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Lori D. Bell
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AN INQUIRY INTO THE EVOLUTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN VIETNAM

A dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

BY

Dr. A.J. Kondonassis

Dr. A. B. Holmes

Dr. O. O. Okediji

Dr. D. Sutter

Dr. R. H. Taylor

For my
Mother, Husband and Son

John Maynard Keynes

Economic tools of analysis do not "provide a machine, or method of blind manipulation, which will furnish an infallible answer". The great fault of symbolic or mathematical methods of "formalizing a system of economic analysis" is that they "expressly assume strict independence between the factors involved". In "ordinary discourse" we can take account of the necessary reservations, qualifications, and adjustments. Too often mathematical economics rest on "initial assumptions" which do not take adequate cognizance of the "complexities and interdependencies of the real world" (p. 187).

A Guide to Keynes (1953)
Alvin H. Hansen
New York: McGraw-Hill

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Abstract

This dissertation is a systematic and holistic examination of the progress or lack thereof of gender equality since the opening of Vietnam's markets under *Doi Moi* (renovation) in Vietnam. It seeks to test the hypothesis advanced by Heyzer that high growth is closely related to poverty reduction but has no direct relationship with gender equity and human development. The framework used is Nussbaum's articulation of A. Sen's capability approach to human development.

Chapter One

Introduction

In recent years, development economists and institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank, have noted that while economic growth brought benefits and opportunities to many, it also failed to help large numbers of people. While the proportion of individuals living in poverty worldwide has decreased, the absolute number of poverty-stricken people has increased. Whether or not economic growth benefits a particular group or individual depends on how a society's distributional structures are constructed (Heyzer, 1997). Women in developing countries experience some of the most deep-seated poverty. They are over represented in the most marginally productive occupations and are the smallest operators and producers. Almost universally they carry the dual burden of home labor and cash production. Therefore, anti-poverty programs should address the social, legal and economic problems women face (Buvinic & Lycette,1989).

In a study of the connections between human development and economic growth Ranis, Stewart and Ramirez (2000) utilize cross-country regression analysis to show a significant relationship in both directions, but note that countries that originally favor economic growth will lapse into the 'vicious category'; that is, weak human development may result in low growth which in turn leads to slower economic growth. Conversely, those countries that initially favor human development will embark upon a 'virtuous cycle' with high human development fueling higher economic growth. Therefore, where

possible, human development particularly in the form of public expenditures on health and education, notably those that affect females should be given preference.

Forsythe, Korzeniewicz and Durrant (2000) also find that the relationship between economic growth and gains in equality between men and women is tenuous. While cross-sectional and longitudinal models indicated a positive, linear relationship between economic growth and the status of women, economic growth has given impetus to rising gender inequalities in some countries. Status, as defined by Morris (1969), is a relative position ultimately depending on meeting the expectations set by a hierarchy outside one's self. Thus a gain in status may mean an increase in responsibility that counters women's own capability to achieve well being (Abadian, 1996). In the case of societies that value bearing male children, status might be achieved by having many sons, however, the inequality between men and women will persist.

The United Nations (1995) has noted that while the conventional theories of economic development deal with expanding GNP, the real wealth of a nation is its people. The purpose of development should be to create an enabling environment for people. Defining the objective of development as enlarging all people's choices, the United Nations identifies three essential components; equality of opportunity for all people, sustainability of opportunities from one generation to the next, and empowerment of people so they participate in and benefit from development.

According to the U.N. (1995), the link between economic growth and human development is not automatic. Industrialized countries, with real GDP per capita six times that of developing nations, show only a human development index 1.6 times higher than that of the lesser developed nations. Costa Rica with a real GDP per capita of $5,480 in 1992 ranks in the high human development category, while Oman with a real GDP per capita of $11,710 is in the medium human development class. Thus without a focus on people, economic growth does not automatically trickle down to individuals (U.N., 1995).

Heyzer (1997, p. 130) states that, "High growth is related closely to poverty reduction but has no direct relationship with gender equity and human development. . . The pattern of growth is as important as the rate of growth. . . For growth and poverty reduction to translate into social development, a society needs relatively equitable structures, social cohesion, people's participation and considerable targeted intervention in terms of government planning and implementation." The conjecture is that refocusing development to take account of women and then including the gender factor in program implementation alleviates the skewed results of past development schemes (Koczberski, 1998).

To test Heyzer's hypothesis this dissertation uses the case of Vietnam. Vietnam provides an interesting test case for several reasons. Primarily, Vietnam is one of the few socialist countries still extant in the world. As a socialist country, it exhibits the characteristics that Heyzer sets forth as necessary to promote gender equality especially

in the area of targeted government interventions promoting the equality of women. Further, it has experienced phenomenal growth in GDP over the last decade. Finally, due to a long period of conflict, Vietnam has found it necessary to recruit women into the economy. Thus, for a developing country, they have a long history of advocating gender equality.

Socialist thought on gender equality predates the recent focus on women and development during the last two decades. As early as 1825, William Thompson and Anna Wheeler criticized patriarchy and demanded equal rights for women and children. They further questioned the theory of political economy that held men to be individually competitive in the market and altruistic at home claiming that it was inherently contradictory. Criticizing competition based on individual self interest, Thompson and Wheeler contended that women would always be disadvantaged due to their unequal physical strength and the need to interrupt work for gestation and child rearing (Folbre, 1993).

In Vietnam, the Women's Union, founded in 1930, promoted women's liberation as part of the Indochinese Communist Party's (ICP) goals. Ho Chi Minh articulated the ICP position stating "Women are half the people. If women are not free then the people are not free" (cited in Tetreault, 1993, p 40). As early as 1946, the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) established the economic and political equality of women (Tetreault, 1993). Women were recruited to help in the revolution in large numbers.

More recently, the government of Vietnam has exhibited a strong commitment to women's equality emphasizing gender in their development plans. In an attempt to negate its Confucian past, Vietnam's Constitution and numerous legal documents reiterate a strong theme endorsing the equality of all citizens. Following the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995, a National Plan of Action was devised which systematically lays out a strategy for achieving eleven specific goals implementing the proposals of the conference. Vietnam is a signatory to the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, which focused on improving the situation of women as a path to accelerating income growth and slowing population growth. They have also ratified the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Since the late 80s, Vietnam has consistently shown growth in GDP although the growth did slow after the Asian Crisis. Between 1990 and 1995, GDP grew by an average of 8% per year, slowing to 5.8% per year in 1998. Real GDP per capita has risen from $156 to $352 over this same period (Vietnam Ministry of Planning and Investment [VMPI] & United Nations [UN], 1999). The annual inflation rate has been reduced from 67.5% in 1990 to 4% in 1996 (Kumssa, 1997).

Although the incidence of relative poverty is low, the incidence of absolute poverty remains high. As of 1994, the Gini coefficient for Vietnam was 0.36, which is better than the figure for the same year for the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia. On the other hand, the proportion of persons living in absolute poverty in Vietnam is 51%,

which is much higher than for Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Over 80% of the population lives in rural areas where the incidence of poverty (57%) is much higher than in urban areas (26%) (Irvin 1997). The low relative poverty in the face of high levels of absolute poverty is attributed by Irvin (1997) to the levels of social spending (pensions, health and education) that have been kept constant as a percent of GDP while the government privatized the economy.

As one of three socialist countries left in the world, Vietnam, like China, has chosen to take the gradual approach to changing the economy. Further, while Vietnam has been in the process of opening it's markets to the world and adopting an economic system more in line with capitalist economies, there is no indication of a relinquishment of control over and commitment to the social sphere.

Socialist states can be well placed to take advantage of the requirements that Heyzer considers necessary for development. Socialist doctrines specifically set out guidelines for equity and participation. For example, the land allocation scheme was relatively egalitarian (Irvin, 1997). Access to medical care and education services were originally spread throughout the country. Further, the planning processes, economic and social, these countries engage in are targeted intervention. For a very poor country such as Vietnam, implementation can be problematic due to lack of funding, however. Finally, it can be claimed that Vietnam, with its history of concerted resistance to foreign invaders and its majority Kinh population has a large degree of social cohesion.

The methodology adopted, discussed in depth in chapter two, uses the basic needs/capabilities framework first developed by A. Sen and M. Nussbaum. An abbreviated form of this is already used as the basis for the human development and gender indices adopted by the United Nations. The International Labour Organization also uses the basic needs format. Using this to look a selection of indicators such as health, education and employment, a simple comparison is drawn between what men have achieved and how close women have come to this benchmark.

As noted above status has been discarded as a goal due to conceptual problems. Therefore, the fourth area examined is empowerment. The concept of empowerment is related to autonomy, which has been defined as "the condition or quality of self-governing. . . self-determination, independence (Abadian, 1996, p. 1795)". There are shortcomings with the notion of autonomy however, in that it places a large emphasis on the individual when there are many instances in which other relevant actors may also bear responsibility. For instance, women do not bear the responsibility for fertility alone. The term empowerment was introduced at the Cairo Conference as a refinement of the previously used terms. It is defined by Dixon-Muller as "the capacity of individual women or of women as a group to resist the arbitrary imposition of controls on their behaviour [sic] or the denial of their rights, to challenge the power of others if it is deemed illegitimate, and to resolve a situation in their favour [sic]. . . implies a struggle for change against opposition (1998, p. 6)". The relationship between autonomy and

empowerment arises since both require access to social and material resources from which power derives.

Health, education and employment are often viewed as objectives in themselves, while empowerment and autonomy are seen as a means to attain ends. However, this is a mistaken assumption. Empowerment of women is an end in itself. According to the ICPD documents, the social and development benefits are considered self-evident needing no justification by way of demographics. Measuring empowerment is a difficult task currently done through a human rights venue. This dissertation follows that avenue looking at and comparing particulars such as political representation, household decision making and ability to move freely.

The data necessary to conduct a study over time of this sort is usually a problem when dealing with a less-developed country. The problem is especially egregious in a country such as Vietnam that was closed to the western world for almost twenty years. However, for the last 10-15 years a number of studies have been completed by the World Bank, United Nations and other NGOs that include gender as a factor. The government of Vietnam has submitted reports on the implementation of the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women also. These sets are heavily drawn upon in this dissertation. Unfortunately, the studies have not been done regularly. The irregularity of the studies and the short time period over which they have been collected preclude a more rigorous statistical method other than a simple comparison.

To the best of my knowledge, no one has undertaken a systematic and holistic look at the progress or lack of progress in gender equality during the late 1980s and 1990s for Vietnam. This period includes the opening of Vietnam's economy under *Doi Moi* and the Asian Financial Crisis. Other transitional economies have noted a marked loss of social safety nets and a subsequent decrease in gender equality upon the opening of their markets to the world (Kumssa & Jones, 1999). However, the transition in these countries has not been accompanied by an increase in GDP as in Vietnam. The question is whether strong growth in GDP and a strong legal and political commitment to gender equality translates into progress for women, given a social and cultural history of female subordination.

The outline of this dissertation is as follows: chapter two presents data sources and methodology; chapter three will be an historical survey of Vietnam including the evolution of the status of women; chapter four is a literature review exploring the role of women in economic development; chapters five through eight furnish data on education, health, employment and empowerment for women in Vietnam including political representation and sexual rights; chapter nine submits conclusions.

Chapter Two

Data and Methodology

Measuring well being requires that a number of interacting variables be examined. In addition, there is a documented difficulty in obtaining reliable data from developing countries. Even when good data is available, as is the case in the more industrialized countries, some measures currently being used as indicators of quality of life are only partially representative. For instance, a high level of educational attainment does not necessarily translate to improved job opportunities when individuals are constrained by cultural and social norms from entering certain professions. Job opportunities are not necessarily an improvement in the quality of life if taking the job leads to such increased work (market and non-market) hours that exhaustion is a daily part of life. Nor does engaging in paid employment mean an improvement in intra-household bargaining positions if the individual is not allowed to retain control of his or her earnings. According to the Human Development Report (1995), the objectives of development are embraced in the concept of human development—the enlargement of people's choices. The human development paradigm encompasses not only productivity, but also equity and empowerment. Thus, analyses should be based on an in-depth assessment of factors relating to the situation of women because numerical measures are not always available or may be inadequate.

In line with Amartya Sen's writings, Nussbaum (1995) elucidates the qualities that the 'good' life should encompass. These qualities include the standard, measurable variables such as education, health and life expectancy, and employment but continue on

with a human rights agenda containing the freedoms of assembly, association including religious and political, artistic and political expression, sexual and reproductive choices, movement, and freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. Finally, Nussbaum includes items not customarily considered in the standard paradigm of economic development or the human rights agenda such as: " . . . Being able to avoid unnecessary and non-beneficial pain, . . . Being able to use the senses; being able to imagine, to think, and to reason, . . . Being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves, . . . Being able to live for and to others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, . . . to have the capability for both justice and friendship . . . Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and world of nature . . . Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities . . ." (pp. 83-85). Furthermore, not one of these capabilities is more important than another nor should one be sacrificed to attain another.

These qualities of the 'good' life are an offshoot of the Basic Human Needs mandate and U.S. foreign development assistance policy initiated in 1973 called 'New Directions' (Sartorius & Ruttan, 1989). New Directions was based on studies showing that the technology transfers and capital intensive nature of previous foreign aid may have actually been detrimental to the development of poorer nations. For instance, Adelman's and Morris' (1973) study of 74 developing countries which concluded that economic growth tended to lessen political participation and widen income inequality. The new mandate and foreign policy was thus designed to meet the needs of the poorest people in the poorest countries. The Basic Needs mandate and the qualities of the 'good

life' give form to the statement from the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development in 1995, to Vietnam's National Plan of Action promulgated after the Beijing Conference on Women, to the ILO's basic needs strategies, and to the U.N.'s human development index, gender development index and gender empowerment measure.

The two most commonly used measures of gender equality in development economics are the previously mentioned Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) reported in the United Nation's Human Development Report. The GDI is based on life expectancy, educational attainment, and share of earned income. These are the same variables as the Human Development Index (HDI) however; the GDI adjusts the average achievement in each country in accordance with the disparity in achievement between women and men. The GEM is also constructed from three variables. The first, used to gauge economic participation and decision-making power, is women's and men's percentage shares of administrative and managerial positions along with women's and men's percentage share of professional and technical jobs. The second variable, which is women's and men's percentage shares of parliamentary seats, is used to reflect political participation and decision-making power. The third variable is a measure of power over economic resources using income and real GDP per capita.

In an analysis of these measures, Bardhan and Klasen (1999) contend that although GDI as an overall measure of gender inequality in a country is an important tool for analyzing the aggregate well-being in a country, it is dominated by the portion that

assesses gender gaps in earned income. In the calculations of the gender gap in income shares, the penalty for unequal shares is dependent not only on the magnitude of the gender gap in earned income, but also on the income level of the country, thus relatively rich countries have a greater penalty than poor ones. This approach heavily skews the resulting calculation of the GDI in two ways. The richer countries are penalized more heavily for inequality, as stated previously, and any income inequality ends up being more heavily weighted than the other two variables, life expectancy and educational attainment. Arguably, life expectancy and educational attainment may be more important indicators of well being than income equality. Bardhan and Klasen complain that no justification is offered for the differential treatment between poor and rich countries. However, it could be argued that such a gender gap is more egregious in a wealthy country that could well afford to tackle this problem, yet fails to do so.

The GEM, as a measure of agency well being, is also subject to the problems associated with the calculation of the earnings gap indicator. Other problems with it, according to Bardhan and Klasen, arise from its measure of political participation. As it stands, the GEM measures only participation at the national level and ignores local, grassroots and NGO activity.

Beyond Bardhan and Klasen's critique however, lie conceptual problems associated with using the GDI and GEM as the sole indicators of gender equality. If one compares these to the proposed list by Sen and Nussbaum, each covers a portion of the components of the good life but they fail to cover all of the points. If all the components

are equally important, and one cannot be traded for more of another, as Nussbaum claims, then an assessment should reflect, as far as possible, all the components. They should also be equally weighted. Furthermore, nowhere in the list is there direct reference to income. Insofar as income may allow one to purchase some components or to empower an individual to attain some of the components, it is an indirect measure of welfare. It is possible to have an income and still not enjoy an adequate quality of life. If we consider the woman who must hand over her income to her spouse or father, then income is a highly inadequate measure of welfare. She must be in a situation where she can be empowered from the gain in income. In the case of divorce, on the other hand, whether the law allows separation or not, without an income it is very difficult, if not impossible, for the woman to leave. It may be that income is included to make the GDI more compatible with the Human Development Index which does include a measure of income equality between the well-to-do and the less well-off. Thus, while the level of income may affect the quality of life and the bargaining position for females, it is not accurate to include it as a direct measure of women's condition.

Along with the income portion of the GDI, most of the GEM is particularly problematic for Vietnam. The component of GEM measuring political participation uses percent share of parliamentary representation. Besides the complaint from Bardhan and Klasen that this only includes representation at the national level, political representation in the National Assembly in Vietnam does not carry the same connotation as in more democratic societies. Vietnam has a one party system that is controlled by the Vietnamese Communist party. Therefore, an increase in the number of female members

of the National Assembly does not necessarily point to an increase in political decision-making power in Vietnam.

The next section of the GEM measures share of administrative, managerial, professional, and technical jobs in an effort to gauge economic participation and decision-making power. The third segment measures income equality. Both of these are questionable measures in a primarily agriculture-based socialist society. Until the early 90s, all major industry in Vietnam was state-owned. According to Mallon (1993) management of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were often Communist Party officials. During the initial phases of reform, government agencies "continued to involve themselves. . . to an extent that ranged from a major role in day-to-day management decision to something closer to that of a board of directors. . . (pg. 212)". As late as 1993, approximately 60% of industry was fully or partly state-owned. The non-state industrial sector was comprised of co-operatives and small and medium family-run enterprises (Irvin, 1995). In the same year, only 25% of the retail transactions took place in the free market (Dana, 1994). When so much formal employment is controlled by the state or by an individual family, it is difficult to say if positions held by women is indicative of decision making power. The intertwining causes of party ideology, political connections and/or ownership by the family would severely confound the situation.

During Vietnam's restructuring, approximately two-thirds of lost state jobs belonged to women. Along with the loss of employment, many of the benefits such as day care and maternal leave were also forfeited. According to the Vietnam Development

Report (Poverty Working Group [PWG]), 1999) women make up more than half of the labor force yet less than 40% of the wage work. Further, the wage sector is very small. Less than a quarter of all those who reported working in the year preceding the 92/93 VNLSS worked for wages. Regulations severely restrict the type of work that women are allowed to perform. For pregnant/nursing women there are extended restrictions. Female wage work is usually for the State or MNCs producing export goods. Following other countries in the region, women who work for MNCs are generally younger and unmarried. In an effort to attract foreign investment, the government lowered minimum wage standards in 1992 for employees of foreign entrepreneurs to keep Vietnam competitive in labor intensive industries (Dana, 1994). Four/fifths of all women report being self-employed. Agricultural work forms 68.3% of reported self-employment for women over the age of six (Desai, 1995). Females constitute 75.6% of all agricultural workers as of 1995 (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1999). The work is performed on small family farms marked by labor intensive cultivation of rice and other crops. For a woman in agriculture, extra income is generated by sideline occupations such as handicrafts, gardening, raising poultry and livestock (Hop, 1995). Considering the comparatively small number of people who work for wages and the concentration of women in agriculture and self-employment it is difficult to make a case that a measurement of equality of wages is an accurate picture of gender equality in Vietnam.

Employment situations of this type are not limited to Vietnam. Agriculture-based societies with a large proportion of workers in the informal sector are rather the norm for

less-developed countries. It is in more developed, industrialized nations that wages earned by women and type of jobs held by women are most apropos. Under these circumstances, a more pertinent empowerment measure would ascertain whether women had access to, and control over, resources important to their individual ways of life. Do they or can they obtain title to land that they farm? Is it possible to obtain credit to make improvements to the farms or to start microenterprises? Once women gain access to these resources, are they able to keep control over how they are allocated? Do women have input into decision-making in households? Unfortunately, the types of statistics necessary to measure these questions are not collected on a consistent worldwide basis.

A complete assessment of the level of gender equality in a country based on the qualities of the 'good life' should use a variety of variables and techniques. Some of the variables are available as numeric measures from which comparisons between men and women can be fashioned. However, some must be evaluated through descriptive narrative and rank orderings. Furthermore, some of the components of a good life are inseparable. That is, if they exist for men, they also exist for women. For these variables, a simple enumeration of their existence or non-existence suffices. To be complete and accurate an analysis should encompass all three of the above assessments for any nation.

For the purposes of this dissertation, numeric measures are taken from the World Bank, various branches of the United Nations, including UNICEF, UNIFEM and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and, the World

Health Organization (WHO). Further information of this type is gleaned from the reports published covering information obtained in the two Vietnam Living Standards Surveys (VNLSS) done in 92/93 and 97/98, from the 1988 and 1997 Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and the 1999 and 2000 reports from Vietnam on the implementation of CEDAW. The indicators gathered here include information on literacy, education, longevity, sex ratios, maternal mortality, infant and child deaths, contraceptive use, labor force participation rates, nutritional levels, political participation and BMI indices. Evidence of freedom of choice in marriage, divorce, childbearing, and abortion is gathered from secondary sources and from the VNLSS. Several Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA) were conducted in various regions of Vietnam during the same period as the second VNLSS. These are also used as information resources. Intelligence on ownership of property, access to credit, safety from abuse, working conditions, leisure time availability/workload, and health care availability are gathered from these references and from U.N. reports on implementation of CEDAW. Information on freedom of speech, association, assembly, religion, and the enforcement thereof are found in the legal documents from Vietnam, news reports and United States State Department documents. Also included is freedom of movement/relocation and access to and freedom of use of personal property.

If we define human development as an increase in an individual choice set, then indicators that pick and choose among items may furnish a very misleading sense of improvement or setback. It is only through a complete assessment of the interplay between all of the above items that a true picture can be gained of the situation of women.

All of the items for an adequate quality of life are equally important. Each one should be a goal of development.

Chapter Three

Historical Survey

Vietnam is a medium size country in Southeast Asia. It shares borders with China to the north, and Laos and Cambodia to the east. Vietnam has 3,444 km of coastline along the Gulf of Tonkin, Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea. The estimated population in 2000 is 78.7 million in an area of 332,000 square kilometers. GNP per capita (purchasing power parity) in 1999 was $1,850 which places Vietnam in the low income group of countries (CIA Factbook, 2000).

3.1 Ethnicity and Religion

The majority of Vietnam's population (87%) is Viet (or Kinh as they are known in Vietnam). Approximately 53 other ethnic groups comprise the remaining 13% of the population. The largest of these are Tay (1.8%), Thai (1.6%), Chinese (1.5%), Khmer (1.4%), Muong (1.4%) and Nung (1.1%). The minority populations, except for the Chinese, reside mainly in the remote, mountainous areas of Vietnam which are also the most poverty-stricken areas (Vu, 1998).

