violence plans



WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

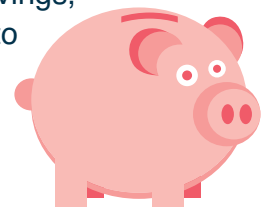


Removal of **gender barriers** to participation in the **economy** (such as differential retirement age and the list of proscribed occupations for women on the basis of their sex) and **reforms** to **support** it (such as subsidised quality child care).



More women are **economically secure**

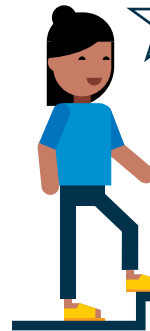
and have savings, and access to productive assets.



Introduction and expansion of preferential policies and financial incentives for women-led **Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)** and other women-led groups (such as rural credit and agricultural cooperatives).

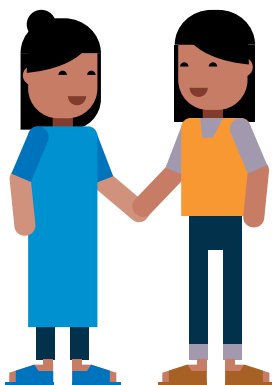


Increased share of **women-headed business** and



a **reduction** in gender based labour productivity gaps.

AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



EQUAL

RIGHTS

for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people.



Foundations established for growth of **tourism** and **agriculture** markets in North West, including vocational training and access to finance and technology for women to excel.

04

The Strategy's priorities

Based on Australia's global priorities for gender equality and women's empowerment, this Strategy also adopts a 'twin track' approach – i.e. taking measures specifically designed to tackle gender inequalities, as well as incorporating gender issues into all of Australia's work. Core to this Strategy is that all Australian Government agencies in Vietnam focus on gender equality and women's empowerment – whether in foreign policy, our economic partnerships, development, agriculture, defence, policing or corporate services.



Ms Trieu Thi Mui, 26 years old from Dao Ethnic Minority. Ms Mui provides technical instructions on planting organic cinnamon to farmers in Bac Ha district, Lao Cai province to help them improve their income. This is an activity under the WEAVE program, funded by Australia.

Credit: SNV Vietnam



1. Enhancing women's voice in decision-making and leadership

Australia's response

Australia will establish a long term partnership with Vietnam to promote women in public and private sector leadership. We will continue to provide significant support for women to increase their qualifications and leadership potential through the Vietnam-Australia Human Resource Development Partnership. In addition, Australia plans to work with the Centre for Gender and Women's Leadership (GELEAD)³ within the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration, to foster leadership capacity among women in the public sector. Other sections of

the Embassy (Australian Federal Police, Defence, Agriculture and Education) contribute to this area by engaging with and profiling role model women leaders in non-traditional sectors, and by supporting women in training and further education opportunities.

Specifically, Australia will:

- Promote higher representation of women in key political leadership and decision-making positions at all levels by:
 - advocating for the removal of gender barriers, such as the unequal retirement age, in the revision of the Labour Code, in 2017;
 - maintaining a deliberate focus on Women in Leadership across all activities delivered under the Vietnam-Australia Human Resource Development Partnership 2016-2020;
 - supporting tailored trainings for female National Assembly Deputies;
 - monitoring Australia Awards alumna access to promotion and to support by their supervisors on return to Vietnam;
 - continuing to celebrate achievements and impact of both male and female Australia Awards alumni upon return to Vietnam, in public, private and community sectors;
 - creating opportunities for women leaders and potential women leaders to visit Australia; and
 - profiling female Endeavour Award alumni and Australian and Vietnamese women in science.
- Ensure equal access for both men and women to scholarships and all learning opportunities by:
 - continuing to encourage the Vietnamese Government to nominate women in at least equal numbers as men for training and capacity building opportunities;

3. Formerly known as the Centre for Women in Politics and Public Administration (WiPPA)

- promoting non-stereotyped access to Technical Vocational Education and Training;
 - encouraging more female scholars to apply for John Allwright Fellowship and John Dillon Fellowship;
 - promoting women's equal participation in programmes and initiatives (Building Relationship through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement (BRIDGE), multilateral and bilateral projects in education and science-related projects and Technical and Vocational Education and Training);
 - working with RMIT University to promote women's empowerment initiatives with students and alumni; and
 - ensuring better representation of female officials on delegations to Australia and in dialogues with the Government of Vietnam.
- **Support women's capacity to be leaders in non-traditional sectors by:**
 - carrying out and monitoring the Women in Police Leadership program under the Asia Region Law Enforcement Management Program; and
 - supporting Vietnam's participation in Australia's Women, Peace and Security training at the Australian Civil-Military Academy.
 - **Provide in kind and financial support to the LGBTI community to advance their advocacy for equal rights and social acceptance.**
 - **Implement the Australian Public Service's Gender Equality Strategy by:**
 - carrying out an annual review of the Gender Equality Strategy for Australia-Based and Locally Engaged Staff; and
 - providing leadership skills development workshops and coaching.