The Chinese dominated Vietnam for over 1000 years between 111 B. C. and 939 A. D. This period of colonization left a strong pattern of Chinese culture on Vietnamese life including the influence of Confucianism on traditional family life. Vietnam has also been shaped by other cultures including the Cham (Muslim and Indic) during pre-modern times and after the annexation of the Champa Kingdom in the 900's. From the late 1800s to the advent of WWII, Vietnam was a French colony and protectorate. Since WWII, it

has been increasingly subject to Western cultural factors. This is especially evident in the urban areas in South Vietnam, which are the regions that were heavily colonized by the French and also where U.S. troops were based. The French promoted the idea of assimilation in which the Vietnamese received a French education and became citizens of France. In actuality, very few Vietnamese ever achieved this status. As of the 1937 census, only 2,746 Vietnamese were considered Assimilated. However, it was these Assimilated who enjoyed a more luxurious life and obtained employment as other than agricultural peasants and laborers (Keyes, 1995).

Although the U.S. entanglement in Vietnam lasted fewer years than the French occupation, it had a more profound effect on life in South Vietnam. The economy in the South was heavily dependent on American aid, jobs and spending during this period. As many as 5 million out of a population of 17 million Vietnamese became refugees flowing into the cities and towns, refugee camps and army basis (Irvin, 1995). According to Brown (1975) approximately 200,000 individuals were hired directly by the military, most of them female. Further, Vietnam was a traditionally rural country previous to the Vietnamese war. Until the 1930s, only 7.5% of the population lived in urban areas (Van Trinh, 1991). During the ten years of American involvement, due to economic stimuli, forced urbanization by the military and dislocation, cities in the South tripled in size reaching 45% of the total population. On the other hand, population in urban areas in the North remained static. These cities and towns were evacuated and industry was dispersed throughout the countryside to avoid American bombing (Forbes, 1996).

Major religious groups include Buddhist, Roman Catholic, indigenous beliefs, Muslim, Protestant, Cao Dai and, Hoa Hao. While Buddhism is the major religion of Vietnam attracting approximately three-quarters of the population, it has been Vietnamized to include elements of popular religion and ancestral worship practice. Catholicism was introduced during the French occupation of Vietnam beginning in the 17th century. Currently, its adherents attract approximately 7% of the population located mainly in South Vietnam. Different Protestant denominations, which are the primary Christian religion of the Hmong and minority ethnic groups, has approximately 600,000 members. Cao Dai, which although nominally a form of Buddhism acknowledges prophets from other religions including Jesus and Siddhartha, has followers forming approximately 1% of the population. Muslims number less than 600,000 total adherents located primarily in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Hoa Hao, a reform branch of Buddhism, is concentrated in the Mekong Delta region with 2 to 3 million members (U.S. State Department, 2000).

3.2 Political History

In 111 B. C., the Chinese annexed the Vietnamese peninsula and although this period is marked by rebellion against the Chinese overlords, the Chinese reign continued until 939 A. D. In 939, General Ngo Quyen vanquished the Chinese invaders and founded the first national dynasty. Ngo Quyen spent 6 years of his reign fighting the continual revolts of the feudal lords. At his death in 967, the kingdom fell into chaos and became known as the land of "Thap Nhi Su Quan", 12 feudal principalities which regularly fought each other. The most powerful of the 12 feudal lords, Dinh Bo Linh

eventually reunified the country and took the imperial title of "Dinh Tien Hoang De" (The First August Emperor Dinh). By the time of his death in 980, he negotiated a non-aggression treaty with China in exchange for tributes payable every 3 years, thus setting the framework for Vietnamese/Chinese relations for the next several centuries. In 982, Le Dai Hanh launched a military expedition against the Champa Kingdom to the south, entered Indrapura (present-day Quang Nam) and burned the Champa citadel. The conquest of the northern part of the Champa Kingdom brought about a marked Cham influence on Vietnamese life. In 1428, the Chinese signed an accord recognizing Vietnam's independence and except for an abortive attempt in 1788, China never invaded Vietnam again. By 1673, the Champa kingdom was completely absorbed giving Vietnam its present day boundaries (Nguyen, 1996).

In 1787, Gia Long, founding emperor of the Nguyen dynasty, signed a treaty with France. In exchange for help subduing the Tay Son rebellion, the port of Tourane (Da Nang) and the island of Poulo Condore were ceded to France. The second Nguyen emperor, Minh Mang, pursued an anti-Catholic policy that gave the French a pretext to intervene in Viet Nam. A French party landed in the port of Tourane in August 1858, heralding the beginning of the colonial occupation that lasted almost a century. By 1885, France directly administered Chochin-China (South Viet Nam) as a colony. The north and central regions, Tonkin and Annam were ruled as protectorates (Nguyen, 1996).

In 1945, during WWII Japanese rule, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam an independent country establishing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). After the

end of WWII, the French attempted to re-establish colonial rule until they were defeated at the battle of Diem Bien Phu in 1954. The 1954 Geneva Accords divided Vietnam into two parts at the 17th parallel. The north was to be governed by the DRV, the south by the Republic of Vietnam. After attempts to unite the country through general elections failed, North Vietnam, backed by the former Soviet Union and China, and South Vietnam, backed by the United States, embarked upon armed conflict. In 1965 the U.S. sent troops to Vietnam, directly intervening in the war. The U.S. and the DRV signed the Paris Peace Accords ending open hostilities between North Vietnam and the United States in 1973. South Vietnamese forces continued to battle the North until 1975, when the North overran Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) and defeated the Southern Regime. In 1976, Vietnam was renamed the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Library of Congress, 1987b).

For the next ten years, Vietnamese leaders attempted to build a socialist government through collectivization of agriculture and rapid and large-scale industrialization in both the north and the south. To accomplish this, assistance from the Soviet Union was necessary. During this same period, Vietnam waged war against Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge. On December 25, 1978, 100,000 Vietnamese troops poured across the Cambodian border, quickly gaining a foothold in Cambodia's northeast. By January 7, 1979, less than two weeks after their initial attack, Vietnamese forces successfully occupied Phnom Penh, forcing the Khmer Rouge to flee into the wilderness (Library of Congress, 1987a). Although withdrawal from Cambodia began in 1981, Vietnamese occupation continued until 1990. Vietnam's presence in Cambodia

consumed approximately 40-50% of its total military budget although the Soviet Union underwrote a large portion of the invasion. The intensive build-up of the economy, along with a continuation of hostilities put an enormous strain on a country that was trying to recover from many years of conflict. By the early 1980's, there were signs that the economy would not be able to sustain a reasonable growth rate. Expected aid from the U.S. never materialized and the trade embargo from the U.S. continued. China contributed loans only instead of the expected grants. Financial support from the Soviet bloc dwindled. In 1986, Vietnam launched a renovation campaign known as "Doi Moi," the aim of which is to build an effective market economy and promote socio-economic cooperation with the rest of the world (SarDesai, 1998).

3.3 Economic History

From the mid 1800s until WWII, Vietnam was fundamentally a French colony although the central and northern regions were called protectorates. Vietnam produced raw materials for export and imported manufactured goods from France and other developed nations. Capital investment by the government of Indochina was mainly in infrastructure such as railways, port facilities, roadways and canal systems to facilitate trade. Private investment was predominantly in commercial agriculture. Along with the traditional rice crop, the French introduced rubber, coffee, tea and tobacco as cash crops. Other private investment was in the production of metal ores and coal. Land tenure changed under French rule from being held in communal plots owned and operated by kin groups or villages to large tracts of land held by the French or by Vietnamese collaborators. These lands were rented out to or sharecropped by the Vietnamese

peasants. Expansion of rice production was accomplished via intensification of labor rather than by way of improved technology. Due to increasing population, changes in land tenure and increased demand for exports of the crop, rice consumption underwent a decline during the colonial period resulting in nutritional deterioration for the Vietnamese. Chesneaux (cited in Keyes, 1995) estimates that the consumption of rice per capita fell from 262 kilograms per annum in 1900 to 182 kilograms in 1937. Droughts in 1943 and 1944 worsened the situation resulting in the great famine of 1944-45 during which an estimated 400,000 to 2 million people died (Keyes, 1995).

From the end of WWII until 1975, war disrupted the economies of both the north and south. Land reform was implemented in the south in 1970. Completed by the end of 1974, 1.3 million hectares of agricultural land was redistributed to over 1 million farmers. Rice yields increased substantially during this period in the south due to switching of cropping systems to two crops per year from one crop and the introduction of new types of rice seed and fertilizers (Pingali & Xuan, 1992). However for much of the Vietnamese war, the urban South Vietnamese economy was dependent on American aid (Keyes, 1995).

Beginning in 1954, a land-reform program was implemented in North Vietnam to facilitate the break up of large estates previously held by the French and their collaborators. From 1958 to 1964 the government attempted to build agricultural cooperatives. Complete collectivization was never achieved due to the demands of the war. Cooperatives could not keep up with the needs of the armed forces. Average rice

yields were 2,283 kilogram/hectare in 1959 and declined to 1,984 kilogram/hectare in 1965. Therefore, the government gave encouragement to the production of crops on private land and was forced to permit the continuance of rural markets. The first five-year plan also called for factories and industrial plants in large urban centers. However, American bombing made these plants vulnerable. The state was compelled to encourage decentralization of production and the creation of small-scale light industry. During this period the DRV did manage to push ahead with programs to improve the health situation of citizens. The number of doctors increased and vaccination programs were instituted. Wells were built in rural villages to improve the supply of potable water. In 1966, a birth control program campaign was launched (Keyes, 1995).

Upon cessation of hostilities and the reunification of the country, the DRV embarked upon collectivization of the south. Most South Vietnamese farmers resisted these efforts. By 1986, less than 6% of the Mekong Delta belonged to an agricultural cooperative, although labor and production resources were shared more often. In the years immediately after reunification, southern rice output dropped by approximately one million tons (Pingali & Xuan, 1992). The Second Five-Year plan established a 16-18% target in annual growth for industrial production. Growth was only 0.6% for this sector. Vietnam experienced shortages of basic consumer goods including food in 1979 and 1980 (Dana, 1994).

In 1981, the state introduced the 'product contract system' in agriculture. The system allowed for production on individual plots and households retained any output

above the amount set for state collection for personal consumption or sale on the free market. By 1985, Vietnam produced 182 million tons of grain, up approximately 17 million tons a year from 1980. The export trade sector was also targeted for reform. Four major cities, Ho Chi Minh City, Haiphong, Da Nang, and Hanoi, were allowed to form their own import-export corporations which could retain a 25% share of foreign exchange earnings. The 'product contract system' was also introduced for certain collective and private enterprises (Murray & Vieux, 1991). According to Dana (1994), it was this liberalization that helped industrial output to grow an average of 9% during the period of the Third Five-Year Plan. By 1985 however, inflation reached several hundred percent (Murray & Vieux, 1991).

Prior to 1986, economic reforms were piecemeal approaches to fixing what was not working in the DRV model of socialism. In 1986, a major shake-up in party leadership due, in part, to the disastrous economic situation led to the introduction of *Doi Moi* (renovation). *Doi Moi* comprised a shift towards a more market-oriented economic system, a move away from the centralized management system and acknowledgment that production should be linked to the market. The reforms included: a decree issued in November 1987 which gave firms greater versatility in production and financial decisions and introduced profit based accounting system; resolutions passed in March 1988 which recognized the legal status and rights of the family economy and the private sector; agricultural reforms allowing individual farmers to make production and marketing decisions; and price reforms that reduced the difference between free market and state prices (Mallon, 1993).

The reforms had a positive impact on the economy. By 1989-1990, Vietnam was the world's third largest rice exporter after the U.S. and Thailand. Inflation fell from 310% to 79% to 30% in 1990 while growth in GDP rose from 5.1% to 8%. In 1991, the Central Committee began the process of ending state-enterprise subsidies and the use of commercial criteria in credit allocation. Exports were worth US$2.5 billion by 1992 and 2.9 billion in 1993, although, the trade deficit went from 2.6% of GDP in 1992 to – 3.0% in 1993 also. Vietnam exports raw materials, including oil, along with agricultural goods and imports capital goods and refined petroleum products (Irvin, 1995).

Until the Asian Financial Crisis, Vietnam continued to show strong growth in GDP. From 1993 through 1997 average GDP growth was around 9% per year. Between 1998 and 2001, GDP growth fluctuated around 5.5% (CIA Factbook, 2002). During the period of phenomenal growth however, the social safety nets have eroded and income inequality risen. The government has instituted programs in microcredit, education and health to alleviate the problems but is having minimal success. Part of the reason is the lack of government funds to reach all citizens. As the economy moves to a market-based system, more and more of these services are being privatized. As fees appear for these services, the poor find it increasingly difficult to access them. Also, due to restructuring of the economy with the concomitant closures and downsizing of state owned enterprises, unemployment has been rising. Estimates show as much as 20% unemployment in some urban areas. The worst affected segment of the population is women who constitute 58%

of the unemployed (Kumsaa, 1997). Economic growth has brought its own problems to the development process.

3.4 Historical Status of Women in Vietnam

Prior to the invasion by the Chinese, Vietnamese society, like many others of that time period, was matrilineal and matrilocal. Patriarchy first appears in approximately 300 B. C. during the era of the Hung kings and to this day, due to the long occupation by the Chinese, Confucian tradition concerning women's status predominates, especially in North Vietnam. Vietnam, however, retains a particularly Vietnamese adaptation of patriarchy. Four of the oldest temples in Vietnam are dedicated to female cults. A woman, Trung Trac, led the first successful rebellion against the Chinese. Infuriated after a Chinese governor executes her husband, she commanded a victorious insurrection and was designated ruler. In the eleventh century, Queen Ly Chieu Hoan is approved by the court to inherit the throne from her father (Vu, 1998).

Vietnamese women continue to work in production as well as in the house during this time which has important consequences for their status. Tasks historically reserved for women include dance and midwifery, rice and vegetable cultivation, spinning and dyeing of cloth. Women run sampans, gather wood, and conduct small business. Under the fifteenth Century Hong Duc code, women as well as men could inherit land (Keyes, 1995). The Hong Duc Code also gave equal ownership right to men and women (Vu, 1998). The Le (1428-1788 A.D.) Code sanctioned beating wives, if no injury was inflicted but it also protected the rights of the primary wife. The secondary wife could never be promoted to the status of principal wife, unlike in China. Under the Le Code,

men could be put to death for fornication (women could only be exiled); neglect was grounds for a wife to divorce her husband; daughters could inherit property, including property set aside for ancestral veneration if no male heir lived (Frenier & Mancini, 1996).

In the south of present day Vietnam, contact with the Champa kingdom also mitigated the effects of Confucianism. The Cham were characterized by matriclans that determined rights to land and property. Local descent groups were based on matrilineal principles. Female goddesses associated with fertility and rice fields were worshipped. Although, the Cham became increasingly Muslim after their defeat by the Viet, they too retained local custom as regards women. Kinship groups continued to consist of matrilineal groups embedded within matriclans. The Islamic tradition of polygyny was allowed, although this was not the regular pattern found in the villages. After marriage the male went to live within the woman's mother's household. Property was inherited along the mother's line and divorces were initiated primarily by women (Scupin, 1995). Therefore, Confucianism would have less effect on women's status in Vietnam than in China and the effects lessen as one moves south in Vietnam. Frenier and Mancini (1996) state, ". . . moving from north to south in Vietnam, 19th century families were more likely to be nuclear in the south and extended in the north, women were more likely to have a say in their own marriages in the south, and women were even more active in marketing goods in the south than in the north. . . . Vietnam's history of guerrilla warfare against China, its fierce nationalism, and its connections with the rest of South-East Asia make it distinct from China and help account for the higher status of Vietnamese women" (p.

25). Also, it appears that Confucianism is probably more deep-seated the higher in status the family is. The realities of everyday peasant subsistence precluded the ability of the family to so constrain productive activities for any member of the family. Men and women, boys and girls contributed to the household economy and thus held certain rights.

Nonetheless, women's status did suffer decline. The seven reasons for which a Chinese husband could divorce his wife became law. These include the wife's adultery, jealousy, acquiring of an abhorrent disease, verbosity, disobedience to parents-in-law, failure to bear children, or theft (Frenier & Mancini, 1996). The Book of Changes, which asserts that Yin and Yang assigns gender roles and freezes females into rigid roles of submission and domination, is adopted by the Vietnamese. Polygamy sustained a subsistence economy, which required the labor of women, either through coercion, community sanctions, or family affection (Tetreault, 1996). Men are served dinner first; marriages are usually arranged. The desirable traits a family looked for in a woman were "gentleness and delicacy, her reproductive potential and her potential contribution to household production" (Nguyen, 1998, p. 14). One of the most important functions of marriage was to produce male children. According to Ngyuen (1998), although the Le Code, which replaced the Hang Duc Code, also gave inheritance rights to women, in reality, by the 16th century, daughters no longer inherited equally. The Gia Long Code of the 18th and 19th century forbade women from inheriting. Women were almost never educated due to patrilocal norms of marriage.

Under French rule, social organization and traditional family roles were increasingly westernized in the south and urban centers. It is during this period and the following Second Indochinese (Vietnamese) war that socialist revolutionaries/nationalists begin to use gender as a "code through which to discuss the penetration of their society by the French" (Tetreault, 1996, p. 39). Vietnamese nationalists under Ho Chi Minh actively recruited women to participate in the liberation struggle promising equal political, social and economics rights under a new regime. Women's political mobilization was negotiated through the Women's Union, established as an instrument of the Indochinese Communist Party. The purpose of the Woman's Union was to mobilize, educate and represent Vietnamese women (Tetreault, 1996).

From 1946 to 1954, women engaged in combat, community mobilization, intelligence gathering, and the transport of material. After partition however, any commitment to women's equality took a back seat as the North began to consolidate its holdings and redistribute land. From 1965 to 1972, as conflict heightened between the north and south, women were once more called upon to sacrifice for their country. In the south, they were active in the People's Liberation Front, serving as troops, offering shelter in enemy occupied areas, surveying areas and carrying supplies. In January 1960, a series of demonstrations by thousands of peasant women led by Nguyen Thi Dinh protested the large-scale indiscriminate killing and looting by government (South Vietnam) troops. The government was forced to accede to their demands. Madame Dinh was made a general of the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF). Forty percent of regimental commanders in the PLAF were women. Women also shared in the civilian

leadership of the National Liberation Front and the People's Revolutionary Government in the south. However, women in the south had difficulty gaining the respect of their male peers and were not recruited to be cadres until the male pool was depleted by high casualties (Tetreault, 1996).

Marxist thought clearly delineates the conviction that treating women as second class citizens is a feudal anachronism and that it is impossible to build a better society without guaranteeing both men and women the same civic and private rights. Further, it was obvious to the revolutionary leaders of Vietnam that without attracting women to the cause, it would be impossible to pursue the revolution. Clearly, women were needed to organize villages, transport goods, and substitute for men wherever necessary. Because of this reality, work on ensuring the legal equality of females began with the Constitution written in 1946, which established the economic and political equality of women and men, outlined the rights of women within the family, and provided for female suffrage (Ginsbergs, 1975). Currently, women have all the rights and privileges that male citizens have in Vietnam. As regards labor provisions, they have protections not extended to males, including a constitutionally mandated 'equal pay for equal work' clause. Under the DRV and in line with Communist Doctrine, attempts have been made to take into account and make easier women's multiple roles as mother, wife, and worker in a modern society by providing crèches and maternity leave among other perquisites.

Most recently, questions have arisen concerning the 'promissory notes' given to women during the early years of the DRV. While this socialist country continues to

guarantee the equality of women through numerous legal documents, translating paper guarantees into reality requires a strong, enduring commitment from all elements of society including the women themselves. Further, Vietnam has recently embarked upon the process of opening of its economy to the world. As the market becomes increasingly capitalistic, will the DRV be able to maintain not just a paper guarantee but a real program of ensuring the rights of women?

Chapter Four

Women and Development

4.1 Background

The birth of development economics can be traced to the end of WWII with the breakup of former colonies and creation of independent states. The focus during the early period was based on economic growth from the classical period with specific attention paid to accelerating the pace of growth. The primary tenet during these years was that poverty alleviation for underdeveloped countries could be achieved through growth in GNP. This progress would be accomplished through industrialization using capital-intensive technology. As GNP grew, the citizens of lesser-developed nations would benefit through 'trickle-down effects' and through top-down handouts of goods and services. However, assessment of the programs at the end of the 1960s showed that, even when growth occurred, the standard of living did not rise for a large proportion of the people. Many third world nations did achieve economic growth as measured by an increase in GNP, but for large masses of people the standard of living remained the same or worsened. For instance, income inequality increased between 1960 and 1980 for all non-Communist developing countries. For these countries the Gini coefficient grew from 0.544 to 0.602. However, within the lesser-developed countries, oil-exporting countries experienced the most change during the period (0.575 to 0.612) while middle income non-oil exporting countries experienced a slight improvement (0.603 to 0.569) (Adelman, 1986). Yet GNP per capita during these years rose the most for the oil-exporting countries.

Increasing disappointment with the growth models led to more integrative models in the 1970s. The new models perceived the poor as participants in development rather than passive recipients. Economic development was redefined to include "the reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment within the context of a growing economy" (Todaro, 1996, pg 14). The International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade identified the ultimate purpose of development as "to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and to bestow benefits on all" (Snyder, 1995, pg 14). During this same period, the ILO developed the 'basic needs' strategies, based on Amartya Sen's work, calling for sufficient food, clothing, clean water, shelter, health care, employment, and self-determination for all (Snyder, 1995).

Development economist's interest in women in the development process was precipitated by the 1970 publication of Women's Role in Economic Development by Danish economist Ester Boserup. This study assembled hard data on work input, employment, occupational distribution, land ownership, education and income that outlined women's critical economic activity and warned "the whole process of economic growth could be retarded if women were deprived of their productive functions" (Snyder, 1995, pg. 15). Her work highlighted the contributions that women make to productivity in traditional economies and emphasized the change in gender relationships as development proceeds. Boserup also noted that the introduction of modern technologies and the expansion of cash cropping benefited men while often increasing women's work burden. That is, industrialization of a country was often done at woman's expense. The 'trickle down' effects were not an improvement in her standard of living but rather

deterioration. In another contradiction to prevailing viewpoints, Boserup argued that recruitment of women into the modern sector accelerated economic growth rather than simply displacing men. She advocated increased educational opportunities for women, contending, "As long as girls remain under the twofold handicap of a family education which suppresses their self-confidence and of training facilities in schools and elsewhere which are inferior to those given to boys, they are bound to be inferior workers who contribute little to the national product despite their hard toil in many traditional tasks of low productivity" (Boserup, 1970/1998, p. 220). A growing global concern with rapid population growth and the earth's capacity to support such an increase in population also marked the 1970s. As a final observation, Boserup stated that in the future women would be encouraged to find employment "outside the home as a means of limiting births" (Boserup, 1970/1998, p. 224).

Thus was begun the Women in Development (WID) movement. The World Conference of the International Women's Year was held in Mexico City in 1975. At the conference, delegates from 133 countries highlighted women's economic and social position in their countries and complained that existing planning and development organizations and funds had not been directed toward helping women. "As a result, the huge amount of productive work performed by women in agriculture, fuel supply, self-help community organizations and the like remained nearly invisible" (Snyder, 1995, p. 26). Out of this conference grew the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), UNIFEM, and a conference resolution entitled Special Resources for the Integration of Women In Development (Snyder, 1995).

During the ensuing 1976-85 United Nations Decade for Women it was assumed that simply accounting for women's work and correcting biases in data would lead to less inequality and more programs assisting women's role in development. WID advocates argued that current development policies undermined women's economic activities. To raise the efficiency of these programs, women should be integrated into them (Tinker, 1990).

The mid to late 1980s brought a feminist critique to WID approaches. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach argues that gender inequalities are shaped by deep-seated institutional arrangements that are relatively unaffected by economic development. GAD contends that given the entrenched institutions of patriarchal family structures, discriminatory labor practices, and property laws, development may exacerbate gender inequality. Therefore, the top down practices of WID that aim to improve select indicators of women's status are ignoring the differential impact of programs on different groups of women. Further, improvements in some measures are often matched by the exacerbation of others problems or the creation of new ones (Forsythe, Korzeniewicz, & Durrant, 2000).

More recently, it is commonly acknowledged that gender inequalities must be addressed through strategies that both promote growth and address necessary institutional change. Gender disparities affect all people. According to the United Nations (1995), development, if not engendered, is endangered. Thus not only are women an integral

component in economic development, but they are also integral to overall economic planning and national development. Because gender inequalities can potentially hamper the progress of economic development it underscores the importance of addressing the role of women in economic development planning. As enumerated in Section 4.2, the non-market work that women provide ranges as high as 52% of the total volume of work done in an economy (Ironmonger, 1996). Therefore, development planning must be gender-sensitive, self-empowering, and country specific to realize the goals of poverty reduction and gender equality.

During and since the U. N. Decade for Women much attention has been paid to the issue of gender in economics. These studies can be grouped into two main categories; women's contributions to the development process, and the effects of development upon women.

4.2 Impact of Women on Development

Because of the invisibility of much of women's work, it has been difficult to quantify the impact of women's labor on development. Benaria (1991) and Waring (1999) have written about valuation of women's work, arguing that the system of accounting used to calculate GDP/GNP is inadequate and misleading. Using 1992 data, Ironmonger (1996), estimated that market work was only 48% of the total volume of all work in Australia. The household sector which includes the informal sector, household work, volunteer work, and reproductive work was the largest producer, exceeding manufacturing production by a multiple of ten and mining and mineral extraction by a

multiple of three. Goldschmidt-Clermont (1983) found that the household sector in the U.S. produced approximately 25% to 50% of GNP employing at least the same number of hours worked as the market sector.

The estimates of the value of non-market work are for countries in which we have extensive time use survey sets. For the most part they are the industrialized countries. In industrialized countries a large portion of domestic work has been commoditized. For the developing countries, these service industries do not exist except perhaps as available from the extended family or for the well to do. Further, women in developing countries are much more likely to be engaged in subsistence activities and to work as unpaid family laborers. Therefore an estimate of the numbers of hours worked and the contribution of unpaid work by women would be much larger in the lesser-developed nations. The United Nations (1995) estimates that approximately $16 trillion in global output is invisible. Of that, women through either underpaid or unpaid work produce $11 trillion. Anker (1983) finds that depending on how broadly the labor force is defined, widely disparate figures are generated concerning female labor force activity. For example, using the definition of 'all persons who are paid', India generates 4.5% female participation rate. On the other hand, if the definition is broadened to include 'all persons producing items that are generally purchased in developing countries but are not necessarily included in national income accounts', the rate is 93.3%. How the definition of labor is surveyed is important for development policy. While an increase in the number of workers in paid work vs. unpaid work will show an increase in GNP, these workers may actually be less productive at paid work than they were at unpaid work.

Floro (1995) states that standard macroeconomic analysis ignores a large portion of economic life, which is the production of household goods and services. These household-produced goods and services are vital for social reproduction and human development. Yet as increasing numbers of women are forced to allocate their time between their production and that of the market economy there will be long term serious economic and welfare consequences appearing as increased stress, deterioration in mental and physical health and neglect of the next generation of workers.

In an investigation of family income equality in Hong Kong, Pong (1991) finds that women's labor equalized family income if the definition of work was extended to include nonmarket contributions. Kusnic and DaVanzo (1986) also found that income inequality falls as the definition of income is widened and suggested that the relationship between economic development and income inequality may be a statistical artifact due to the fact that current measures count only market activities. Thus, as poverty increases, women expand their nonmarket activities, giving up leisure time, in an attempt to keep family welfare stable.

In a study examining women's contribution to family owned businesses in Hong Kong, Chui (1998) notes that the contribution is 'large' for several reasons. "First, most of the businesses were started up after marriage and the women contributed to the start-up capital. Second, all wives increased the productivity of the business through their labour

[sic] input. Third, the labour [sic] input prevented the diversion of income from business to labour [sic] costs. Fourth, through their unwaged or low-waged work, they permitted their earnings to be reinvested back into the business" (p. 41). However, the rewards that women garnered from the business were much smaller than the men's profit since women's labor was perceived as a reduction of expenses rather than production enhancing. The benefits derived from the wives' partnership were classified as part of the husbands' income while the resulting resources were kept under the men's control.

Numerous studies have documented the positive effects of shifting control of resources to women. In the case of microcredit loans, Pitt and Khandker (1998) find the profit from the loans goes first to the children in the form of more and better quality food and books for school. Kabeer (2001) found the entire family more likely to benefit economically when loans were made to women than when they went to men. A positive relationship has been found between the percentage of cereals produced under women's control and household consumption of calories in Gambian households by von Braun (1988). Likewise, a study using data from Kenya and Malawi found that the proportion of income controlled by women had a positive and significant effect on household caloric intake (Kennedy & Peters, 1992). In a cross-national study, Shen and Williamson (1997) find that women's health, educational status and reproductive autonomy has an effect as strong, if not stronger, on child survival as does the level of a nation's industrialization. According to Cagatay, Elson and Grown (1995), women tend to have a higher marginal propensity than men to spend on goods that benefit children and strengthen their potential. Based on this conclusion, "income distribution toward women would increase

the long-run growth rate of the economy. . . distributing income toward women is both equitable and growth-enhancing" (p. 1830).

Agarwal (1994) advances efficiency, as well as welfare, as an argument for giving women title to the land that they work. Many women operate as household heads in the absence of their husbands with responsibility for organizing cultivation and ensuring family survival. In most cases, they do not have title to this property. Output could be increased by granting equal rights to the land and by providing them with infrastructural support such as access to credit and technology and information on productivity-increasing agricultural practices and inputs. Moock's (1976) study of Kenya found that if women maize farmers had the same access to inputs and education as men, yields could be increased by 9 percent. Tzannatos (1999) demonstrated the social inefficiency of discrimination against women in labor markets, contending that if discrimination were eliminated in patterns of occupation and pay, total output and women's wages would both rise.

In countries that have a large proportion of their workers in the informal sector, women do a sizeable share of this work. Chen, Sebstad and O'Connell (1999), citing the 1995 World Development Report, state that over 80% of all workers in low-income countries operate in this sector. In South Korea, 43% of women workers produce in this segment of the economy, and in Indonesia, 79% of women workers are employed in the informal sector. In Thailand, 38% of workers in the wearing apparel industry are homeworkers. The informal sector includes subcontracted work that is directly tied to the

formal economy and is used by firms as a means of cutting costs. This type of employment and production is not reported in most national income figures, yet it provides a large fraction of the economy.

Klasen and Dollar and Gatti (cited in Grown, Elson & Catagay, 2000) have found that gender biases with respect to education, employment, and health have a significant negative impact on economic growth. On the other hand, Seguino (2000) finds that semi-industrialized, export oriented economies which had gender gaps in wages had higher rates of economic growth. She argues that wage differentials may signal higher profitability to firms. A structuralist model developed by Braunstein (2000) shows how these widely varying results can occur. The inconsistent outcomes can arise depending on which measure of gender inequality is chosen, how the underlying economy is structured and, the modeling of the interactions between the economy and gender bias.

4.3 The Impact of Development on Women

Boserup (1970) was one of the first individuals to note the possible adverse impact of development on women. In economies that are principally agriculture-based, the expansion of trade causes the production of cash crops to grow at the expense of food crops. Since women produce predominately food crops and men produce predominately cash crops, women's relative income is reduced. Also, since technology is directed toward cash crop production, women do not gain access to knowledge and resources at the same rate as men. Norris (1992) employs a specific-factors model to analyze Boserup's contention that development may diminish women's welfare. In this model,

the expansion of trade in the agricultural sector results in diminishing both absolute and real returns to female labor and raises the real return to male labor. Technological progress, if limited to the cash crop sector, also reduces women's relative and real returns.

Lantican, Gladwin and Seale (1996) test alternative theories of development concerning the path income inequalities take to see if they are as applicable to gender inequalities. Using data from Bangladesh, the Philippines and South Korea, they find that Kuznets' inverted-U-curve pattern is followed for educational access. Gender inequalities in secondary education and agricultural employment show a linear pattern. They appear to decrease as GNP rises, which supports the structural transformation theory. However, gender inequalities in manufacturing employment do not decrease as GNP and education rises. This fact supports the findings of the GAD or socialist feminists, who contend that unless the deep-rooted sources of gender inequality are addressed, simply increasing select indicators will not improve women's status. Humphries (1993) uses national income per capita, infant and child survival rates, maternal mortality, life expectancy at birth, and adult literacy rates to rank low-income countries. She finds only a negligible relationship between the level of development and the level of women's well being relative to other countries. Increasing the level of economic development does not automatically 'trickle down' to women. This finding also supports the position of the GAD.

Many countries, such as the Asian countries of South Korea, Taiwan and, Indonesia have followed the export-oriented path to development attempting to emulate the success of Japan. Multinational companies, taking advantage of wage differentials in lesser-developed countries, have moved processing of electronics goods and apparel and other light industry to these nations. Although MNCs have provided women opportunities for employment and integration into the development process, it has also increased their vulnerability to exploitation. Nor has their employment in these industries necessarily had a positive effect on their status. Wong (1986) notes that even though women in Singapore are better educated and bear fewer children, the division of labor has not been altered. Sex inequalities and wage differentials persist in the face of double-digit rates of growth. Tam (1991) in a study of the gender income gap in Taiwan, finds that it is not due mainly to gender difference in labor force experiences. Rather the income gap results from gender differences in family role constraints. This is the same result found by Greenhaulgh (1985) for women in Taiwan. While women have made gains in education, health, nutrition and other socioeconomic indicators, gender inequality persists due to inequality in the distribution of resources within the family. Seguino (1997) and Berik (2000) in studies of Taiwan and South Korea have also found high rates of export-oriented growth to be consistent with a high degree of gender inequality in earnings and employment conditions and opportunities. Wives and daughters may become more valuable assets. However, the subordination of women at home is carried onto the factory floor. Women are concentrated at the bottom of the hierarchy in dead-end jobs with little job security. Also countries find it advantageous to keep wages low, lest manufacturing concerns relocate to another country.

Not all families are able to smooth consumption during times of income loss. In a study of Indonesia, Cameron and Worswick (2001) found that households reduce educational expenditures for girls in the face of economic crises. In fact, structural adjustment programs that purport to be gender blind may cause burdens borne disproportionately by women. Adjustment programs usually are composed of macroeconomic stabilization policies along with trade reforms. These programs generally lead to an increase in export-oriented industry within an economy. According to Standing (1989, 1999), trade reforms 'pull' women into the labor market because they are perceived as cheap and flexible labor. They also 'push' women into the market due to a worsened income effect. More family members are forced to seek paid employment to counterbalance declining family incomes. Time constraints may exacerbate problems for women as they attempt to balance reproductive duties with employment. Elson (1994) argues that macroeconomic adjustment policies take the reproductive sector for granted which is tantamount to assuming that there is an unlimited supply of female labor. When privatization and public sector reform takes place under structural adjustment policies, many activities which had been provided such as health care, are then shifted to the female reproductive sphere. This shift not only increases women's burden but also is socially inefficient (Elson, 1991). Studies that have investigated the strategies of households for surviving adjustment policies show an imposition of severe costs on the workforce. For women, these costs include an increase and intensification of women's reproductive labor, an increase in female informal sector labor force participation, a decrease in educational opportunities for girls, and deterioration of

physical and mental health in women. Such strategies may be efficient in generating profit but they are not efficient in generating the wider goals of human development (Elson, 1999). Whether or not an individual can respond to the new economic incentives depends crucially on whether an individual or household owns factors of production or at least has access to them and the ability to reallocate them in line with the incentives according to Haddad, Brown, Richter and Smith (1995). In so far as women are unable to gain access to or control of resources, they will experience an adverse impact from adjustment policies. Thus, in many countries, women, who may be poverty-stricken to begin with, are at a severe disadvantage and suffer disproportionately to men during adjustment periods.

The development process in Southeast Asia has also led to a boom in the sex sector of the economy. In a study undertaken by Chulalongkorn University in Thailand during 1993-1995 (Lim, 1998), prostitution was the largest of the underground businesses, accounting for about two-thirds of the total income from illegal activities. Annual income from prostitution was approximately 10 to 14 percent of Thailand's GDP for that same period. Lim (1998) maintains that macroeconomic policies such as the promotion of tourism, migration for employment, and the export of female labor as important sources of foreign exchange, have indirectly encouraged the growth of this sector. Other consequences of development that have impacted the growth of this sector include the lack of employment alternatives for the poorly educated or unskilled, the increasingly adverse terms of trade between rural and urban areas, growing income inequalities, and the absence of social safety nets for the poor.

Some East Asian countries have recognized the role of the state in determining patterns of development. In particular, because developing market economies have a tendency to generate inequalities that lower the quality of life for the less well off, the state is well placed to alleviate the situation through redistributive social policies. Shen and Williamson (1997) find that increased state strength has a positive effect on quality of life, which is in direct contradiction to the neo-classical approach to development. They also find that MNC penetration does not effect an increase in women's status. Many times domestic policies, such as minimum wage laws and working condition regulations, are suspended in order to protect the economic interest of foreign investors. In the case of debt repayment, budgets for health and education are cut, which leads to a lower quality of life for the poor. If the society has a patriarchal bias, it is the women and girls who are removed from school first and who are unable to obtain adequate health care. Foreign investment dependency also encourages the disparate growth of service and informal labor markets.

In a study of socialist economies, Croll (1986) evaluates changes that have affected peasant women. While socialist theory recognizes the contributions of women, and while socialist countries have made strong efforts to include women in the development process, they have met with limited success. In the four countries studied by Croll, the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and Tanzania, women have gained employment opportunities and political representation. On the other hand, they still bear a 'double burden' as regards child rearing and household labor. Croll contends this is because it is

expensive for an economy to finance reproductive activities outside the home. These countries have simply not accumulated the capital that would enable them to finance the infrastructure necessary to bring about true equality.

4.4 Vietnamese Women and Development

By far the most prolific area of study on women in Vietnam has focused on the effects of the population policy, abortion, fertility levels and birth control. For example, Goodkind (1995, 1994) and Jones (1982) among others, examine the population policy and its effect on fertility levels and number of abortions. Thi (1995) and Anh (1999) have examined the impact of collectivization and decollectivization on rural women. Tuyen (1999) looks at women's employment in a transitional economy. However, most information on women is incorporated into countrywide studies on the state of the economy including poverty levels, the effects of doi moi, food sufficiency and other thematic works. These include the U.N. and World Bank reports.

Desai (1995) has completed a more complete study of gender issues in Vietnam. Using the 92/93 Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VNLSS) conducted by the World Bank, he analyzes data collected on expenditures and income, demographic characteristics, education, migration, employment, wages, anthropometry, health, and fertility for differences and similarities between males and females. Desai's study does not examine empowerment.

4.5 Conclusion

The literature has established that women are an integral part of the development process. Ignoring or sidelining women's issues degrades the level of human development and slows the pace of economic development. If the totality of women's work, including market and non-market tasks, is combined, they contribute more to an economy than men do. Women, who are responsible for much of the provisioning in a society, must therefore receive commensurate consideration during the development process to enable the country's economy to fully evolve.

Even though there are studies on single issues concerning the circumstances of women in Vietnam using more current data, to the best of my knowledge, there are no studies that use more current data, including the 97/98 VNLSS, to examine the multivariate particulars that comprise the 'good life'. Nor have there been any studies that examine changes in women's welfare. Thus there is a need to examine in toto and over time the role and situation of women in Vietnam as concerns the basic needs agenda set forth by Sen and reiterated at the Cairo ICPD and the Beijing Conference on Women.

Chapter Five

Health

5.1 Health and Development

Adequate levels of sanitation, health care, and nutrition are not only desirable in and of themselves, they are important precursors for development. Myrdal (1968) refers to 'circular and cumulative causation' in underdeveloped countries. That is, low levels of nutrition, personal hygiene, and health can lead to low productivity and inefficiency. A worker who produces less, has less income, which then leads to poor nutrition and health. This is the vicious cycle of poverty referred to in development literature, i.e. a country is poor because it is poor. Further, malnutrition and its concomitant health problems are not a result of a mismatch between food production and population, but rather the consequence of a severe imbalance in income distribution. Thus poverty levels are directly tied to malnutrition and poor health and vice versa (Berg, 1981).

The 1978 Alma-Ata international conference on primary health care sponsored by UNICEF and WHO declared that ". . . health, which is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, is a fundamental human right (World Health Organization, 1999). This statement was reaffirmed at the U.N. Millennium Summit of 2000 and subsequently endorsed by the World Bank. Of the eight Millennium development goals to be used as a framework for measuring development progress, half are directly related to improving the health of individuals (World Bank, 2000). Case and Deaton (2002) argue that a broader measure of poverty would include health and education, as well as income, to more correctly

ascertain well-being, especially in studies concerned with intrahousehold allocation. Currently, the World Bank and the United Nations publish large numbers of socioeconomic indicators including health to assess a country's standard of living.

Gender disparities exist in all countries however, the differences are most notable in health indicators in third world countries. For example, in developed countries, maternal mortality rates are generally less than 10 per 100,000 while in lesser-developed countries the average is over 600 per 100,000 live births (UNDP, 1995). High levels of maternal mortality are a direct result of poor nutrition and inadequate health care (Okojie, 1994). In general gender inequalities in health are influenced by a societal emphasis on women's childbearing role, son preference, excessive workloads of women and, lack of autonomy by women (Okojie, 1994). Differential access to nutrition and health care manifests itself in higher female mortality and morbidity rates. Thus, this first section examines female health indicators.

5.2 Historical Background

After the 1954 declaration of independence in North Vietnam, the new government undertook implementation of a basic health service network. This network was expanded throughout the country after unification in 1975. Based on the Soviet model, the purpose of the network was to ensure equitable access to basic health services along with the provision of free health care, including diagnosis, treatment, and medicine. During the ensuing years Vietnam's general health indicators showed rapid improvement, with lower birthrates, lower infant and maternal mortality rates, and higher life

expectancies. The 1978 Alma-Ata Conference held Vietnam up as an example of a developing country that had solved its primary health issues (Naterop & Wolffers, 1999).

However, care must be taken in examining the indicators from this period. Although access to health services was provided for approximately 90% of the population at commune health centers and preventive measures were actively promoted by the government, the services were also severely under funded and staff members were poorly trained (Witter, 1997). Naterop and Wolffers (1999) note that "equal accessibility and availability of health facilities seemed to be more important than quality" (p1590).

Loss of aid from the Soviet Union and adoption of the World Bank's adjustment programs during the late 1980s and early 1990s forced the Vietnamese to privatize health care, although some free and reduced fee care still exists for poor and disadvantaged elements of the populace. Liberalization of pharmaceutical production and sales accompanied privatization of health services. Even with the reduction in public expenditure, the health budget could only meet 40% of its most basic requirements between 1985 and 1989 (Natterop & Wolffers, 1999). In 1989, total spending on health care was $2.50 per person, or 2% of GDP. Government spending was $0.83 per capita. Most spending is directed toward curative services, with only 3% on preventative care and 2% on commune health stations (Tipping & Dung, 1997).

The poor and disadvantaged suffer the most when social safety nets are dismantled. For countries with cultures that exhibit a male bias, females comprise the

largest group of disadvantaged regardless of the income group. In these societies, they are undernourished as children, have inadequate access to maternal health care, and are exposed to occupational and environmental hazards during their adult years, along with bearing very heavy workloads (Okojie, 1994).

5.3 Female Children

Confucian societies are noted for son preference. Sons are important for two reasons in these societies: (a) parents are usually supported in their old age by sons; and (b) sons are needed to maintain the family line. A third justification exists for son preference in Vietnam. The war years left the population with skewed sex ratios in favor of women. The 1979 census counted 1.5 million more women than men (Jones, 1982). A survey of literature would suggest that an ancestor-worshipping culture with almost universal marriage could exert strong pressures favoring male children under this circumstance. Strong son preference may manifest itself as inadequate nutrition for female children along with increased infant and child mortality rates for females.

5.3.1 Child Nutrition

Two studies have been published on child nutrition in Vietnam that test for gender bias. Both of the studies use the 92/93 Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VNLSS) data. Haughton & Haughton, (1997) find that gender bias appears to play no role in nutrition whether looking at stunting or wasting. Desai (1995) uses a different econometric specification to arrive at the same result.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (1999) also finds no difference in underweight, stunting, and wasting between boys and girls. However, malnutrition is a serious problem for many children of both sexes in Vietnam. The prevalence of underweight and stunting have decreased since 1985 from 52% and 60% to 40% and 36% respectively in 1998, but according to WHO criteria, a prevalence of underweight above 30% in children under five years of age is sign of a serious problem. Thus, according to the data, Vietnamese children are equally malnourished. Female children are not less well-fed than their male counterparts.

5.3.2 Sex Ratios

Sen (1989) has used sex ratio at birth to estimate the number of missing women in seven countries (China, India, west Asia, north Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh) with the highest rates of excess female mortality. The base figure used is the sex ratio in sub-Saharan Africa of 0.977 males per 100 females. Coale (1991) has calculated another base using data from the Model Life Tables 'West'. Taking into account population growth and the sex-specific mortality rates, he estimates the expected nondiscriminatory sex ratio to be between 1.01 to 1.03 for the same countries as Sen. Klasen (1994) claims that the sex ratio at birth for these countries should range between 1.025 and 1.048 depending upon the life expectancy of the country and the overall fertility level. For developed countries, the sex ratio at birth fluctuates near 1.05.