Women's participation in decision-making, leadership and peace-building is important as a right in itself. Women bring particular perspectives, priorities and strengths resulting from their life experiences, which are often different from men's. This means they are likely to make different decisions, with women leaders responding more strongly to women's policy priorities. Private sector businesses that have female leaders tend to deliver stronger financial performance.

Australia's Global Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy



Office Cadet Pham Thi Thai Thu proudly displays her graduation certificate surrounded by Major Bui Thach Can and her fellow Vietnamese office cadets at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra. Officer Cadet Thu is the first female Vietnamese People's Army officer to graduate from Australia's prestigious Defence Force Academy.

Credit: Department of Defence (2014)



2. Promoting women's economic empowerment

Australia's response

Australia will integrate gender equality in our development work, economic diplomacy and trade efforts to make growth work for women. In the next five years, Australia will focus on the policy and institutional changes needed to dissolve stereotyped work options for urban and rural women, and to promote vital roles for women in reform and development.

In 2015, Australia and Vietnam agreed that 'promoting women's economic empowerment, including among ethnic minorities' will be one of the three pillars of the Aid Investment Plan for 2016-2020. We will support economic reforms to remove barriers and to promote increased women's participation in new businesses and growth. We will focus our support in the North-West of Vietnam which has a higher incidence of extreme poverty. We will complement the efforts of the Government of Vietnam by identifying, trialling and scaling up new approaches to close gender gaps in economic livelihoods in these areas, including by working with the private sector. Australia will work in Vietnam to improve policies for women at work in the formal sector, expand the number and size of women-led small to medium enterprises, and promote women's leadership and decision-making in workplaces and businesses. We will support national advocacy platforms on women's economic empowerment to overcome institutional as well as societal barriers to gender equality, enabling Vietnamese women from diverse social groups to increase their participation and leadership in economic and public life. In addition, Australia will select senior women for attendance at international and regional fora on economic development and integration.

The ultimate ambition - for all of this investment in economic empowerment - is that the women reached will be able to report pursuing their career aspirations, feeling safer at home, having more choices, and more respect in the community.

Specifically, Australia will:

- Remove barriers and increase opportunities for quality employment for women in the labour market by:
 - carrying out job market assessments to provide in-depth analysis of women's opportunities and constraints in the evolving labour force;
 - supporting the development of policies to remove barriers and facilitate the movement of women from lower productivity informal employment to higher productivity formal employment;
 - providing technical assistance to remove gender barriers such as the unequal retirement age, and the list of jobs prohibited for women on the basis of their sex, as requested by the Government of Vietnam;
 - supporting business coalitions to implement and monitor gender equitable practices in their work places;
 - carrying out a time use survey to develop key data for advocacy for the care economy;
 - advocating for strengthened provisions for the supply of child care and related services in Vietnam's revision of its Labour Code; and

When women are able to actively participate in the economy and the formal labour markets, then everyone prospers. So we are going to support women starting businesses, building their skills, stepping up to leadership roles

**The Hon. Minister Julie Bishop
2014 Australasian Aid and
International Development
Policy Workshop**

- commissioning a review on the impacts of economic reforms and trade agreements on women, for gender-responsive policy making and programs.
- **Increase the share of women-owned businesses in the economy by:**
 - supporting advocacy and implementation of better policies and financial incentives for women-led SMEs including impact investing, innovative credit measures, trade promotion and linkages to global value chains;
 - supporting advocacy to simplify administrative procedures relating to business that have particularly adverse impacts on women and other groups less connected to power structures;
 - carrying out an Investment Climate Assessment with a special focus on women-owned businesses;
 - promoting easier business registration to facilitate the formalisation of women-led SMEs and women workers;
- advocating for women's economic roles and contribution to be explicitly noted in Socio-Economic Development Plans and targets;
- supporting Vietnam in the Women-Led SME Working Group and the Women and Economy Forum in its APEC host year in 2017;
- continuing to enhance engagement with the Ho Chi Minh City Association for Women Executives & Entrepreneurs (HAWEE) as the premier group of female businesswomen in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC);
- enhancing the emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment in Direct Assistance Projects (DAP), and advocate to provincial authorities and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) on projects for women and girls' education - including entrepreneurship, business and vocational training;