Table 1

Sex Ratios for Vietnam (females per 100 males)

	All Ages	0 - 4	5 - 14	15 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65 +
1985	105.2	97.3	95.9	98.9	114.5	117.1	118.3	148.4
1990	104.2	95.1	95.8	94.9	111.1	116.8	117.6	159.7

1995	103.2	94.2	95.3	95.0	100.5	119.2	119.1	156.2
1998	102.7	95.0	94.9	95.7	96.7	117.1	120.6	153.3

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (1999).

The figures in table 1 show that Vietnamese sex ratios at birth are well within the ranges estimated by Sen, Coale, and Klasen. For the earlier years, the switch in ratios showing a high number of females per males can be attributed to the Vietnam War. Further, although they do not reach the levels of most developed countries, the average sex ratios for all ages are higher than most other countries in the ESCAP region (Asia and the Pacific) and higher than all other countries in the area at approximately the same level of GDP per capita. For the group of least developed countries in the ESCAP region, all age sex ratio ranges from 96.6 to 97.1 (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [U.N. ESCAP], 1999). While these indicators may be an artifact of the many years of war in Vietnam and the longer life spans of women that occur naturally, as evidenced by the extremely high number of females in the older age cohorts, it is not possible to eliminate the idea that although son preference is strong, it is not strong enough to show families systematically discriminating against female children in nutrition and health. On the other hand, the all ages sex ratios are falling. This could be attributed to less risk taking behaviors for men, or fewer resources and health care devoted to women during their child-bearing years and old age. It would be premature to state decisively that son preference is not a factor that may, in the future, influence female survival rates.

5.3.3 Infant and Child Mortality Rates

Biomedical research has shown that in societies with unbiased access to nutrition and health care, male mortality rates are higher than female at every age (Waldron, 1985). Therefore, high female infant and child mortality rates can be seen as evidence of discriminatory practices in economic, social and cultural life. U.N. ESCAP (1999) reports 85 female per 100 male infant deaths for 83/87. The 1988 Vietnam Demographic and Health Survey documents under five mortality per 1000 of 51.2% for males and 43.2% for females (Nguyen-Dihn & Feeny, 1999).

Table 2

Infant and Child Mortality Rates: Vietnam 1997

		Male				
		Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest
IMR	Under 12 months per 1000 births	49.9	52.8	51.3	27.0	18.2
U5MR	Under 5 years per 1000 births	69.3	59.2	52.9	36.0	26.8
		Female				
IMR	Under 12 months per 1000 births	35.8	31.9	17.4	27.5	15.5
U5MR	Under 5 years per 1000 births	57.2	43.0	29.7	40.7	18.9

Source: Gwatkin, D. R., Rustein, S., Johnson, K., Pande, R. P. & Wagstaff, A. (2000).

Table 2 taken from the 1997 Demographic and Health Survey conducted by Macro International for the World Bank shows the infant and child mortality rates by economic status and gender. Economic status is assessed via asset ownership, which is assumed to be a reasonable proxy for consumption in this survey. The assets include those that relate to household ownership of consumption goods, and to household access to services and resources such as electricity, water and sanitation. It can reasonably be assumed that if son preference is strong enough, then expenditures on female nutrition and health care are income elastic. As economic status fell, higher rates of female infant

and child mortality rates would be expected. However, according to this survey, for every asset group in Vietnam, the male infant and child mortality rates are higher than the female rates. This is consistent with the finding of *Waldron (1985)* no discrimination in nutrition between boys and girls.

5.4 Family Planning

Incorporated with the establishment of public health centers were services for reproductive health and contraception. Although the North Vietnamese government recognized the need for family planning in 1960, it was not until 1984 that the National Committee for Population and Family Planning (NCPFP) was established with a mandate to limit population growth. The committee embarked upon an aggressive propaganda campaign along with programs to distribute contraceptives and monitor compliance at the commune level. A 1988 decision of the Council of Ministers specifies a family of no more than 2 children, mandates the age of first birth to be after 22, offers free contraceptives, provides abortion services for government employees and poor couples, and lays out rewards and punishments for adherence, along with providing educational programs (Vu, 1998).

As a result of the heavy focus on family planning, annual population growth rates fell from 2.1% in 1985/1990 to 1.6% in 1995/1998, with total fertility rates per woman falling from 4.2 to 2.6 respectively (U.N. ESCAP, 1999). These figures may be a little optimistic. The 92/93 VNLSS yields a total fertility rate (TFR) between 2.88 and 3.44 with 95 percent confidence. The Inter-Censal Demographic Survey (ICDS) finds the

TFR to be 3.10 for 93/94 (Haughton, 1997). For the period from July 1996 to July 1997, the 1997 Demographic and Health Survey shows a TFR of 2.19. This study separates urban and rural rates to yield a below replacement level of 1.49 in urban areas and above replacement rate of 2.38 for rural areas. This is a decline of 1.73 since the 1985-1987 DHS. Notwithstanding the disparate measures, the TFR has shown phenomenal drops in a short period of time from a high of approximately six children in 1965-69 to near replacement levels currently (Thang & Huong, 1998).

The drop in TFR has been accomplished through extensive distribution of contraceptive methods and free provision of abortion/menstrual regulation. The 1988 Vietnam DHS survey indicated that 89% of ever married women aged 15-49 knew of a modern method of contraception and the source of supply of that method. The 1994 ICDS shows an increase of 4% to 93% by 1993 (Phai, Knodel, Cam & Xuyen, 1996). The 1997 DHS reports 98.5% of ever-married women know this information (Thang & Huong, 1998). 45.8%, 56.9% and 68.3% respectively of women had ever used a modern method. The method employed most often by an overwhelming margin is the IUD, with 40.5%, 48.4%, and 57.8% from the three surveys.

Although the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development advocates education and involvement of men in fertility regulation and family planning, the use of male methods of contraception remain low in Vietnam. In all three surveys, male sterilization rates are below ½ of one percent. Condom usage has risen from 4.2% in 1988 to 8.5% in 1994 to 12.3% in 1997. These figures do not represent consistent use

but simply indicates if condoms were ever used. Goodkind & Anh (1997) contend that condom use may continue to grow in Vietnam as the market reforms progress, making condoms more readily available through the private sector. Further, as privatization continues, western influences are expected to make deeper inroads into Vietnamese culture including acceptance among the younger cohorts of extramarital sexual activity. As the incidence of extramarital sexual activity increases, incidence of STDs are expected to grow which should also spread the endorsement of condom use among males.

Along with high levels of IUD use, Vietnam exhibits one of the highest rates of abortion in the world. The figures for abortion include two different procedures: menstrual regulation, which is performed before five weeks of pregnancy, and abortion conducted after five weeks. The total number of abortions in Vietnam increased from 70,281 to 811,176 between 1976 and 1987, in 1991 the number of abortions reached 1.13 million, by 1993 they had increased to 1.37 million. This figure exceeds the total number of reported births. The total abortion rate (TAR), analogous to the total fertility rate, for Vietnam was 2.5 in 1992 (Goodkind, 1994). According to the Vietnam 1988 DHS, 5.9% of ever-married women had used abortion/menstrual regulation as a form of contraception. The 1994 ICDS shows a rise to 12.8% (Phai, Knodel, Cam & Xuyen, 1996). Since the early 1990s and the opening of the market, abortion has also been available in private clinics. In 1991, the government began subsidizing private abortions. There are no figures currently available for the number of abortions provided in private clinics although Goodkind (1994) estimates 15% of all abortions are done privately.

There is also scant data on the number of abortions/menstrual regulations performed for single women. Belanger and Hong (1998) note that statistics of this type are difficult to collect due to a guarantee of anonymity from providers. Estimates provided by WHO assert that between 25% to 30% of all single women of reproductive age are seeking and using abortion services every year. The NCPFP reports low demand for contraception among young women at the same time that an increase in premarital sexuality is rising as a causative factor. A 1995-1996 study (Belanger & Hong, 1998) conducted in Hanoi suggests that the low use of contraceptives by single women stems from social taboos, which gives young women few sources of information and little access to counseling services. The lack of information from home and social sources is exacerbated by Vietnam's family planning program that targets married couples and does not educate either young women or men on sexuality and contraception. One-fourth of the young women surveyed were having their second or third abortion.

High rates of abortion may be caused by several factors. In particular, Goodkind (1994) links limited contraceptive choice due to poverty and lack of government resources to make inexpensive supply-based methods available, penalties associated with extra children, which raises the marginal cost of childbearing, and a modernization trend, which is raising the incidence of premarital sex to the choice to have an abortion. A study of two villages in Thai Binh Province notes that the most often cited reasons for choosing abortion were economic: either the expense of rearing a child or the expense of the sanctions imposed upon having more than two children (Johansson, Nga, Huy, Dat & Holmgren, 1998).

Hieu, Stoeckel and Tien (1993) note that of 2,088 women surveyed in Hanoi and Thai Binh over half had at least one prior abortion and one-fifth had at least two. This suggests either the use of abortion as a form of contraception and/or contraceptive failure. However, when asked about the use of a modern method of contraception, only 23% stated that they were seeking termination due to failure of the method. Approximately three-quarters of the women with IUDs reported that the IUD had been retained but had failed. 63% of the women who used condoms reported irregular use as the reason for failure. 37% of the women seeking an abortion were using traditional methods of contraception such as rhythm and withdrawal. Therefore, although high numbers of women are aware of methods of contraception and where to obtain them, contraceptives are perhaps not being used consistently or correctly. In the case of the rhythm method, withdrawal or other traditional contraceptive choices, the method used is not as effective as more modern birth control. Finally, it may be the case that abortion is used as a form of birth control.

The NCPFP operates an information, education, and communication (IEC) program to improve awareness of the family planning program. However, the IEC does not provide information about how to use contraceptives, their side-effects or counseling on contraception. A 97/98 survey (Thang, Johnson, Landry & Columbia, 1998) in Hanoi, Soc Trang and Tay Ninh provinces notes that far less than half the women who received a modern method of contraception said they had received information about how to use the method nor did they know about or understand the possible side-effects inherent in use of

the chosen method. 42% did not know if an IUD would protect them from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV, 44% did not know whether the pill would and 29% did not know if condoms would provide such protection. Of the sterilization clients, over half the men and two-thirds of the women either believed they were protected against STDs as a result of sterilization or were not sure. Although 65% of the women who had an abortion reported that they received information about family planning and obtained modern contraceptive methods at the time of the abortion, most were not checked prior to leaving the clinic and advice concerning follow-up appointments were given to only about one-third. 69% did not know when they could get pregnant again.

Although legal abortion is much safer than illegal abortion, there are still risks associated with the practice, as it is invasive surgery. Statistics are not available concerning mortality/morbidity rates from abortion but one study does show that for rural women, abortion is related to reproductive tract infections (RTI). In this study, having an abortion in the last six months yielded a 162% greater chance of RTI symptoms (Gorbach, Hoa, Tsui & Nhan, 1998). For a country with a high rate of abortion such as Vietnam, this is a significant health risk for women.

Most of the research claiming to study reproductive health actually focuses on Vietnam's family planning program, the use of contraceptives, and abortion and whether or not the program has been successful in curtailing population increase. Reproductive health, however, is a much broader issue. The U. N. International Conference on

Population and Development of 1994 defines reproductive health as: " a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. . . in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its function and processes" (para. 7.2). This includes, "family-planning counseling, information, education, communication and services; education and services for prenatal care, safe delivery, and post natal care, especially breast-feeding, infant and women's health care; . . . abortion . . . including prevention of abortion and the management of the consequences of abortion; treatment of reproductive tract infections; sexually transmitted disease and other reproductive health conditions . . . "(para. 7.6). While rapid population growth can negatively impact per capita income growth and exacerbate poverty and inequality (Todaro, 1996), population control should not be the focus. If responsibility for using contraception is the woman's role and men remain reluctant or unable to take a part, as is the case in most countries, then more attention should be paid to informing women of their choices, the risks and benefits inherent in those choices, and ensuring their health during childbearing years. If the responsibility for using contraception is a joint obligation of men and women there needs to be increased education on the male role in contraception for men.

5.5 Maternal Care

Maternal mortality rates (MMR) have risen over the last 25 years in Vietnam. During 1975-1988 the rates rose from 0.9 to 1.4 (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 1990). UN ESCAP (1999) reports 160 deaths per 100,000 births for 1990. The Ministry of Health (MOH) provides a figure of 110/100,000 for 1990. However a MOH survey indicates a MMR of 220/100,000 for the same year (UNICEF, 1994). This

rate remains at 110/100,000 for 1997 according to the 1997 Health Statistics Yearbook (Davidsen, 2000). WHO estimates a MMR of 160/100,000 as of 1997 (Vietnam Ministry of Planning and Investment [VMPI] & United Nations [UN], 1999). Thus, although the exact MMR is subject to debate, the highest of these rates is not exceptionally high for a lesser-developed country. For the ESCAP region, only Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia show lower rates during the same period. Vietnam's goal is to reduce this rate to 70/100,000 by the year 2000.

Major causes of maternal mortality according to UNICEF (1994) include hemorrhage, post-partum infection, eclampsia, tetanus and ruptured uterus. The Ministry of Health believes that up to 35% of maternal deaths could be completely eliminated, and another 53% possibly eliminated through improved access to health care and improved hygiene.

Statistics from Vietnam's MOH have consistently indicated that over 90% of all births are attended by professional health care personnel. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (1999) reports that less than 50% of all births occur in a health facility. This percentage is even lower for rural and/or remote areas. The discrepancy may be due to the heavy reliance Vietnam is forced to place on village health workers and midwives due to budget constraints. However, in some remote provinces up to 25% of all births are unattended. Thus, even a low level of help is unavailable in case of emergency.

Whether or not the birth is attended by trained personnel or takes place in a health facility depends heavily on income profile and on place of residence. For an individual in the wealthiest quintile almost 100% of deliveries are attended. Only 50% of the individuals in the poorest quintile have attended births. 65% of the women in the poorest quintile give birth at home, while only 7.1% of the richest do so (Gwatkin et al. 2000).

The discrepancy may be due to the poor penetration of health facilities into remote, rural areas where the majority of poorer people reside. MOH statistics indicate that while 90% of urban areas have maternal health care services available, only 20% of the rural, remote areas do (VMPI &UN, 1999). The 92/93 VNLSS finds that either a physician/doctor or a nurse/midwife attends 71% of the rural births. For urban women 91.6% of births are attended by those personnel (Desai, 1995). Second, the work habits of poor, rural women may preclude their ability to give birth in an attended, health facility setting. Anecdotal evidence from the Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA) indicates that many women's work hours are excessive. It is not uncommon for women to work until the hour of birth and to re-commence work the day after the birth. An average workday begins at four in the morning and ends around eleven in the evening (Turk, 1999).

Data on the availability of pre and antenatal care previous to the nineties is scarce, although a Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) survey from 1989 in two northern provinces found that for half the women in these provinces the nearest clinic was over an hour away. For the remainder of the women, travel time was over two hours

(UNICEF, 1990). Given a heavy workload and the recent birth, the possibility of formal health care is very small. More recent statistics show that the number and type of antenatal care is once again tied to income quintile. While 70.6% of women on average were able to obtain care, according to the 1997 Health, Nutrition and Population Survey (Gwatkin et al., 2000), 92% of the wealthiest and 49% of the poorest visited a medically trained person. From the 92/93 VNLSS data on prenatal visits, 56.4% of rural women sought prenatal care with an average number of 2.2 visits. Urban women averaged 3.4 visits with 76.3% seeking care. 44% of the poorest quintile and 78.2% of the richest quintile obtained prenatal care (Desai, 1995). As it is in most countries, the wealthier, urban clients are seeking and obtaining more health care.

According to the UN Common Country Assessment (Turk, 1999) maternal health care is provided by commune health centers which serve an average of 6,000 citizens. Official statistics maintain that all but 5% of the communes have community health centers available to the population, however a monitoring program set up at 12 districts showed utilization at only 40%. In those same districts, only 23% of women had adequate antenatal care, assisted delivery, and post-natal care. Although Vietnam provides some reproductive health care at less than cost and grants exemption for certain groups of disadvantaged persons, one reason for underutilization may be the recent introduction of user fees. An exemption for payment of health care is left to the discretion of the individual health worker. The worker must personally meet any financial loss to the commune health center. Therefore, it is difficult to gain waiver or deferral of fees (Tipping & Dung, 1997). Even small user fees may discourage the

marginally poor from accessing needed health care, especially in the case of childbirth. Childbirth has traditionally been viewed as a 'natural' process that requires little to no assistance. As recently as 1978, doctors at a leading women's hospital in North Vietnam believed that the majority of deliveries were essentially pain free (Molander, 1978).

The opening of the health care market to private providers has also introduced moonlighting by doctors and other personnel. Prior to economic reform, the commune paid for health staff. Since Doi Moi, the state has taken on salary payments, as communes are no longer able to support them. Prior to and since initiation of the state-supported system, salaries are extremely low, supplies seriously limited and infrastructure crumbling. In response to the low salaries many staff began to offer private services part time or turned to farming or trading to maintain themselves and their families. The result was a loss in confidence on the part of citizens in the public health care system (Witter, 1997).

To alleviate these problems the Vietnamese government has made a commitment to expand access to reproductive health services for all men, women, and adolescents by the year 2010 in line with the statement from the ICPD on reproductive health care. To accomplish this goal, Vietnam will increase the share of its budget for reproductive health in order to provide improved information, education and communication for the population along with stronger reproductive health training for service providers (Davidson, 2000).

5.6 Nutrition

Poor health is directly tied to poor nutrition. Poor nutrition is not entirely defined as the lack of enough food, the food must contain the correct amounts of nutrients to promote health. Poverty and poor nutrition creates a spiral leading to poor health. Poor individuals do not have the ability to provide themselves with nutritious food. Individuals without access to nutritious food do not have the energy to attempt to remove themselves from poverty.

Although Vietnam emerged as a primary rice exporter in the last 10 years, rice alone is not enough to promote complete nutrition. Nor is it guaranteed that when a country has food to export, its citizens also have enough to eat. WHO considers a recommended daily intake of 2100 kcal/capita/day as the minimum requirement. Further, the nutritional requirements for women, pregnant women, men, and children are different which makes a simple computation of calories ingested a misleading indication of nutritional health.

Table 3

Epidemiological Diagnoses of CED

Degree of CED	Body Mass Index
Normal	> 18.5
I	17.0 – 18.4
II	16.0 – 16.9
III	< 16.0

Source: FAO (2001)

A second measure applied for purposes of assessing adequate nutrition, shown in table 3, is the body mass index (BMI). BMI, computed as height/weight^2, has been found to be highly correlated with weight and consistently independent of height which makes

it a good indicator of the body's energy stores. It is also highly correlated with body fat, i.e. energy stores, for both men and women between the ages of 20 and 65 however, it is not recommended as useful for the young, very old or breastfeeding/pregnant women. Although women have greater fat mass than men do and have been shown to tolerate a lower BMI, the same cut-off for diagnosing chronic energy deficiency (CED) is used. The rationale is that women must have additional energy to sustain pregnancy and lactation along with the additional burden of child rearing, housework, and workload in developing countries. FAO notes that individuals with BMI < 17.6 have lower average physical activity levels with increased amounts of rest time per day. A low BMI is also associated with increased risk of low birth weight, poor lactational performance, impaired immunocompetence and higher susceptibility to infection (FAO, 2001).

Third, it is possible to estimate nutritional state by assessing the absence or presence of vital micronutrients in individuals. For instance, vitamin A deficiency causes vision problems as well as reduced immune function. Iodine deficiencies cause brain damage in the developing fetus and goiter. Iron deficiency anemia can cause reduced physical work capacity, impaired cognitive functioning, and reduced immunocompetence.

5.6.1 Caloric Intake

A General Nutrition Survey taken in the period 1987-1989 estimated over half of the Vietnam's population fell under the food poverty line. The food poverty line is based on a basket of goods in which food items provide 2100 kcal/capita/day (FAO, 1999). As

of 1992, 25% of the total population were considered undernourished, that is, not receiving at least 2100 kcal/capita/day (FAO, 1999). A World Bank study using the 92/93 VNLSS data found that if households are assumed to spend 70% of their income on food, on average 49% of the population could not afford to buy 2100 calories a day per member of the household. If the rural areas only are taken into account the rate falls to 43% (Haughton, 1999). Further, the FAO (1999) and the National Institute of Nutrition in Vietnam consider the worldwide recommendation of 2100/kcal/capita/day to be too low considering the energy expended in daily life in Vietnam. The recommended energy requirement for Vietnam is 2300 kcal/capita/day. Cereals, the most important of which is rice, comprise 78% of total intake in Vietnam. In certain areas, rice is supplemented with cassava, sweet potato and corn. Protein, predominantly of vegetable origin, provides 13% of energy supplies. Fat consumption is low at 10% (FAO, 1999).

Pregnant women generally do not increase their intake of calories. Since physical activity is not reduced during pregnancy, the caloric intake is especially low for this group. Traditional practices contribute to an already inadequate caloric intake. Hard work and small babies are believed to make delivery easier. Thus average weight gain during pregnancy is only 6.6 kg in rural areas and 8.4 kg in urban areas. In some areas, intake is especially restricted during the last trimester. Low maternal nutrition is the leading cause of low birth weight in babies. Low birth weight is the leading cause of neonatal and post neonatal mortality, child morbidity and impaired child development. In 1995 an estimated 14% of all births were low birth weight (FAO, 1999). Especially in

the case of hemorrhage, which causes 30% of all maternal deaths, malnutrition is an aggravating factor in maternal mortality as well (UNIEF, 1994).

5.6.2 Body Mass Index

BMI has been measured for a number of years primarily by the National Institute of Nutrition in Vietnam. The 92/93 VLNSS also collected anthropometric data on adults.

Table 4

Vietnamese Body Mass Index

Source/year	Location	Sex	Age	Mean BMI	% < 16.0	%16.0-16.9	%17.0-18.5	% Normal
NIN, 1985	National	F	18 – 60	19.4	8.1	13.8	66.8	. . .
NIN, 1990	National	F	15 – 50	19.2	4.8	10.4	22.4	. . .
VNLSS, 92/93	National	F	20 – 65	19.7	4.7	7.3	21.6	66.4
VNLSS, 92/93	National	M	20 – 65	19.5	2.1	5.7	23.9	68.3
NIN, 1995	National	F	15 – 49	. . .	. . .	15.9	25.9	. . .
NIN, 1995	Ha Tay Province	F	15 - > 75	19.1	5.8	8.6	26.6	. . .
NIN, 1995	Ha Tay Province	M	15 - >75	19.1	4.6	8.3	27.2	. . .
NIN, 1997	National	F	15 – 49	19.6	4.6	7.1	22.6	. . .

Note: . . . indicates no data available
Sources: FAO (1999), Desai (1995)

According to table 4, prevalence of CED has remained at slightly more than one-third of all women during the 1990s, although the percentages did drop from 38% in 1990 to 34% in 1997. Considering this is the period in which Vietnam changed from being a rice importer to an exporter, there appears to have been little benefit of the macroeconomic phenomenon trickling down to the women of Vietnam. Average BMI for both men and

women has also remained fairly stable during this period at just under the 20 – 25 normal range. The incidence of overweight (25.0 - 29.9 BMI) has increased between 1990 and 1997 from 1.7% to 2%. While small, this may be evidence of an increasing gap between the rich and poor. For the 92/93 VNLSS, although men and women both show little difference when we consider all degrees of CED, the percentage of women in second and third degree CED are much higher than those of the males. In an analysis of the anthropometric data from the VNLSS, Desai (1995) finds a greater variation in nutritional status among women than men. The gender gap in nutritional status is at its highest in lower income groups. Spouse-absent female headed households (FHH) show adult women with significantly poorer nutritional status than women in other types of households. Interestingly, the children of spouse absent FHH show higher nutritional status than other children. In spouse present households with children, adult women show poorer status while men in those households showed no difference. He also observes that urban women are less energy deficient than those in rural areas. As more households in rural areas receive at least the minimum level of calories, this may reflect the heavier workload for rural women. Thus, adult women's nutritional status is at significantly more risk. They begin at a lower BMI and tend to bear the brunt of any food shortages.

5.6.3 Micronutrients

Probably the most significant micronutrient indicator for women is the prevalence of iron deficiency anemia. Anemia can be due to low levels of iron in the diet. Aggravating factors include the prevalence of parasitic diseases and malaria. The rates of

anemia have not changed much over the years. In 1989, rural rates of anemia were much higher than urban with rates of 51.5% and 31.5% respectively. Among pregnant women, the urban rates rose to 41.2% with the rural rate at 48.8%. The anemia rates rise as the pregnancy progresses. Rural women during the third trimester in this same survey had an anemia prevalence rate of 59.3% (UNICEF, 1990). A National Institutes of Health survey taken in 1995 found the prevalence of anemia to be 41% in non-pregnant women and 52% in pregnant women (FAO, 1999).

Iodine is found in the soil. It is then absorbed by animals and plants as they take their nutrients from the soil. Seafood, dairy products, meat and poultry usually provide the bulk of dietary iodine. In areas without enough iodine, salt is iodized. Iodine deficiency is higher in women than in men for all areas of Vietnam although the rates rise for both sexes in the mountainous regions. People in the mountainous areas consume less rice and more tubers than in other areas of Vietnam. One of the tubers ingested, cassava, inhibits absorption of iodine which may be one reason the rates are higher in these regions. These are also the most poverty-stricken areas of Vietnam with a much lower intake of proteins and lipids. The most recent data from 1986 reports a total goiter rate in northern Vietnam of 48% for females and 23% for males; central regions show 34.4% and 30% respectively; high plateau areas 37.2% and 27% (FAO, 1999). The prevalence of this condition could be an artifact of the lower overall caloric intake for adult women.

5.7 Morbidity

The 92/93 and 97/98 VNLSS collected data on incidence of illness. Although before puberty girls are no more likely to be ill than boys, this changes during the economically productive and child bearing years. From the 92/93 VNLSS, women between 18 to 55 years old had a 29.7% incidence of morbidity (Desai, 1995). 24.9% of the men reported occurrence of illnesses within the last 12 months. For men and women between the ages of 20 and 54, the 97/98 VNLSS shows 37.3% of the men and 46.9% of the women state they were ill during the last year (UN, 2000). Of those women who reported being ill, a high percentage was categorized as having 'other unspecified illnesses'. As the surveys did not collect data on incidence of RTI nor any other illness associated with reproduction, there is some speculation that this is the reason for the overrepresentation of females in this class. However, women are also more often underweight and undernourished, which contributes to levels of morbidity.

5.8 HIV/AIDS

The first reported case of HIV infection was identified in late 1990 (Thuy, Lindan, Phong, Dat, Nhung, Barclay & Khiem, 1999). By the end of 1996 there were 4960 cumulative HIV cases (Thuy, Nhung, Thuc, Lien & Kheim, 1998). As of June 1999, reported cases numbered 13,623 (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 1999). In the year 2000, the number of cases jumped to 26,333 confirmed cases of HIV infection with 4,305 developing AIDS and 2,218 deaths from AIDS ("Vietnam estimates," 2000). Although originally confined to the southern parts of Vietnam and in the provinces bordering Cambodia and China, HIV is now found in 59 of Vietnam's 61

provinces. The pattern of distribution follows that of other Asian countries in that presently over 80% of those infected are men. Beginning with injecting drug users (IDU), then passing to commercial sex workers (CSW), the disease is now moving into the general population through heterosexual transmission. Because prostitution and drug use is illegal in Vietnam, the extent of the problem among these populations is difficult to quantify. However, estimates of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS yield between 130,000 and 160,000 currently infected ("Vietnam and UN", 1998).

The spread of HIV/AIDS can pose substantial problems for a developing country. It is a disease of the sexually active population, which is precisely those people just coming into or at the height of their productive years. It leaves children orphaned, dependent on the state, on other relatives, or with no one to care for them. The medicines to treat the disease are expensive and do not eradicate the disease but only hold it in remission.

Reasons for the spread of HIV are multifold. The opening of the market in Vietnam has brought with it an opening of its borders to trade and migration between bordering nations. Among the younger cohorts especially, the economic transition has brought heightened access to entertainment and increased mobility. Urbanization has taken place rapidly and service industries have sprung up. Teenagers and young adults therefore, are exposed to social milieus not necessarily in line with the morals of the state or the older generations. As a result, high-risk behavior, such as drug use and unprotected sexual activity, are on the rise. The increase in abortion among the young

that has been noted is a result of poor sex education and low use of contraceptives. These factors also contribute to the spread of disease. Many young women are unlikely to request the use of condoms by their male partners for fear of seeming too knowledgeable about sex and thus deemed 'loose'. Yet it is precisely this group that is seeing the fastest increase in dissemination of HIV/AIDS. From 1993 to 1997 the number of HIV-positive 20 to 29 year olds increased from 15% to 29.7% (UNDP, 1999).

According to studies conducted in Vietnam by Thuy et al. (1999, 1998), Vietnamese men are more likely than their western counterparts to visit commercial sex workers (CSW). Whereas Western men more often engage in serial monogamy, Vietnamese men have the same tendency as those in Thailand, who engage in more commercial sex and thus, have many sex partners simultaneously. Of the married male visitors to prostitutes, 14% had used a condom the last time they had sex with their wife; 21% used a condom during their last visit with a girlfriend, 11% had used condoms during their most recent encounter with a CSW. Married men were as likely to have girlfriends as unmarried men. Coupled with low condom use (less than 7% reported consistent usage) it is through these visits that HIV is being transmitted to the general populace who may not be engaging in risky behavior. For women, knowing of the risk of HIV and that condom use reduces that risk, does not necessarily translate into an ability to insist upon the use of a condom. Married women may have difficulty insisting upon condom use for fear of alienating husbands. Single females are afraid not only of appearing 'loose' but may also be reluctant to suggest distrust. Prostitutes are in a powerless situation, especially in a country where CSW is illegal. In a country where

women are prized for submission and docility, the ability to negotiate condom use is severely restrained.

5.9 Longevity

As a general indicator of health status for a population, longevity is probably the most comprehensive. Life expectancy at birth is the average number of years an infant would be expected to live if health and living conditions remained the same. It denotes whether the populace has access to heath care including immunization programs and the quality of that health care. It reflects environmental concerns such as access to safe water, fertile soil, clean air and energy sources. It indicates whether citizens have sufficient, nutritious food. Individuals who are well fed, free of disease, face few environmental hazards and have a low incidence of work-related morbidity and mortality live longer.

Table 5

Vietnamese Life Expectancy at Birth

	Males	Females	Difference
1970	45.7	50.2	4.5
1985-1990	61	65	4
1990-1995	63	67	4
1995-2000	65	70	5

Sources: U.N. ESCAP (1999) & United Nations (1986)

In countries with higher life expectancies, women live on average five to eight years longer than men given the same access to resources. In some lesser-developed countries, especially those that show strong male bias or provide poor maternal care, women may outlive men by only zero to three years. When Vietnam is categorized by income group, it lies in the low income cohort. In the ESCAP region, countries that have

reached the longevity statistics shown in table five for Vietnam, are the middle-income countries. In the low-income countries of this region, women on average outlive men by only one year. Thus, Vietnam's life expectancy at birth, depicted in table 5, shows no indication of any bias or systematic discrimination against women, and for the population as a whole is indicative of what a country-wide, systematic push for primary health care and improved access to safe water and sanitation can do.

Thus Vietnam exhibits some very positive health indicators for a low-income country. There is no evidence of bias in child morbidity or mortality. Vietnam possesses excellent longevity indicators for a country of its income level with no indication of systematic discrimination against women. On the other hand, antenatal and prenatal health care is unevenly distributed and inadequate. Family planning is focussed on adherence to a program promoting lower birth rates. There is little to no information disseminated for the unmarried, nor on STD transmission or the male role in birth control. Women also show more variation in BMI and are at greater risk for micronutrient deficiency. Given that the last 10 years have been growth years for Vietnam, the variation in BMI could be a source of concern in the future. If women are the first to go without during economic downturns, then their health, along with their baby's if they are pregnant, will be at higher risk.

As is well known in the education field, a well fed, healthy individual is better able to absorb knowledge. Thus, education along with health is the major focus of

investment in human capital in development literature. The next section turns to a discussion of education for women in Vietnam.

Chapter Six

Education

6.1 Education and Development

Economic literature perceives the demand for education as a derived demand relating to better job opportunities. As a component of the 'good' life, an education is not only worthwhile because of the possible increased employment opportunities, but also because it enables an individual to partake more fully in social, political and spiritual life. Educated individuals make more fully informed life choices. The World Bank (1999) considers education to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for development due to its capacity to improve lives and reduce poverty through "1) helping people to become more productive . . . 2) improving health and nutrition . . . 3) enriching lives directly . . . and 4) promoting social development (pg 5)."

Many developing countries believe education is an integral part of the development process. Education "would accelerate economic growth, . . . raise levels of living especially for the poor, . . . generate widespread and equal employment opportunities for all, . . . acculturate diverse ethnic or tribal groups, and would encourage 'modern' attitudes" (Todaro, 1997, p. 379). Evidence relating to attainment of the purely economic goals of growth, increases in standards of living and more employment, is meager. However, if development is considered to include an increase in human capital potential enabling the populace able to effectively engage in the functioning of the economic and social system, the end results of educational investment are positive (Musgrave, 1995). The World Bank (1999) contends that economic returns to education

exceed the returns on other kinds of investment especially for developing countries. Further, that due to five key trends (democratization, globalization, the prevalence of market economies, technological change and changing public/private roles), education will become more important in determining how well a nation will fare.

Education has been shown to generate secondary effects in the interaction between an educated parent and child. Children of educated mothers are more likely to enjoy better nutrition and to become educated themselves (Buvnic & Lycette, 1989). Women who are educated tend to have fewer children (Cochrane, 1979). In a country such as Vietnam with high population growth rates, the need to ease population pressures can be an important part of the development strategy. Educated individuals utilize health information more effectively. The World Bank (1993) has found that particularly for women and girls, education is beneficial to household health because it is women who prepare the food, maintain cleanliness and care for children and the elderly. Therefore, as an investment, education for women shows a high level of social returns in addition to private returns.

Literacy is defined as a person's ability to both read and write a simple statement about their everyday life with understanding. The proportion of children who have completed the equivalent of grade three approximates literacy rates. While many lesser-developed countries, including Vietnam, have made vast strides in reducing the illiterate numbers of individuals, in today's world much more is needed. Further, considering the vast numbers of people based in rural areas, one way to increase standards of living

rapidly is extension programs and study programs for adults in the countryside. As the urban absorptive capacity of these countries is limited and strained, immediate requirements point to an increase in vocational and technical training rather than an increase in formal education (Meier, 1995d).

6.2 Background

Under Chinese rule and during the era before French occupation, women were considered inferior and their duties did not necessitate a formal education. Under French occupation few Vietnamese, even men, received an education. By the end of WWII, only 10% of the Vietnamese population was literate, almost none of the literate were female (Biddington & Biddington, 1997). In line with Communist principles, Ho Chi Minh advocated equality of the sexes including equality in education. As more and more men were recruited to the war, increasing numbers of women were recruited to take the men's places in the factory and on the farm. During this time, women in North Vietnam secured the opportunity to receive an education. According to DRV statistics, in 1946 there were three female students in technical schools, college and universities. By 1971 that number had risen to 47,620 (Brown, 1975). Females constituted 47% of the students attending primary and secondary school in 1972 (Molander, 1978).

6.3 Literacy

After unification, Vietnam embarked upon an ambitious program to introduce every citizen to formal education through a series of literacy campaigns, establishment of

state supported kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and adult education programs. Between 1980 and 1990 the percentage of the total population considered illiterate dropped from 16.6% to 9.3%. This is one of the lowest rates of illiteracy in the third world.

Table 6

Literacy Rate among Population over 10

	1989		1992-1993		1997-1998	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Nationwide	92.5	83.8	91.4	82.3	93.7	85.6
Urban	96.8	91.5	96.3	90.7	97.1	91.6
Rural	91.1	81.7	90.1	80.0	92.6	83.7

Source: UN (2000)

According to statistics from the United Nations shown in table 6, female literacy is consistently lower than male literacy with the differences most pronounced in rural areas. In 1980, the female illiteracy rate was 22.4% with the male rate at 10% (UN ESCAP, 1999). By the end of the decade, although rates have fallen dramatically, the difference still exists with 16.2% for women and 7.5% for men (UN ESCAP, 1999). Although the male-female gap has not closed to date, most of the difference lies in the older cohorts. As of 1999, women fifty years and older have a total illiteracy rate of 36.2% compared to men of the same age range with 10.6% whereas those individuals in the 20-29 year old group have 6.5% and 6.2% respectively (UN, 1999). The task of eradicating illiteracy among younger people is very much different from that of eliminating this problem for older cohorts. For young people, it is a matter of ensuring that children attend school. For older individuals, literacy classes are harder to organize, make available and induce people to attend. Further, the ramification of illiteracy between these two age groups is different. For those older individuals retirement or at

least an easing of economic activity is occurring and experience is a very real advantage, while younger individuals are just beginning their careers. Considering financial constraints, it may be optimal to continue focusing on younger cohorts.

Although the Vietnamese have achieved impressive growth in literacy rates, simple basic skills will not allow them to compete in a global, digitalized economy. With the loss of State sponsored co-operatives that manage marketing, allocation of supplies, and budgeting, there is a need for further, job-specific training in the rural areas. Not only would this type of training improve the lives of those in farming communities, it could slow down migration to overcrowded urban areas. A growing concern articulated by the government is the loss of literacy in the years after primary school is completed. The DRV has noted that large numbers of rural women who return to subsistence farming and manual labor upon leaving school become illiterate again (Thi, 1990).

6.4 School Attendance

School curriculum in Vietnam is mandated to be the same for both sexes. Male and female children attend the same schools in the same classrooms with the same books. The DRV contends that revised textbooks contain no content or images of discrimination and the books enhance awareness of social equality and justice (UN, 1999). The method of teaching is heavily reliant on rote learning involving memorization of facts (VMPI & UN, 1999). The emphasis on book and rote learning puts rural school systems at a disadvantage as they lack funds to purchase books or subsidize students who cannot

afford them. This approach also tends to make education less relevant to the needs of the community, which may discourage parents from sending children to school.

Vietnam's burgeoning population of school age children may be making it difficult to finance a truly adequate education. Even without 100% enrollment, Vietnam's attendance at primary schools was 9.4 million children in 1992-1993 (Biddington & Biddington, 1997). By 1997-1998 attendance had increased to 10.3 million (VMPI & UN, 1999).

Further, the amount of time spent in school is short when compared to world averages. In primary school, students attend for only 660 hours in contrast to 880 average hours in the world. For ethnic minority children in rural areas, the hours are only half the world averages. This could be a method of dealing with the large numbers of children and concurrent budget shortfalls along with a teacher shortage or, as is the case in many agricultural societies, the school year may be kept short intentionally to free children for work in rural areas. In addition, a short school year enables teachers to seek other income-augmenting activities.

Table 7

Percent Currently Attending School, 1989

	Rural area		Urban area	
Age Group	Males	Females	Males	Females
5-9	62.4	61.7	73.8	74.0
10-14	78.0	71.1	87.5	86.0
15-19	26.8	16.5	37.7	34.0

Source: UNICEF (1990)

At the time of the 1989 census, approximately 62% rural and 74% urban females in the 5-9 age group were attending school as outlined in table 7. However, there is a precipitous drop for females at higher levels with 16.5% and 34% respectively in the 15-19 age bracket. Attendance numbers for females are invariably lower than for males with the most disparity shown at higher levels of education. There are also pronounced rural/urban differences in attendance. The low enrollment rates are attributed to worsening economic conditions that resulted in funding loss for education. Pre-school education collapsed, particularly in rural areas. Primary and secondary education deteriorated. The institution of fees for what had been provided free also contributes to the low enrollment rates.

Vietnamese leadership considers education vital to facilitate the move to a market oriented economy. At the United Nations Jomtien Conference of 1990, Vietnam took the opportunity to re-emphasize its goal of 'education for all'. In 1991, primary education was made compulsory for children in the primary school (ages 6 to 14) group.

Subsequently, government funding of education rose from 1.6% of GDP in 1991 to 3.8% in 1998 (VMPI & UN, 1999). However, this funding has not been sufficient to achieve complete subsidization of the educational system. As a result, funding for most construction of new primary schools, the costs of teaching-learning materials, textbooks, basic school supplies, uniforms, and various fees and contributions are all made at the household level (UN, 1999). While the State finances 48% of primary school, only 32% and 28% of lower and upper secondary school financing is provided by the government.

At the post-secondary level over 78% of total expenditures are covered by the State (Prescott, 1997). Therefore, it has become more difficult for rural and impoverished families to send their children to primary and secondary school reducing the number of children attaining higher education. The over subsidization of higher education may be leading Vietnam into the trap experienced in India where the supply of graduates exceeds the demand for high level employees. This leads to a high rate of educated, unemployed individuals. According to Musgrave (1995), educated, unemployed people are not only a lost investment but become sources of political instability. Further, job opportunities are directly tied to educational attainment rather than ability to perform, as is the case in many developing countries. Those who never attain a high level of education, never attain better paying jobs. Women become disproportionately locked into the lower rungs of employment because they, more often than men, do not continue in school.

The redistribution of land under Doi Moi has also had an impact upon school attendance. Children are an important resource for farm families and the tendency to keep them home to aid in income-generating activities has increased in recent years. Biddington and Biddington (1997) point out that oftentimes an older daughter is kept home to work or mind other children, while other children are kept out of school sporadically during labor intensive periods on the farm.

Table 8

Age-Specific Enrollment Rates

	92/93 VNLSS		97/98 VNLSS	
Age Group	Males	Females	Males	Females
6-10	85.3	85.0	95.7	94.6
11-14	77.8	67.0	61.1	62.2
15-17	34.8	19.7	30.3	27.4

Source: Desai (1995) & U. N. (1999)

Using data from the 92/93 Vietnam Living Standards Survey, Desai (1995) notes that although there are no differences between males and females in the schooling attainment for the 22-24 year old age group as shown in table 9, this trend is reversing itself as seen in table 8. For lower secondary school (11-14 years old) female enrollment drops by almost 30%, while male enrollment drops only 14%. The rates drop again in upper secondary school (15-17 years old); only 19.7 % of the eligible females are enrolled at this level compared to 34.8% of the males. Desai (1995) suggests that decreasing school enrollment and completion may be due to affordability and, in the case of females, parental preferences and lower expected future returns from girls' schooling. The 97/98 VNLSS however, confirms a return to almost equal age specific enrolment rates for males and females.

Table 9

Schooling Attainment of Adults 22-44 Years Old—92/93

	Rural area		Urban area	
Type of Diploma	Males	Females	Males	Females
No School	5.3	8.9	2.7	2.2
No Diploma	16.3	22.3	8.9	13.6
Primary	27.4	26.7	22.0	25.4
Lower Secondary	34.0	30.3	27.9	26.6
Upper Secondary	8.2	6.2	14.4	13.9
Tech/Vocational	7.3	5.0	16.0	13.6
License	1.4	0.7	8.0	4.7

Source: Desai (1995)

School enrollment is a count taken at a particular point in time and says nothing about whether or not education has taken place. Many students may enroll and then drop out for one reason or another. Progression through grade levels may be uneven. The 1992/93 VNLSS shows approximately 61% of all children at or ahead of the target, while 25% are behind one grade and 14% are behind more than one grade for their age in the primary school years. The rates are similar for both boys and girls at this level. At the lower and upper secondary levels, in both rural and urban areas, boys are more likely to be behind than girls. For urban females 67.5% are at grade level in the lower secondary level; 34.1% of rural females are at grade level. For males in lower secondary school in urban areas 59.5% and in rural areas 27.7% are on target. In upper secondary schools, 62.7% or urban females compared to 52.1% of males, while 37.8% of rural females and 24.2% of males are at grade level (Desai, 1995). However, as noted in table 10, females are more likely to drop out at all grade levels regardless of on time achievement at school.

Table 10

Education Level of Population over 15 Years, in Regular Employment, 1997

Education Level	Male	Female
Illiterate	4.39	7.08
Did not finish primary School	18.46	23.32
Finished primary school	28.32	27.26
Finished lower secondary school	33.58	30.58
Finished secondary school	15.25	11.76

Source: U. N. (1999)

According to Vietnam's report on implementation of the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination against Women (UN, 1999) females account for 70% of the dropouts in rural areas. Whether in rural or urban areas, females account for twice as many dropouts as boys (Biddington & Biddington, 1997). Thus, they are less likely to achieve higher education at all. Although the State has made efforts to provide flexible classes for those who leave school early, attendance has been poor due to economic and family difficulties (UN, 1999).

6.5 Higher Education

For the women who do reach higher education, there appears to be a certain degree of gender educational separation. Women are more likely to receive degrees in teaching, health care, pharmacy, foreign languages and law with the expected effects on their employment prospects (UN, 1999). Whether this is a matter of choice or of societal and other pressures is hard to ascertain. Although the State contends that women may enroll in any branch of training, including those considered more suitable for men, labor laws preclude them from many occupational types. Therefore, it would be counterproductive for women to train in these areas. Further several statements from the

Vietnamese government lead one to believe that there are pressures from outside inducing women to enter some fields to the exclusion of others. The 1999 report from Vietnam on implementation of CEDAW states, "Women usually choose fields suited to their strengths and capabilities and enrol [sic] in schools with 'easy' examinations on the advice of their families and friends (p. 37)". The 2000 report continues "the education service has been taking effective measures, such as increasing the enrolment [sic] target for higher education in *fields appropriate for women,* [italics added]. . . (p. 27)".