Tran Minh Anh, an Australian Alumni, a key optometry lecturer at Hanoi Medical University

Credit: Australian Embassy in Vietnam

- extending the relationship with the Young Entrepreneurs Association, female alumni in business, female leaders in HCMC, RMIT University students and alumni to promote women's voice, leadership and decision making; and
- encouraging meaningful participation by women in trade delegations between Australia and Vietnam.
- Increase women's access to, control over and use of productive resources and markets by:
 - advocating for and supporting implementation of policies to increase women's access to productive assets, including for ethnic minority women;
 - advocating for and implementing agribusiness and tourism policies that are advancing of women's economic empowerment;
 - advocating for and implementing better policies and financial incentives for women-led groups such as credit groups or "common interests" groups;
 - improving awareness on climate change issues and supporting climate smart agricultural and aquacultural practices for both women and men;
 - advocating for more gender responsive transport infrastructure projects which respond to women's needs and increase their access to transport systems;
 - advocating for better application of safeguards measures to minimise adverse impacts of transport infrastructure development projects to women;
 - improving access to clean water for women;
 - mainstreaming gender into the research process for all Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) investments; and



Consul-General Karen Lanyon after signing an MoU with the HCMC Association for Women Executives and Entrepreneurs.

Credit: Consulate-General HCMC

- increasing the number of agriculture research-for-development projects that foreground gender research questions and issues.
- Support advocacy and action to address discriminatory gender norms and to monitor and feedback to government on programs and policies.
- Support the operationalisation of the National Action Plan for Gender Statistics 2016-2020 for policy making and monitoring.
- Pilot flexible working hours and family-friendly arrangements for Australian and Locally Engaged Staff to accommodate work and home priorities and promotion opportunities for women.



3. Ending violence against women and girls

Australia's response

Australia will continue to monitor the situation and support the Government of Vietnam to allocate budget to the *National Action Plan on Domestic Violence 2016-2020*, led by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the *Gender-Based Violence National Program 2016-2020* and *Vision to 2030* led by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). We will use foreign policy dialogue opportunities (such as the Human Rights Dialogue) to maintain this commitment.

Australia continues to consider integration of Ending Violence against Women and Girls (EVAW) as a cross cutting issue in its work. At a minimum, Australia will ensure that the 'do no harm' principle and violence-related risk is integrated into the dedicated women's empowerment projects. We maintain funding of EVAW in Vietnam through complementary sources – including the Canberra-funded UN Trust Fund, the partnership with the UN Women and UNFPA regional offices, and through the Australia NGO Cooperation Program (ACNP).

Everyone has a responsibility to prevent and end violence against women and girls, starting by challenging the culture of discrimination that allows it to continue. We must shatter negative gender stereotypes and attitudes, introduce and implement laws to prevent and end discrimination and exploitation, and stand up to abusive behaviour whenever we see it. We must condemn all acts of violence, establish equality in our work and home lives, and change the everyday experience of women and girls.

**Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General
International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2014**



LGBTI Roundtable discussion hosted on the occasion of Human Rights Dialogue between Australia and Vietnam, August 2016.

Credit: Australian Embassy in Vietnam

05

How will we deliver

A Steering Committee composed of key partners, including from the Government of Vietnam, will guide the implementation of the commitments in the Strategy. The Steering Committee will meet annually and will be convened by the Australian Ambassador. The Australian Ambassador will actively participate in the regular Ambassadors Group on Gender Equality meeting, chaired by UN Women, to share progress on our strategy and seek support for joint advocacy opportunities.

An internal Gender Equality Action Plan has been developed to manage and monitor the achievement of this Strategy's policy objectives. Each action has a lead agency responsible for delivering it. A review of the Action Plan will take place annually, aligning with the annual reporting requirement on gender equality progress to Canberra. The review meeting will be chaired by the Deputy Head of Mission.

Implementation and monitoring of the Strategy will be coordinated by the national Gender Specialist. The Gender Specialist provides technical advice to development programs, foreign policy and economic diplomacy. Australia has also appointed a dedicated Gender Focal Point who coordinates the annual, themed Gender Month (20 October – 25 November) and whom assists with specific events such as International Women's Day. The Gender Focal Point participates in the annual DFAT Asia Regional Gender Week and other key skills-building and networking events. The Gender Focal Point also monitors the sex-disaggregated data for the Special Visits Program and reports on it to the Deputy Head of Mission every six months.



Australian Ambassador to Vietnam HE Craig Chittick hosted a reception with Australian Alumni working on gender issues to celebrate the Embassy's Gender Month.

Credit: Australian Embassy in Vietnam