Table 11

Type of Training Received Beyond General School—92/93

	22-34 Years Old		35-44 Years Old	
Type of Training	Males	Females	Males	Females
Natural & Social Sciences	20.7	31.6	21.7	44.2
Technique & Technology	51.6	21.3	49.3	19.5
Forestry & Fisheries	7.2	5.9	5.9	2.1
Medicine & Pharmacy	7.6	12.2	7.0	12.1
Literature, history, culture, art, etc	7.2	20.9	10.3	18.9
Other	5.6	7.9	5.9	3.2

Source: Desai (1995)

Although women form the majority of workers in the EPZ and agricultural sectors, they are not receiving the training that would allow them to advance in these areas. The 92/93 VNLSS data in table 11 shows females concentrated in the humanities and social sciences. Less than half of the individuals receiving training in technology are female and fewer women than men train in forestry and fisheries. As of 1997, 9.1% of those receiving technical training and 23.3% of those receiving agricultural degrees were female (UN, 1999). Vocational training, composed of State formal vocational schools, short-term vocational training centers and vocational orientation centers (UN, 2000) have courses available including advanced animal husbandry and farming techniques,

integrated pest management farm produce processing, new trade skills and small businesses and service management (UN, 1999). The government plans for 25% of the population to receive vocational training to improve job skills. According to government statistics, 45% of a total 1.65 million women targeted have received this training. However, this effort has not reached the rural areas for the most part. Agricultural extension programs and courses report 10% to 30% female attendance. Females form 15% to 30% of those working in provincial extension centers. As communes must finance extension services themselves, there is currently a dearth of these necessary programs in the rural areas (UN, 2000).

Through its intense focus on education, including increases in spending and countrywide literacy campaigns, Vietnam has made good progress in reaching the goal of a literate population and reversed a short-term trend of less education for females. Nonetheless, schooling in LDCs is for the most part a direct transplant of the western model. While this may serve the urban areas well, it is not necessarily apropos for the rural areas. Beyond basic literacy programs, what is most needed are occupational and skill enhancement classes. Large amounts of state government funding are provided to each level of formal schooling, while agricultural extension services receive none and funding for vocational schools is very low. This inappropriate model is contributing to the higher dropout rates for women in rural areas. The agricultural sector employs 73% of the workforce in Vietnam. Women form the vast majority of workers in the agricultural sector. In order to benefit this majority population, increase productivity by a skilled

workforce, reduce population growth and enhance the overall health of the economy, the DRV needs to re-focus its educational system.

Investments in human capital, such as health and education, are intended to help increase productivity for a nation's citizen's. Increased productivity can lead to a higher standard of living for the individuals in a society. Therefore chapter seven looks at employment for women in Vietnam.

Chapter Seven

Employment

7.1 Employment and Development

Early development strategies focused on industrialization as the key to rapid economic growth. Growth would, in turn, lead to a maximization of the rate of labor absorption. Called structural transformation, this development policy was based on the path that western societies had followed in the course of their expansion. As the manufacturing sector grows, it absorbs excess, low productivity labor from the rural sector. Surplus labor in the countryside is created by switching from subsistence agriculture to green revolution techniques or from already existing underemployment (Meier, 1995b). Under this scenario, development economists believed that the agricultural sector could provide food for the urban areas and workers for the manufacturing sector, supply exportable primary goods to create foreign exchange and generate demand for manufactured goods (Meier, 1995a).

Oftentimes however, little investment is undertaken in the rural areas while prices for agricultural products are kept depressed in order to facilitate the industrialization process. As the terms of trade between the rural and urban areas worsen, poverty increases in the rural areas. A poverty stricken rural populace has little surplus with which to create internal demand for manufactured goods (1995a). Although this income gap draws many workers to the urban areas, neither job creation nor urban infrastructure keeps pace with migration rates. When coupled with significant population pressures, the results for employment is a small formal sector, large numbers of people working in the

informal sector in the cities, and a still large portion of the population engaged in a depressed, backward agricultural sector. In the absence of safety nets, the agricultural sector also serves as a source of support for urban workers during economic downturns (Meier, 1995c).

For women, employment and control over economic resources can be a means to greater equality within the family and within society. Female employment has been shown to confer benefits on the family as a whole as women tend to spend a higher percentage of their own income on children. Employment for women has also been shown to slow population growth (Summerfield, 1997).

The source of income is as important as the amount of income. Wage work for a woman confers intangible benefits that household work and family business oriented work does not. The participation of women in paid employment mitigates the dependence of women on men and begins to break cultural patriarchal patterns. It yields gains in within-family status and thus increases the ability to bargain for intra-household allocations. Oftentimes, women who engage in wage work are in a better position to alter the division of labor according to gender. Finally, when women leave the home to work, social patterns of isolation and subordination are abandoned, leading to greater involvement in worker's unions and social and political spheres (Valdes, 1995).

According to Summerfield (1997), whether or not working in the paid labor force makes a positive contribution to women's well being depends upon whether paid

work expand or narrows their range of opportunities and strategies. Because so much of women's work is uncounted household production, expanding their labor force role may only double their workload. Thus, for some women, being compelled to enter the workforce is not the preferred situation. For women with small children, the ability to work at home to earn a small income and still be able to look after her children may be optimal. Therefore the key to economic self-reliance for women is not to simply increase women's participation rates in paid labor. If a particular source of income is to add more to a woman's well being it must allow her more control over her life and yield the ability to aid those she cares about. Development policy must be reorganized to take account of this double burden (Beneria, 1991)

7.2 Background

Vietnam followed the Soviet model of development in its formative years. This model, similar to the western structural transformation model, promotes rapid industrialization, collectivization of the agriculture sector, and limited, government-controlled internal migration of the population. Under the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) form of the Soviet model, industry was nationalized except for a few very small-scale businesses. Land reform redistributed agricultural areas and formed villages into collective enclaves from which resources could be extracted to fuel the industrial sector. Production in the collective farms was organized into teams each responsible for a portion of the work with work points awarded for each completed task. These points were assigned according to the type of task performed based on the cooperative's conception of the difficulty and technicality of the task. Proceeds from the

crops were awarded on the basis of work points collected. Price controls were set on foodstuffs and consumer items. The results were low labor productivity and raw material and food shortages, with resultant black markets (Murray & Vieux, 1991).

Partial privatization of the agricultural sector in 1981 raised productivity but led to inflationary pressures. Low wages in the industrial sector in the face of food shortages and inflation led the government to reform this sector. A new industrial management program was introduced, which allowed managers to trade directly with other firms in order to alleviate delivery delays and end favoritism and corruption. Wage and currency reforms were introduced to raise urban wages and to curb capital accumulation by firms (Murray and Vieux, 1991).

7.3 Women's Employment Pre-*Doi Moi*

Wage and employment data are difficult to determine with any accuracy from the period before *Doi Moi* in Vietnam; however, it is documented that women were heavily recruited into the national economy for three reasons. First, there was a shortage of men. During the Vietnamese War nearly every male and some women and children were mobilized for the war effort in North Vietnam. Of those mobilized, approximately 1.2 million battle deaths are recorded; the vast majority of which are male. Further, immediately after the war and in the decade following, almost 2 million Vietnamese males emigrated. According to Goodkind (1997), reasons for emigration included the greater mobility of males and draft evasion. Women were exhorted to fulfill the three duties "encouraging their sons and husbands to go to war, taking responsibilities for

household affairs and assuming a greater role in industrial and agricultural production (p. 116)." By the early seventies, women formed 80% of the agricultural workforce and 50-70% in education, medicine, and light industry in North Vietnam (Goodkind, 1997).

The situation was little different in South Vietnam again due to the shortage of males available for economic activity. Brown (1975) cites Republic of Vietnam data that shows women holding between 51.5% and 60% of total employment in urban areas. For example, in Saigon prior to the end of the war, women made up 76% of all employees in the weaving industry, 74% of workers in the pharmacy/drug laboratory sector, 56% of the banking industry, and 55% of the manufacturing employees. Women's salaries consistently lagged behind those of men in the South never reaching more than 88% of men's wages in the same jobs. Furthermore, male government employees were given a family allowance for their wives and children, whereas women government employees were never given an allowance for their husbands even if the husband was not employed. According to Brown (1975), the reason given for this inequity by the South Vietnamese government was that women's income merely supplemented husband's pay. However, the reality was quite different. Out of every 10 female employees, eight worked out of need. The woman's income was necessary to make up deficiencies in the family income. It is evident that an entrenched system of gender discrimination in employment and pay equity was active during this time.

Second, the socialist model and pressures from women who participated in the war effort mandated the inclusion of women in the development process. From its

inception, the socialist government of the north realized its dependence on the women of their country. Ho Chi Minh articulated the Party's commitment to women by stating, "Women are half the people. If women are not free then the people are not free" (Tetreault, 1996, p. 40). In 1930, the Women's Union was formed under the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) as a means to mobilize women. Women's liberation was listed as one of the Party's goals. The Women's Union advocated economic and political equality for women and gained for them a share of land taken over by the Viet Minh along with Constitutional rights to equality and suffrage (Tetreault, 1996).

Third, it is a misconception to claim that women gained the right to participate in work under the DRV model. In addition to tasks performed as wife and mother, Vietnamese women have always been an important part of the workforce. In the family and village mode of production in the agricultural sector, women and children worked alongside men in cultivation, care and harvesting of the crop. Women operated as spinners and weavers of cloth and as fuel gatherers in forests. As in other Asian societies, local trade was operated by women (Keyes, 1995). The French colonization period introduced a plantation system of agricultural production, factories and a mining industry. Women worked as day and seasonal laborers on the rice and rubber plantations and entered the textile mills and the mines. Under the French regime, wages for women were one-half to two-thirds lower than for the equivalent male worker. They were subjected to frequent beatings, starvation, and forced prostitution (Molander, 1978). During the Vietnam War years, women were considered an integral component of the conflict working alongside men in the battlefields, factories and farms. What women

gained under the laws and Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam due to its Marxist underpinnings, was the legal right to exist independently of men on the political and economic playing field.

7.4 Women's Employment and Reunification

Females are often treated as a flexible supply of labor by policymakers. At no time was this more evident than during a time of war for a nation. Images of 'Rosie the Riveter' are inextricably intertwined with the history of WWII in the United States. Generally speaking however, at the end of the national crisis, women are urged to give way to men, especially in terms of employment, and to return to the more traditional role of wife and mother. Although the Vietnamese government did exhort women to make way for men returning from the war, women continued to be employed, notably in the rural areas. On state farms, middle-aged peasant women averaged 60% of the labor force, in some areas climbing as high as 90% of the basic production brigades (Woodside, 1989). Vietnam, with its agriculture-based economy and shortage of men due to war casualties, continued to employ women in large numbers.

Employment for women as viewed in the literature is a means to increase female status and autonomy and to improve the quality of their and their children's lives. However, for this to happen they must have control over the proceeds of their labor. In other countries, this might mean the ability to make decisions independently of their spouse or other male relatives. In the context of socialist Vietnam, the state obstructed a person's ability to control their income. According to Woodside (1989), Vietnamese

peasants had to pay sixteen different kinds of secondary charges in addition to their taxes. These assessments totaled 80-85% of their crop. Villagers during the collective period might have up to 100 cadres whose salaries were paid by the peasants. These cadres controlled the distribution of grain, industrial goods and farm materials, the issuance of land for housing, contracting of farmlands, and the assignment of compulsory labor tasks. Female membership in the village people's committees peaked at 31% in 1975. By 1982, they held only 5.6% of the positions. The number of female chairmen and assistant chairmen of villages and wards also fell from 5,488 in 1969 to only 260 by 1982. In addition, under the work point system male labor was remunerated at a higher rate than female labor (Ahn, 1999) due to the arbitrary nature of the scheme. Therefore, although peasant women had employment, they had little control of their resources or the means to improve their lives.

The situation for women was comparable in the urban areas. By 1979/1980 women represented 39% of the manufacturing employees, 23% in other industries, and 52% in services (United Nations, 1999). They were most heavily represented in social support services, petty trade, education, and the state/financial/insurance sector (Goodkind, 1995). Male/female wage ratios are estimated at 1.09 for this period (United Nations, 1989).

In a reversal of wartime, indications of a highly gender segregated labor market begin to appear during the early years after reunification. This may be due in part to protective labor laws instituted by the state that banned women from certain types of

work. These laws covered 54 different situations, such as mining and heavy industry, in an attempt to protect female health and to take account of their dual burden in childbearing and–raising. Laws concerning maternity leave and time for breastfeeding were also passed at this time. Farm work, listed as one of the top five hazardous occupations due to working conditions and the use of pesticides and fertilizers, has no such protective restrictions (VMPI & UN, 1999). Special labor provisions for a woman has the effect of making female labor more expensive and thus, less desirable. It also restricts women to jobs that are considered appropriate by authorities.

There is no evidence that women attained upper-level positions to any great extent in the fields in which they were allowed to work. It is known that the majority of firms were managed by important political cadres and their families (Woodside, 1987). As most political leaders were male, this may be a reason for the small representation of women in high level positions in business.

7.5 Decollectivisation

One of the first manifestations of *Doi Moi* was the DRV's decollectivisation of the farms. In an attempt to bolster falling productivity, the government allocated land to peasants on a long-lease program. Under the Land Laws of 1988 and 1993, farming households become the basic economic unit in agriculture. Agricultural taxes are assessed in the form of a quota of product, instead of turning the entire crop over to the state. The size of the land holding is determined by family size and the proportion of people of working age in the family. Cooperatives are relegated to collection of taxes,

administrative duties, social service providers and providers of fertilizers, pesticides, technical know-how, and marketing (Tran, 1998).

The land transfer has been very slow, in part due to problems inducing cooperative officials to yield influence over the village. By the end of 1992, only 7.31% of the cooperatives had completed the process (Tran, 1998). By 1998, approximately 86% of the cropland was allocated but only 10% of the forestland (VMPI & UN, 1999). However, the ability to independently market agricultural products and to decide upon land usage brought large increases in productivity.

7.6 Women in Agriculture

For women the agricultural sector continues to be the largest employer in Vietnam. Women form 54% of the economically active population and 79% of this population lives in rural areas. In rural areas, 80% of the female workforce is employed in agriculture (Thi, 1995). Rural poverty rates in 92/93 were 66.4%, falling to 44.9% in 97/98. However, poverty is becoming more concentrated in the rural areas. The rural poor make up an increasing share of the total poor; from 91% in 92/93 to 94% in 97/98. (VMPI & UN, 1999).

Women are involved in all stages of rice production. Sowing, transplanting, irrigating, processing and drying rice, applying pesticides, weeding, and harvesting is exclusively woman's province (FAO, 2000). Women weave and sew. They are responsible for home gardens, work in aquaculture, and raise livestock. Women are the

traditional traders and marketers of Vietnam and also earn extra income from handicrafts. These tasks are in addition to their duties as wife, mother and homemaker. Further, as the role of the commune has lessened and state subsidies have fallen, the number and quality of day care centers has decreased. Rural communities have seen the largest decrease in day care centers, as the inhabitants of these areas are less likely to be able to pick up the financial costs of day care. The burden of rural women has increased as a result.

The result of this workload is a long, arduous workday with little to no time for leisure or community activities. On average, women in rural Vietnam work approximately 16-18 hours per day, which is 6-8 hours more than men (Poverty Working Group [PWG], 1999). In income generating activities alone, women make up a greater proportion of those with heavy workloads (61-60 hours per week) and very heavy workloads (more than 61 hours per week): 54% and 57% respectively (PWG, 1999). In addition to little time for leisure activities, the heavy workload has health repercussions emanating from exhaustion and the inability to take time to see health care providers. A further consequence of the long workday is less time to participate in community meetings, which are fora for informal learning, adult literacy classes, and decision making in the village. The oppressive workload is exacerbated by earlier policies to extract surplus from the rural sector for industrial development, which left little for investment in rural infrastructure. According to the Common Country Assessment (VMPI & UN, 1999), only 37.2% of rural households have access to safe water, 54% have access to electricity, and 16.7% have access to adequate sanitation. Most rural

communities do not have access to good transport routes, which hinders access to markets, thereby limiting income-generating opportunities and increasing time to reach health care and education facilities.

The 1993 Land Law, which expanded the 1988 law, granted farmers 20 year rights to land used for annual crops and 50 year rights for perennial crops along with the rights of transfer, exchange, lease, inheritance and mortgage. Although the language of the law is gender neutral, thereby granting equal rights to women, customary practice has been to title the land under the male's name and for sons to inherit property. This is due not only to the fact that traditional practices consider men to be more important, but also because there have been no women on any committee charged with allocating land (Anh, 1999).

As land was allocated on the basis of age and family size, those households with more adult workers received more land. The result for female-headed households, which have a higher dependency ratio, is less land to cultivate. As these households constitute approximately 32% of all households in Vietnam, this lack of land left many women struggling to make ends meet (FAO, 2000).

The one-time allocation of land on a per capita basis has had ramifications for marriage also. Women who marry within the village can continue to farm their allotted land. However, women who move to another village upon marriage, lose access to their share of their birth family's land, and are then dependent on the husband's family. This

inadvertent result of the land program causes the new daughter-in-law to be viewed as a burden by her husband's family if she is not from the husband's village. In the case of divorce or separation, the law states that if the woman remains in the village she may use the land assigned to her. If she moves away or is not able to continue working the land, she is not entitled to land use rights but should receive compensation. However, in Vietnam, there are few mechanisms for assessing fair value of the land. Further, monetary compensation for the land does not guarantee access to other lands to farm due to a shortage of arable land in this heavily populated country (Anh, 1999). The PPA conducted in Lao Cai found that in no case had any women received land after a separation or divorce (PWG, 1999).

Without title to land, it is impossible to gain access to credit. According to the FAO (2000), among women designated as household heads, 42% are still married, 41% are widows, and the rest are formally separated or divorced. Of the women who are still married, many of their husbands are working as migrant laborers and are not available to make decisions and sign papers. At certain times of the year, up to 80% of the males will be away to work or for trade (Anh, 1996). Widowed women have difficulty changing the name on the title due to complexities in the process and high fees. Thus many times, they simply do not bother to do so. The severe time constraints mentioned above, which are even heavier for female headed households, allow few women the opportunity to attend village meetings which disseminates information on the processes to obtain title, loans, and other important information. Although the government does offer low-cost loans to peasant households through the Vietnamese Bank of Agriculture (VBA), the process is

complicated, costly and time-consuming. A borrower must fill out 2 application forms, 3 borrowing contracts and 2 declarations of payment in kind. The two applications and declarations of payment in kind forms must have certifying seals of the village people's committee. According to Anh (1996) all of the local administrative representatives are men who prefer to work with other men. Many times borrowers must travel tens of kilometers to complete the process because there is not a branch of the VBA in every village.

Thus, there are significant obstacles for rural women in the conduct of their economic lives. The work is difficult and time-consuming. This burden leaves women little time for socializing, for gaining information on new farming techniques and other networking or simply to rest. Few of them hold title to land, which constrains women's bargaining power in intra-household allocation mechanisms. The lack of bargaining power is exacerbated by the fact that the penalty for separation or divorce may be the inability to earn a living. In 2000, the DRV amended the Law on Marriage and Family to give women the right to put their name on the certificate of land use. However, the number of certificates registered in both names remains negligible. The law also requires the wife's consent when undertaking civil transactions relating to common property, which is intended to make it more difficult for men to involve their wives in debt without consent (UN, 2000). Although this policy may alleviate the problems associated with land titling, there is little that any government can do to directly and quickly change cultural patterns of gender relations or to ease women's workloads.

7.7 Women in the Non-Agriculture Labor Market

According to an ILO/MOLISA report (VMPI & UN, 1999), more than one million jobs must be created in Vietnam every year to absorb new entrants into the market. A further 100,000 jobs will be needed for the next 10 years to employ the currently unemployed and underemployed workers. Although the industrial sector has fueled impressive increases in GDP, employment has not grown at the same rate because of the capital-intensive focus of the sector. Most employment growth has been in the services sector over the last ten years. While agriculture has shown a 0.4% growth rate per annum and industry averages 4% per annum, over the period from 1993 to 1998, services have provided a 6% increase in employment per annum. The private sector now provides 91% of total employment. Within private employment the household sector dominates, accounting for 89% of employment. As the household sector includes farming, this is not remarkable. Only 34% of the total employment the household sector provides come from non-agricultural activities.

Table 12

Proportion of Males and Females in Various Occupations, 1989

Occupation	Males	Females	Total
agri/forest/fish	71	72.8	71.9
stats/finance/econ/plan	2.2	2	2.1
science/educ/medicine	2.3	4.4	3.4
mining/metallurgy/elect./mech/chem ind.	4.6	0.9	2.5
paper/printing/publ	0.1	0.1	1.0
weaving/cloth/leath/wool	1.2	4.7	3.0
bldg/glass/materials/wood factories	4.9	2.0	3.4
transport	3.5	0.3	1.8
sales/supplies	2.4	8.3	5.1
public service	1.7	0.6	1.1
other	5.3	2.6	4.0

Source: UNICEF (1990)

Table 12, which shows an occupation by gender, indicates that through 1989 most employment was in the agricultural sector where men and women were approximately equally represented. Women were particularly underrepresented in the transport and mining sectors due to the restrictive labor code that forbids their employment in these sectors. After agriculture, women held the majority of jobs in the textile industry and sales. As textiles are traditional occupations for women in Vietnam, their representation in this sector is not surprising. Other employment in the early development years for women have included those of sales clerk or typist in many countries. Thus, in this period, women were following the course set for them in other parts of the world.

Table 13

Ratios of Full-Time Employed Population by Occupations, 1997-1998

Occupation	Male	Female	Total
General	48.3	51.7	100
Leaders	81.8	18.2	0.99
Science/Technology	82.8	17.2	0.39
Healthcare	47.7	52.3	0.57
Education	26.6	73.4	1.95
Others	59.8	40.2	2.29
Security/sales/services	31.4	68.6	11.18
Agri/forest/fish	46.6	53.4	62.07
Handicraft/processing	59.3	40.7	10.68
Machine assembly and operation	93.7	6.3	1.45
Simple works	57.4	42.6	8.37
Others not listed above	0.06	0.0	100.0

Source: UN (2000)

Throughout the next ten years, there was a shift in Vietnam out of the agricultural sector into services and industry as shown in table 13. This is the usual pattern of structural change seen in a developing country. Over time, the economy shifts from a low-income agrarian rural state to an industrialized urban one with higher per capita incomes. During Vietnam's transition, men held a large majority of jobs in leadership

positions, science and technology, machine assembly and operation. Women were largely employed in education, sales and services, and healthcare. The proportion of females in agriculture is significantly larger than that of men. Except for agriculture, this is the usual job segregation pattern seen in other countries around the world. Women are overrepresented in services, sales and the caring professions and underrepresented in leadership positions, hard sciences and technology.

Wage employment is a very small portion of the labor market in Vietnam. As of 1993, only 9.5% of women and 16.7% of men worked in the wage sector (Desai, 1995). Before the transition, state-owned enterprises (SOE) provided the bulk of wage employment. As SOEs have been restructured, women have borne the brunt of the lay-offs. Women make up approximately two-thirds of all redundancies in the state sector (Tuyen, 1999). While women have been more likely to re-employ in the export processing zones (EPZ) that have been permitted since the opening of the market, they have lost the benefits that accrued to them as state employees including maternity leave and health care. Although Vietnam has laws on the books guaranteeing certain rights to employees and minimum wages, these have not been enforced.

Vietnam is following the development path of many Asian countries, relying on cheap and abundant labor to attract textiles, garment, and food processing manufacturers along with telecommunications and electronics enterprises and other labor intensive businesses. Women form a large majority of unskilled workers in these export-oriented companies. According to Tuyen (1999), women form 79.8% of the workforce in

textiles and 71% of the workers in the garment industry in Vietnam. Although there is equal pay legislation in Vietnam, Desai (1995) finds that on average, women's earning are 72% of male earnings and that occupational distribution is not a major cause in the determination of wage differentials. A MOLISA survey completed in 1998 found an average income for women of 88% of male's income of the same skill level (UN, 1999). The VNLSS 97/98 concluded that average income for women was 86% that of men (UN, 2000). Because these industries are highly capital mobile and labor intensive, Asian countries find themselves in the position of competing amongst themselves for the firm's presence. The competition is carried out in the form of low wages along with a docile workforce with few benefits and poor working conditions. Cheng and Hsiung (1994) note that the availability of an elastic and low-waged labor supply in the form of women has fueled the development of these nations. In Southeast Asia, female labor force participation is tied to business cycle fluctuations. Collective bargaining is discouraged to keep wages low and benefits are non-existent.

During the nineties in Vietnam, in order to attract foreign investors and stimulate job creation, minimum wages were dropped for employees of foreign entrepreneurs. Export processing zones were established offering inexpensive land, no duties and no taxes as a further inducement for firms (Dana, 1994). As wages were concurrently rising in the NICs, Vietnam was an attractive low cost environment for labor intensive manufacturing. For the most part these are small and medium size enterprises relocated from South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan. According to Zhu and Fahey (1999) many are family based firms that emphasize Confucian values, including absolute

obedience and loyalty in a hierarchical setting. Because existing labor laws are not enforced, working conditions are sub-optimal. Employees of these firms face a lack of hygiene facilities, high industrial accident rates, overcrowding and exposure to environmental pollutants, high noise levels and temperatures, along with physical abuse, long hours, and low wages.

Vietnam's Labor Code explicitly conveys the rules and role of trade unions, however, they have been unable to keep pace with the rapidly changing employment situation. As of 1994, only about 10% of private sector employees belonged to a union and 76% of women in private firms have no contract (Tuyen, 1999). The Vietnam Women's' Union (VWU), which traditionally focused on protecting and improving women's role in the economy, has recently concentrated on activities related to women's traditional role as mother and wife including mother and child health programs and rural income-generating projects (Tuyen, 1999). Although the incidence of strikes and labor disputes has been rising, given the population pressures and the concomitant need to generate employment, it may be some time before working conditions change.

The Asian Financial Crisis had a smaller effect on Vietnam than on other countries in the area. Vietnam's financial sector had not carried out the World Bank's and IMF's liberalization scheme and foreign debt exposure remains minimal. However, as most investment is from the countries that have been hardest hit by the crisis, foreign direct investment is expected to slow. Foreign direct investment fell from $2.0 billion in 1997 to less than $800 million in 1998. Light industry experienced an estimated $612

million decrease. This represents the loss of approximately 300,000 jobs that have not been created because of the East Asian Crisis (PWG, 1999). Because 70% of Vietnam's exports go to South-east Asian and East Asian countries, export growth is also expected to slow (ILO, 1998). Again, employment growth in the export sector is expected to slow or reverse as a result. As women are the main beneficiaries of unskilled employment in this sector, it is expected that they will be most affected by downsizing. Unemployment statistics from the years since the Crisis show an increasing amount of female unemployment. In 1998, total unemployment was at 6.9% while the unemployment rate for women was 6.6%. The next year women's unemployment was at 8% with the overall rate at 7.4% (UN, 2000). MOLISA statistics for 1999 show urban unemployment at 7.4% for men and 8.3% for women (VMPI & UN, 1999).

Export processing and foreign direct investment offers very few jobs in Vietnam. In 1995, the foreign industrial sector employed approximately 130,000 workers, while FDI as a percent of GDP was 3.7% (Zhu & Fahey, 1999). It is the small scale, family enterprise and informal sector that provide the majority of earnings after agriculture in Vietnam. A 1992 survey of industrial concerns showed that 80% of the non-state workers were employed in the household sector and that the average annual increase in this sector is 4.9%. Further, the household sector provides 60-80% of goods and services to the local market. Seventy percent of the workers in this sector are female (Tuyen, 1999). Although this type of work allows women to fulfill their duties as wife and mother simultaneously as they earn income, the work is marked by a high degree of fragmentation with no support services and few opportunities for skill enhancement.

Further, the workers are isolated in small units, such as piece rate workers, and unable to bargain for better conditions and pay.

Family based micro-enterprises average 4.8 employees, of which 3.7 are family members (Tuyen, 1999). According to the 92/93 VNLSS (Desai, 1995), roughly 80% of all restaurants, cafe, and hotels, wholesale and retail trade, and garment and leather manufacturing firms are run by women. Females operate approximately one half of all food and beverage manufacturing. The Common Country Assessment (VMPI, 1999) reports 27% of all micro-enterprises are headed by women. However, female operated firms are smaller than male operated firms, hire more household workers, and earn smaller profits (Desai, 1995). As Vietnam's labor code does not apply to firms with fewer than 10 workers, there is little to no regulation and no ability for these employees to form trade unions. Zhu and Fahey (1999) report that most employees of domestic private enterprises are peasants from rural areas or individuals retrenched from the state sector. Many are not registered as residents. Thus, these employees are subjected to the worst abuses. As employees are more concerned with keeping their jobs, they do not organize or confront employers.

Women do the best in government and administrative jobs where they earn 41% more than men if payments in cash and kind for holidays, lunch, overtime, and bonuses are included (Desai, 1995). The early 90's were difficult for women, however. For the period 1991-1995, only 2.7% of the Director Generals of State-owned Enterprises and 4.3% of Deputy Director Generals were female. While the percentage of Director

Generals rose to 4% for 1996-2000, the level of Deputy Director Generals fell to the same 4% (UN, 2000). Of all the state workers laid off, women accounted for 71.6% of staff in the cultural sector; 78.4% in the health sector, and 82.1% in the commercial sector (UNICEF, 1994). Between 1989 and 1992 the number of female civil servants declined by 27.9% while male civil servants declined by only 22.5% (Goodkind, 1995). These types of jobs have been declining for the entire population as the economy restructures, but most especially for women. Many of the laid off workers have been absorbed by the small trading and services sector with a reduction in job security and benefits.

In professional and clerical jobs, women's salaries are comparable to men's (Desai, 1995). These fields include education and medical services. By 1999, women made up 76.1% of the workforce in education (UN, 1999). The removal of subsidies in the early nineties had a serious impact upon this sector. School enrollments fell and teacher's salaries failed to keep up with the cost of living forcing teachers to moonlight to earn additional income. Teachers salaries during this period were approximately 0.8 to 1.2 times the per capita GNP compared to 2.6 times in other Asian countries. A budget increase in 1993 restored some funding to this sector (Hock, 1996). State spending went from 12% to 15% of total state spending between 1990 and 1997 and doubled its percentage share of GDP (VMPI & UN, 1999). Female teachers predominate in primary schools, as shown in table 14, and although gains in positions have been made at upper levels, women have still not reached parity. Women account for only 14.8% of department directors, 5.5% of university rectors, and 9.8% of education services directors

(UN, 1999). Thus, although women form the vast majority of workers in this field they are not equally represented at upper management levels.

Table 14

Percentage of Female Teachers

	University and College	Professional High School	Job Training School	Senior Secondary School	Junior Secondary School	Primary School
1986	29.00	42.50	20.90	49.45	68.24	71.71
1997	36.20	44.65	25.70	50.83	65.59	77.41

Source: UN (1999)

According to government statements, Vietnam launched a drive beginning in 1994 to promote females in the teaching profession, also directing the sector's trade union to greater efforts. The theme adopted by the union, "Being a good teacher at school and a good wife at home (UN, 1999, p. 39)" is an acknowledgement of the dual workload women carry in Vietnam.

In medical services women also constitute a large portion of the workforce. As government employees, these workers also suffered under reorganization of the economy. In 1992/93 women were 57.52% of staff in the health care and pharmacy sector which rose to 63.93% by 1996 and now stands at approximately 68% (UN, 1999). According to Vietnam's report of 1999 on implementation of CEDAW, women make up 70% of employees working directly with patients, 58% of scientific workers, and 50% in training.

As with export processing, neither education nor health care employs large numbers of individuals. Education employs approximately 750,000 people while health

care and pharmacy account for 4,000. Therefore, while a few women may have gained wage parity with men, for the vast majority of the population much work remains to be done before true equality is reached. On average, women currently earn approximately 70% of men's income. Reasons given for this deficit include women engaging in simple jobs that require little skill and the low and unstable income of women in non-official sectors and agriculture (UN, 1999).

Although Vietnam remains a poor country, it has made impressive gains during the years of economic renovation. Per capita GNP increased 57% in real terms between 1990 and 1997. The incidence of poverty has fallen also from approximately 30% in 92/93 to 15.7% in 97/98. Inequality is also rising although not yet at the rates seen in some other Asian countries. The current Gini coefficient of 0.36 is up from 0.33 in the early nineties compared to 0.43 for the Philippines and 0.46 for Thailand. In 92/93, the richest households were spending an average 4.6 times that of the poor. By 97/98, they were spending 5.5 times as much (UN, 1999). Further, poverty incidence is much greater in the countryside than in urban areas. Women, who work longer hours than men, average less in monthly earnings. As the majority of women work in the countryside and have little access to wage work, and as it is those individuals with wage work who are more likely to be in the upper 20% of income groups, the situation is not improving as fast as the increases in GDP could justify.

Assuming that individuals are healthy, well-educated and productively employed the final element to determine is whether or not they have control over themselves and

the resources they produce or earn. Thus the next chapter looks at empowerment for women in Vietnam.

Chapter Eight

Empowerment

Whereas, previously, the terms 'status' and 'equality' were used to discuss the situations of women, the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (UN ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt, was instrumental in replacing these concepts with one of women's empowerment. At UN ICPD, empowerment was recognized as an important end in itself, essential to the achievement of sustainable development. In 1995, the Beijing Conference on Women also included women's empowerment as part of its declaration stating "women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace" (UN, 1995, p. 4). The documents did not define the term. Nor did they suggest any changes at the programming level. The plans of action following the statement of this principle continued to advocate the usual activities toward gender equality in the economic, social, and political arena. Sen and Batliwala (2000) submit that it is precisely the fuzziness surrounding the concept of empowerment that led it to be adopted with very little debate during the Cairo Conference.

Status, according to Dixon-Mueller (1998), "refers to the positions that women occupy in the family and in society relative to those of men and of women of other classes, other countries, other times . . . autonomy refers to an individual's capacity to act independently of the authority of others . . . empowerment refers to the capacity of individual women or of women as a group to resist the arbitrary imposition of controls on

their behavior or the denial of their rights, to challenge the power of others if it is deemed illegitimate, and to resolve a situation in their favour" (p. 6). Sen and Batliwala (2000) define empowerment as " . . . the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial) and over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes). It means not only greater extrinsic control but also a growing intrinsic capability—greater self-confidence . . . that enables one to overcome external barriers to accessing resources or changing traditional ideology" (p. 18).

Given these definitions, the problem has been one of measurement. Empowerment, like status and autonomy, is a multi-dimensional concept. However, Dixon-Mueller (1998) contends it is more dynamic and comprehensive than status and autonomy. Further, because empowerment is experienced subjectively, individuals who might objectively be described as empowered or disempowered, may not regard themselves as either. Women may, for instance, use their condition of empowerment to assert traditional rights such as wearing the veil or opposing abortion. Finally, the outcomes of empowerment are also the means to empowerment. For example, receiving an education is not only the result of asserting one's rights, it is also the means to learn about those rights.

England (2000) devises a model of women's empowerment for industrialized nations of the north that could be extended to lesser-developed nations. In this model, "the macro-social factors of laws, institutional rules and informal norms, together with

women's economic resources, are the objective bases of power . . . self-efficacy and entitlement, will affect whether one will actually do whatever is necessary to exercise the power . . . the exercise of power affects outcomes in one's self-interest" (p. 41). Economic resources, in England's model, are contingent upon earnings and control over capital such as land or business. The origin of the resource and the presence of alternative sources affect the outcome of bargaining. Laws and institutional rules may either explicitly treat women differentially or have a disparate impact by sex, notwithstanding a direct statement of discrimination or non-discrimination. Informal norms may also be explicit or implicitly have a disparate impact upon women. They may also be imposed upon women or internalized by women. Internalized norms contribute to subjective states of self-efficacy and entitlement, while those imposed upon women are an objective base of power or nonpower.

Currently, surveys and other available statistics do not collect evidence of empowerment. One exception, the 1994 Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey contained a broad set of questions intended to go beyond the standard assessments of status. It included indicators of sources of empowerment, of familial settings that might be empowering or disempowering, and direct evidence of autonomy or empowerment in an attempt to distinguish evidence of empowerment from its sources (Dixon-Mueller, 1998). However, these types of surveys are expensive and time consuming. Consequently, there has been reluctance to conduct special surveys without proof of tangible benefits from women's empowerment. Short of conducting the survey, however, there is no way to obtain empirical proof of the various theories concerning the benefits

of women's empowerment. Nor is there any progress on methods to disentangle outcomes from sources or of subjective states from objective ones.

The human rights approach to empowerment considers whether certain rights for women exist and if women have the ability to assert those rights. These rights include (a) sexual rights such as the right to control one's own body, to enter marriage freely and to terminate marriage and, to refuse unwanted sexual acts or relationships; (b) reproductive rights including the right to decide freely and with full information on the timing and number of children; (c) the right to education and training free of discrimination including formal and informal educational opportunities; (d) the right to employment with equal pay, equal treatment and equal opportunities along with safe working conditions; (e) the right to property including the right to inherit, buy, sell, own, use, and administer property on an equal basis with men irregardless of marital status, and to equal access to credit and loans; and (f) freedom of movement, association, and political activity which includes the right to vote, to stand for office, to move freely within and without of the country and to participate in all aspects of religious, recreational and cultural life (Dixon-Mueller, 1998).

This is closely analogous to Sen's capabilities approach as articulated by Nussbaum and affords the best opportunity to further examine the situation of women in Vietnam. Therefore, the human rights delineation is used for this chapter as a yardstick of empowerment. Because human rights and capabilities both encompass health, education and employment, and these have already been examined in previous chapters,

this section examines sexual rights and the rights of movement, association and political activity.

8.1 Sexual Rights

Sexual rights are the rights to control one's own body. They include the right to enter into marriage with free and full consent and to terminate a marriage; to engage in pleasurable sexual relations free from discrimination, coercion, or violence; to refuse unwanted sexual acts or relationships; to the respect of one's partner and to shared responsibility for sexual behavior and it consequences. It also encompasses freedom from the threat of sexual harassment, rape, prostitution and sexual slavery (Dixon-Mueller, 1998).

8.1.1 Marriage

Socialist thought claims that the institutions of marriage and the family are key to the reproduction of social inequality because the practices that emerge within these institutions sustain an underlying system of private property and its inheritance. Following this line of thought, soon after formation of the Indochinese Communist party in North Vietnam, leadership enacted legislation dealing with family structure. Decree No. 97 of May 22, 1950 and No. 159 of November 17, 1950 established various aspects of equality of rights of men and women in the family; however, enforcement of these decrees was not rigorously promoted during the early years. (Ginsburgs, 1975).

By the time of the Geneva accords in 1954, a reshuffling of the political arena entailed the creation of the Fatherland Front. The Vietnam Women's Union was a charter member of the Front with 3.5 million members. To aid the Women's Union, the Women's Publishing House was started in 1957. The focus of the publications included literary, scientific and political works for women. Its purpose was to "spread among the masses the spirit of equality between man and woman, liberating women from backward habits and customs, and raising their intellectual level" (Ginsburgs, 1975, p. 624).

The Women's Union was instrumental in facilitating a new Law on Marriage and the Family within the framework of a second Constitution written in 1960. It is this law above all others which paves the way for emancipation of women. The law prohibits marriages involving minors, bride purchase, beating or maltreating a wife, and taking concubines. Marriages are to be concluded strictly on the basis of free choice. Neither partners nor outsiders may force another into marriage. No permission is required for marriage. There is no bar to remarriage by divorcees or widows. Monogamy is the only form of marriage. The marriageable age is 20 for men and 18 for women with no exceptions. Only the civil form of wedlock is recognized. The statute stresses that husband and wife enjoy equal rights. Both partners have the right to choose their occupation and engage in political and social activity. Matrimonial property is held in common, whether acquired before or during the marriage. Neither spouse has the right to alienate premarital property without the other's consent. Real property that is acquired is owned in common regardless in whose name it is recorded. Although this portion of the law may seem to fall short of equal rights in property, in context of Vietnamese tradition

it was appropriate. In Vietnam, where the man, husband or father, was the absolute master of all property, this portion had a liberating effect for women, especially in light of the fact that many women came to marriage propertyless during the early course of the socialist transformation. The Law on Family and Marriage also states that both parents are to have an equal voice in deciding what will happen to the children. In addition, the law forbids the cruel treatment of daughters-in-law, adopted children, and children by a former marriage. Sons and daughters have equal rights and duties, including the right to inherit and to an education. Grown children are also guaranteed the freedom to choose a profession, to engage in political activity, to hold title to property in their own names, and to dispose of their wages. Full freedom of divorce is established and provided the woman is a victim of forced marriage, polygamy or, child marriage is to be granted quickly. To facilitate the granting of divorce, all of the judges in marriage cases are women. Routine for other types of divorce cases is outlined also. In the case of the wife's pregnancy, the husband must wait until a year has passed after the accouchement before he can sue for a divorce. All claims for the restitution of gifts and the cost of nuptials are prohibited. The matrimonial property is divided in a manner that takes into account the share of means and labor contributed by each spouse. For this purpose, the law stipulates that work in the home is to be equated to productive economic labor. Parental custody is decided in the interest of the child which means is awarded to that parent best suited to meet the child's needs. Divorced parents must share the cost of raising and educating the child, each in proportion to how much he or she can afford (Ginsburgs, 1975).

The Law on Marriage and Family represented a major movement toward equality for women. Changing ancient customs and traditions, however, is an lengthy process which requires enforcement and commitment, not just a statement of principles. Ginsburgs (1975) points out that official rhetoric of the period that proclaimed the success and the swift adoption of the law in practice may have been premature. Furthermore, "the regime . . . chose to use the informal approach [in numerous cases of law-breaking] in order to emphasize personal persuasion rather than professional prosecution and education rather than coercion . . . [which] does nothing at all for the image or authority of positive law or the courts. Party dicta and Party adjudication may have supplanted custom, tradition and community more but generically they still represent the same type of non-statutory mechanism of social regulation . . . without ever effectuating the transition to a routinized legislative format of rule-making, which, . . . is extolled as the hallmark of an advanced, contemporary political organism" (p. 642)".

The 1980 post-reunification Constitution reiterated the government's commitment to gender equality. In 1986, the Marriage and Family Law was rewritten to include a provision for family planning. Due to concerns over the negative effects of unchecked population growth on prospects for economic growth, Vietnam instituted a one-or-two child policy that was formalized under the Council of Ministers Decision 162 in September 1988. The goal was to reduce total fertility rate below three by the year 2000 (Goodkind, 1995).

A new Constitution, written in 1992 in response to the opening of markets under *Doi Moi*, reiterates the principles of equal suffrage and equal rights for women in all fields: political, economic, cultural, social, and family. All acts of discrimination against women and all acts damaging women's dignity are strictly banned. Further, the principle of equal and free marriage is reaffirmed.

Goodkind (1996) examines the effect of the Marriage and Family Law on wedding practices in Vietnam. Between passage of the law in 1960 and 1993, parent arranged marriages fell from over 60% of all marriages to less than 20% in North Vietnam. A smaller drop was noted in the south after reunification, however the initial proportion was less. Parent arranged marriages fell from 38% to approximately the same level as the north. Although the survey did not explicitly investigate dowries and bride prices, it did inquire about gift exchange between the families. From an initial high in 1952 of 40%, these exchanges fell to approximately 10-20% in the north. However, the south did not experience such a decline. By 1993, 45% of marriages still involved the exchange of gifts between families, 41% of which are from the groom's to the bride's relations. While this may be an artifact of the noted differing cultural backgrounds, it is also an indication that the Marriage and Family Law shows less effect during the shorter time span it has been in force in the south.

Currently, Vietnam continues a tradition of almost universal marriage with only 2.1% of the households reported as never married (Desai, 1995). As of the 1989 census, average age at first marriage had risen to 24.5 for men and 23.2 for women nationwide

where the ages are higher for urban areas and lower for rural areas (U.N, 1999). Lower age at first marriage in rural areas is ascribed to land allocation schemes that favor nuclear households. However, younger age at first marriage is observed in agricultural areas throughout the world. In addition, the land allocation is a one-time event. As there is no land reserved for future generations, the long-term result may be a greater increase in marriage ages because it will be more difficult for nuclear households to support themselves.

Table 15

Population over 15 by gender and marital status—1989

Marital Status	Male		Female		Total	
	Number (thousands)	Percent	Number (thousands)	Percent	Number (thousands)	Percent
Unmarried	7,465	37.4	6,982	31.3	14,447	34.2
Married	11,899	59.4	12,495	56.0	24,395	57.7
Widowed	402	2.0	2,417	10.0	2,819	6.7
Divorced	51	0.3	178	0.8	229	0.5
Separated	70	0.3	201	0.9	271	0.5
Not Defined	59	0.3	52	0.2	111	0.3
Total	19,946	100.0	22,325	100.0	42,271	100.0

Source: Thi (1996)

Thi (1996) believes that discrepancies between the numbers of married women and married men and between the number of separated women and separated men shown in table 15 are explained by three factors. The first is overt polygamy. In these cases, women with children who reside with the legal husband and wife, declare themselves to be married at population censuses. Second, forced separation during the war years has left women with no knowledge concerning their husbands. In some instances the men have gone abroad and it is presumed began a new life. Perhaps some have re-married. Finally, it is not uncommon for men who migrate looking for work to keep two

households or completely abandon their first wife. While the law forbids polygamy and no official cases of it exist in Vietnam that is not to say the tacit practice of polygamy has disappeared. While the society and culture praise and reinforce the values of chastity and fidelity for women, this is not the case for men. A 1993 study found that 54% of Vietnamese men in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City had an average of 3.72 partners in a two-week period. Classified by the men as wives, lovers, and prostitutes, one man articulated his relationships as a "husband and wife relationship between men and my wife, love with my lovers, but fun with prostitutes" (Barry, 1996, p.162).

While the government acknowledges the existence of forced and underage marriages, excessive wedding gifts, and polygamy, they maintain that it occurs mainly among ethnic minority groups. Further blame is placed on ignorance by some citizens of the law and on lack of enforcement by and training of officials responsible for ensuring adherence (UN, 1999). The Penal Code states that violators of the Marriage and Family Law may be subject to a caution, to non-custodial reform for a period of up to one year or to a term of imprisonment of between three months and three years.

8.1.2 Divorce

Vietnam's Family and Marriage Law also pertains to divorce, disposition of children upon divorce and property settlement. If upon failure of arbitration, the marriage situation is found by the People's Courts to be untenable, then a divorce is granted. According to Article 41, when dividing property, the interests of the wife and minor children must be protected. Generally speaking, custodial rights to children are

awarded to the mother especially if the children are young. By law, fathers or mothers who do not directly bring up children must share the expenses of child rearing. However, as a result of the generality of these statements, courts have had difficulties in assessing division of property. Further, the 'no fault' nature of divorce and property division in Vietnam lends itself easily to abuse. Offending parties may purposely cause intolerable situations in a marriage and pay no penalty. There is no mechanism for enforcement of child maintenance. Thus, the interests of women and children have suffered.

Table 16

Head of Household Structure, by Marital Status in Urban and Rural Areas, 1992

	Total		Urban		Rural	
Marital Status	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Married	95.6	42.2	94.2	57.3	95.8	34.8
Divorced	0.3	5.3	1.3	5.9	0.1	5.1
Separated	0.4	5.7	0.4	3.6	0.4	6.7
Widowed	3.0	40.9	3.4	27.5	2.9	47.4
Single	0.7	5.9	0.7	5.7	0.7	6.0

Source: U. N. (1999)

In Vietnam, men have an easier time remarrying than women, particularly if the woman has children. Thus any enumeration determining marital status, such as shown in tables 15 and 16, will show a much higher rate of divorced women than men, even in the face of the disadvantageous land allocation scheme and economic constraints encountered by women. While this is in part due to the shortage of men as a result of war and migration, cultural factors play a strong role for women in this environment. Women are expected to work as a source of sustenance until the children are grown and to be contented with this (Thi, 1996). The cultural, economic, and demographic constraints on remarriage should compel a reluctance to divorce on the part of women. However, courts are more likely to grant a divorce if the woman is the claimant as an acknowledgement of

the extremes a women must face before doing so (Du, 1996). Further, in cases where abandonment is the issue, women are much more likely to be the applicants for a divorce. Divorce documents from courts in Ho Chi Minh City in 1991 show that 83.8% of all divorces granted are due to marriage conflicts including physical and emotional abuse. The next most common reason for divorce is that one of the parties is missing or gone for a long period at 4.5% (Du, 1996). Of the total cases heard in that city, 30% were brought by women and 18% by men, the remainder were jointly sought (Du, 1996). More recently, local courts heard 49,711 divorce cases in 1996 of which 17.5% were due to having no son and 0.5% due to the husband taking a mistress. In 1998, women plaintiffs accounted for 42.08% of the divorce cases and 39.73% in 1999 (UN, 1999). In 1998-1999, 90,000 cases on marriage and family relations were brought before the court, most dealing with divorces (UN, 2000).

Efforts by the government to alleviate inequities have focused on more clearly and consistently defining women's legal rights. New sections of the Law on Marriage and Family states that common property should be divided into two halves taking into consideration the circumstance of each party and contributions by each party. Domestic work is to be regarded as income-generating work. Fathers have a continuing obligation to provide the means to feed their children. Individuals who are responsible for providing for others and are capable of realizing the obligation, but fail to do so, are penalized through a system of warning, re-education without detention up to two years, or imprisonment from three months to two years (UN, 2000). Although touted as new

measures to enhance the protection for women and children, they are actually a reiteration of already existing laws.

8.1.3 Domestic Abuse

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines gender-based violence as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (UN, 1995, para. 113). Such acts include, but are not limited to, battery, marital rape, verbal abuse, economic abuse and deprivation of financial, social and emotional resources.

Vietnam's culture has traditionally set women subservient to men. In the Confucian setting women must obey men absolutely, a wife is considered her husband's property. Under this circumstance, violence against women is literally subscribed to at all socio-economic levels. Women in Vietnam have internalized an acceptance of this treatment in the name of family harmony. While the government has passed numerous laws in an effort to stem 'feudal attitudes' towards women, the results are not encouraging. Intervention by authorities focuses on reconciliation and acquiescence by women. Serious cases of abuse resulted in 17,897 divorces in 1994, 24,992 in 1995 and 19,828 in 1996 (Loi, Huy, Minh & Clement, 1999). However, most instances of abuse do not result in divorce or formal complaint.

According to a World Bank supported study of gender based violence in Vietnam, the concept of violence within the family differs significantly from the international norm. The notion of marital rape is non-existent. According to Mai (1997), men do not accept the concept of forced sex. They consider it the wife's duty to acquiesce to men's demands whenever requested. A wife refusing to have sex with her husband is reason to engage in extra-marital relationships. Women state that refusal to have sex leads to oppression, family disintegration, quarrels, beatings, and extra-marital affairs. Further, they believe that it is their place to promote family happiness, thus even when sick, fatigued, or just would rather not, women tend to comply (Mai, 1997).

Whether or not a relationship is considered abusive in Vietnam depends on three factors; 1) the frequency of the behavior, 2) the level of physical or emotional damage experienced by the woman, and 3) who is seen to be guilty of starting the conflict (Loi et al, 1999). Generally speaking, occasional, violent actions are not considered abusive. However, infrequent actions that do cause serious health or psychological damage are determined as abusive. If the wife is believed guilty of provoking the violence, then it is judged understandable and justifiable. Women are blamed for complaining too much, talking too much, or not satisfactorily carrying out wifely and motherly duties (Loi et al, 1999).

Many factors contribute to gender-related violence, however two basic sources are economic hardship and alcohol and drug abuse. Others include issues of adultery, jealousy, gambling, differing opinions regarding child rearing, patriarchal traditions and

relationships with friends and relatives. Better off households show lower rates of domestic violence which may be due to reduced stress. While men view drinking as a normal part of their social responsibilities, it also leads to verbal and physical abuse. This might be due in part to the use of limited income on alcohol and drugs leading to increased marital tension (Loi et al, 1999). However, drinking and the time the behavior squanders may also be increasing women's dissatisfaction with marital life, as it is their duties that are increased while the men indulge in leisure activities.

While results of interviews with Vietnamese couples do not show that they consider the traditional social construct to be the source of domestic abuse, gender inequalities must be regarded as the fundamental cause. Vietnamese society condones mistreatment of women. This is most evident in the level of help available to female victims of abuse. There are no shelters for women and their children to escape abusive situations despite recommendations for the authorities to provide them (Mai, 1997; Johnson, 1996). Therefore, women who do complain to authorities must return to the household with no protection from the abuser. As a result, women do not often complain for fear of exacerbating the situation and intensifying the abuse. Resident Units, which are responsible for maintaining social order in clusters of 25 to 80 households, and Reconciliation Groups comprised of one representative from the Women's Union, one from the Fatherland Front, and one member of the Resident Unit are both empowered to intervene in cases of violence. However, usually only the Women's Union member is a female and none of the individuals are trained in intervention and counseling. Generally speaking, because these groups are geared toward maintaining social order, the advice

offered is for women to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of the children (Loi et al, 1999). Divorce law requires conciliation attempts before the divorce can be granted. The system treats men and women as equals, in effect ignoring women's weaker bargaining position. Therefore many women, with no place to live while prosecuting the divorce, drop the complaint. While husbands can be charged under criminal law for injury to their wife, there must be more than 10% damage and the wife must file a complaint. Regardless of the degree of injury, without the woman's request, the man will not be charged (Loi et al, 1999). Thus the institutions charged with alleviating and improving women's situation instead, perpetuate the status quo.

8.1.4 Shared Responsibility

Although there is currently no evidence of discriminatory treatment of female children in Vietnam, son preference is still an issue. Several demographic studies (Haughton & Haughton, 1995; Phai, Knodel, Cam & Huyen, 1996; Nguyen-Dinh, 1997) have shown a marked correlation between the number of sons born and the number of children in a family. In particular, women are much more likely to say they want more children when no or only one son has been borne. Further, the father's education, employment status and income stability has significant effects on the mother's fertility. This is in contrast to studies in other countries which show a more marked effect for women's socio-economic indicators than for male's. According to Nguyen-Dinh (1997) however, this is consistent with the assessment that husbands play a dominant role in decision making as in other Confucian oriented countries. As men are the main decision maker regarding family size and there is a preference for sons, it is not surprising that

women are beaten, abandoned and divorced for failure to produce a son (Quy, 1996; Mai, 1997). Although there has been little evidence to date of sex-selective abortion in Vietnam, the state has recently moved to ban the use of tests to determine the sex of a child. The National Committee for Population and Family Planning has noted that the practice is becoming more common and that sex ratios are changing in favor of male children increasing to 112-116 males for every 100 females in some rural provinces (Vietnam plans, 2001).

Men predominate in other family decisions. A survey of three rural communes indicate men controlling decisions on children's marriage, children's occupation and household expenditures (UNICEF, 1994). The Participatory Poverty Assessments compiled by the World Bank show men most dominant with respect to the right to decide in social affairs and the right to decide within the family, while women hold the most responsibility for family and housework (Turk, 1999).

Women are considered a family's financial managers in Vietnam. However, managing the money does not automatically endow the manager with control over expenditures. While women do have responsibility for small household expenditures such as family meals, overall men who also control large expenditures control household income. As men hold the primary right to decide in social affairs, this leads to conflict within the family. Women are expected to make funds available for men's leisure activities, which includes the ability to provide funds for alcohol and tobacco. Almost all

households in the PPA surveys reported that men spent a significant portion of household income on tobacco, alcohol and gambling, despite women's protests (Turk, 1999).

Further, because men are most often named as head of household and therefore hold title to land and house and because women acquiesce to men concerning decisions about large expenditures, women are not always consulted in disposal or acquisition of property. Although the law states that the women's consent must be sought preceding these transactions, there appears to be no mechanism for ensuring that consent is granted. Women may bring suit to protect their rights after the fact, however the chances this sort of action will lead to family conflict is high. A government survey of 1,000 women showed that 76% of urban women and 51.2% of rural women had exercised their right to enter independently into civil contracts including borrowing from banks and mortgaging property. However another 23% of urban women and 46% of rural women said they voluntarily passed this right to their husbands or children (UN, 1999)

8.1.5 Prostitution and Trafficking in Women

Women may enter prostitution for a variety of reasons. In a series of studies done under the auspices of the International Labour Organization in South-East Asia the overwhelming catalyst was poverty (Lim, 1998). Vietnam is no different in this regard. A survey of 968 prostitutes found that 74% declared poverty to be the main reason for entering prostitution, although 24% had a regular, separate job apart from commercial sex work. Over 90% were parents (Thuy, Nhung, Thuc, & Lien, 1998). Estimates of the

total number of prostitutes are difficult to compute due to prostitution's illegality but since the opening of the market there is evidence that more women are becoming at least part-time prostitutes and that these women are becoming younger. According to Tuoi Tre (Youth) newspaper, women aged 18-25 now account for 70% of the total number of commercial sex workers (CSW) in Ho Chi Minh City compared to 43% in 1996. Sixteen percent of the CSW in Ho Chi Minh City were girls aged 14-17 years old (One in five, 2000).

The Penal Code approved by the National Legislature in 1985 and amended and supplemented in 1989, 1991, 1992 and 1997 makes organizing or forcing other persons to illegally depart to or stay in another country, rape, forcible sexual intercourse, sexual intercourse with persons under 16 years of age, buying sex from minors, sexual harassment against children, and harboring or procuring prostitution illegal. Those involved in trafficking of women can be sentenced to between two and seven years in prison. Between five and twenty years prison sentences can be imposed upon those convicted of organizing trafficking (UN, 1999). An amended criminal code passed in 2000 strengthens the Penal Code and sets harsher penalties, now including fines, for those involved in trafficking of women, harboring prostitutes, acting as middle men in prostitution, engaging in sexual intercourse with minors, and cross border trafficking. Also in 2000, the State established the National Committee on Prevention and Control of AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution in which the VWU is represented at both the national and local level (UN, 2000).

Vietnam considers these crimes a 'social evil' and prosecutes them accordingly. Further, they consider most women to be victims rather than the criminals themselves. Thus the vast majority of imprisonment and fines are directed toward organizers of trafficking, brothel owners and pimps. According to Barry (1996), "prostitution is an underground economic system or an informal labour economy that eases the strain that full integration of women into the public, formal labour sector would require in its absence" (p. 153). In apparent agreement with this line of thinking, the government runs 51 rehabilitation centers for prostitutes in which they are taught vocational skills. Soft loans are made available to former CSW and enterprises are encouraged to employ these women.

Nonetheless, Vietnam acknowledges that the situation is degenerating. On their part, the government feels that an inadequate legal system and uneven application of law and policies contribute to the problem. Further obstacles include inadequacy of funds and poor coordination efforts between agencies (UN. 2000). Misled by promises of high paying jobs, women and girls continue to be trafficked from the south and highlands to Cambodia, and from the north into China. Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Naiphong and Danang report increased numbers of prostitutes, some of whom are addicted to heroin and forced to work to earn money for drugs.

Since the opening of the market, the Gini coefficient for Vietnam, which is a measure of income equality, has been worsening (UN, 1999). One of the effects of worsening income inequalities may be an increasing number of women entering

prostitution for economic reasons. As unemployment and underemployment rise and in the absence of social safety nets, the alternative to hunger and deep poverty may be commercial sex work.

8.2 Freedom of Movement, Association and Political Activity

These rights encompass the right to vote in and to be eligible for election in all publicly elected bodies; to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy and to hold any public office; to participate in non governmental organizations and association; to move freely within one's country and to leave one's country and return; to participate in all aspects of religious, recreational, and cultural life (Dixon-Mueller, 1998).

8.2.1 Political Representation

Vietnam has re-written its Constitution several times. From the first, in 1946, to the most recent in 1992, each has granted equal suffrage. All citizens who have reached 18 years of age are eligible to vote. Any person who is at least 21 years old may be elected to office.

Vietnam's highest representative body is the National Assembly. The National Assembly has 450 members and is elected by the population as a whole. The members of the National Assembly elect a Chairman and members of its Standing Committee. The National Assembly also elects the President of the State, the Prime Minister, the Chief Procurator of the Supreme People's Court and the Chief Procurator of the Supreme

People's Office of Supervision and Control. The President of State serves as Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. The Prime Minister heads the Cabinet that oversees the running of the Government. Localities elect People's Councils at the province, town, city, district, ward, and commune levels. The People's Council elects local executive bodies and People's Committees of different levels.

The Communist Party, as the only official political party, plays a leading role in the government of Vietnam. The National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam convenes every 5 years to outline the overall direction of the country and formalize policies for the future. It elects the Central Committee, which elects the Politburo. The highest position in the Party is that of the General Secretary, who is appointed by the Politburo. According to the U.S. State Department (2000), the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) retains control over the selection of candidates in elections for the National Assembly, the Presidency, the Prime Ministership and local government. The National Assembly does not initiate legislation and cannot pass legislation that the Party opposes.

By the 1957 elections, women represented 30% of the cadre workers and employees in the state entities. More than 5,000 women worked in the various central agencies with 336 women elected to the people's councils and 39 serving on the respective administrative committees. The local people's councils included 16,662 women members of which 3,944 sat on corresponding administrative committees. The National Assembly elected in 1960 numbered 49 women delegates or 10.8% of the total (Ginsbergs, 1975).

During the 1964 elections to the National Assembly 366 deputies were named, 18% of which were women. Women filled 25% of the seats in the provincial people's councils and 20% of the staff of the people's councils and the administrative committees of provinces, districts and villages. Ginsbergs (1975) contends that between the years 1954 -- 1965, a period of relative peace, many of the positions on the administrative committees reverted to the de-mobilized men. By 1970 conflict had re-commenced. At this time, women constituted 27% of the deputies in the provincial councils. In the district and village councils, the female membership ranged from 40 to 50%. In contrast, 15% of the membership of the National Assembly consisted of women delegates. Although the percentage of women in the ruling Workers' Party had grown from 5.4% in 1965 to 30% in 1972, only 3% of the positions on the Party's Central Committee were held by women by 1972 (Ginsbergs, 1975).

During the late sixties and early seventies, the Communist Party instituted formal employment quotas. Along with attainment of the quotas arrived an increase in women's political participation that has not been reached since. In a speech to the Vietnamese Women's Fourth Congress (March 4-7, 1975) Le Duan, leader of the VCP from 1969 to 1986, claimed that "women now constituted 30% of the deputies serving in the National Assembly . . . in the people's councils the latest rate was 40%. There were 50 vice-chairwomen, and women members in the provincial administrative committees, more than 3,000 chairwomen, vice-chairwomen of district and village administrative committees" (Ginsbergs, 1975, p. 650). During this same period, women constituted

over 60% of the agricultural workforce and up to 50% of the employment in industry. They served as commandos, in intelligence gathering, community mobilization, and material transport. If Vietnam is compared to other countries in South East Asia, women do impressively well in gaining political seats. However, even with the full support of the Party and during a time of mobilization, women never achieve full parity.

Table 17

Gender Composition of National Assembly Deputies %

Position	Legislature 1981-1987		Legislature 1987-1992		Legislature 1992-1997		Legislature 1997-2002	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Deputy	78.2	21.8	82.2	17.8	81.5	18.5	73.8	26.2
Vice-Presidents	88.9	11.1	80.0	20.0	100.0	0.0	75.0	25.0
Chairperson of Committee	85.7	14.3	57.1	42.9	77.8	22.2	66.7	33.3

Source: U. N. (2000)

In 1988, the Council of Ministers issued regulations stipulating that all levels of government would ensure the participation of the Vietnam Women's Union in State management. Included was a decree that at least one third of the member of the People's Committees at each level should be women and women should also hold a number of key posts. However, women's participation continued to decline. Although the percentage shares of women as Vice-Presidents and Chairpersons increased as shown in table 17, fewer women overall were elected to the National Assembly and women represented only 11% at the provincial level, and 13% each at the district and commune level during the 1987-1992 election period (UNICEF, 1990).

While women's representation rose slightly at the national level in 1992, they were less manifest at provincial, district and commune levels with fewer than 3% of Party Secretary positions. In spite of the fact that women form 16.42% of the total members of the Communist Part of Vietnam in 1992, they hold only 8.21% of the positions in the Party Central Committee (UNICEF, 1994). A comparison of table 17 and 18 shows that to date increased membership is not garnering increasing numbers of women in leadership roles.

Table 18

Women in People's Council at all Levels %

Tenure	1994-1999	1999-2004
at Provincial and City Level	20.4	22.5
at District, Precinct, Township Level	18.1	20.7
at Commune, Ward, Small Town Level	14.1	16.34

Source: U. N. (1999)

In 1994, the Party Central Committee reiterated its commitment to gender equality in politics with Directive 37. The Directive states that all levels of the Government and Party should aim to have at least 20% of positions filled by women. It also requires all branches of the state apparatus to improve their gender awareness and develop plans for training and retraining women cadres (UNDP, 1999).

Table 19

Gender Composition of Leaders of People's Councils, 1994-1999, %

Level	Men	Women
1. Province, City		
--Chairperson	91.7	8.3
--Vice Chairperson	96.5	3.5
2. District, Precinct, Township		
--Chairperson	96.2	3.8
--Vice Chairperson	92.2	7.8
3. Commune, Ward, Small Town		
--Chairperson of Commune Council	97.3	2.3
--Chairperson of Ward Council	89.8	10.2
--Chairperson of Small Town Council	94.2	5.8

Source: U.N. (2000)

Total membership in People's Councils shows increased participation for women. At the national level, women are also increasingly being promoted to leadership positions. However, leadership roles within grassroots lower levels is not increasing at the same rate and remain predominated by men as seen in table 19. Without the training and experience garnered at the grassroots level, women's ability to gain higher office remains constrained. Currently, UNDP and the National Committee for the Advancement of Women conduct training for women candidates along with a media campaign to encourage people to vote for women (UNDP, 1999). The DRV has re-iterated its call for increased representation of women setting targets at 20-30% in elected bodies and 15-30% in administration and governmental consultation agencies by the year 2000 (UN, 2000). The Vietnamese government is actively involved in and encouraging of women's participation in the political area. While women are joining the People's Councils, they are not reaching higher levels within the organization. Women themselves may be unmotivated to active participation or, the culture pressures them to remain

uninvolved. Given the documented heavy workload of women in Vietnam and the cultural submissiveness of women, an argument could be made for both of these.

8.2.2 Freedom of Movement

Early on in its existence, Vietnam, like China, made concerted attempts to deurbanize its population. According to Desbarat (1987) the forced relocation of citizens was designed to meet four goals; economic, demographic, internal security, and external security. Food self-sufficiency and jobs for the unemployed at war's end were the most urgent needs. Accordingly, the government undertook to relocate urban people from the Saigon and Hanoi regions into areas it thought could be developed for agriculture. The DRV also encouraged a North-South migration from the Red River Delta into the Mekong Delta, the southeastern coast and the offshore islands of Con Son and the Spratlys, in order to reduce congestion in the north and to infiltrate the southern populations with those individuals thought more loyal to the new regime. Plans called for the development of New Economic Zones throughout the country. These zones were agro-industrial centers designed to facilitate movement of the labor force throughout the countryside, increase food production, solve the unemployment problem, promote crop specialization, expedite the establishment of state farms and collectives and contain internal political resistance (Desbarat, 1987). A lack of popular support, poor coordination and a lack of funding to make the zones truly self-sufficient plagued the plans. Nor did they provide the rest of the country with necessary agricultural products as originally thought.

By the 1990s, these programs were by and large over. However, Vietnam continues to control the mobility of its population through a registration system. Currently, the DRV maintains that women enjoy equal rights with men to move within and without the country without permission from authorities of any level (UN, 2000). On the other hand, the U.S. State Department (2000) asserts that although citizens have to obtain permission to change their residence officially, many move without approval. However, moving without permission leads to difficulties in obtaining work permits and access to schools, health care facilities and other public services provided by the government.

Table 20

Reasons for Migration by Gender %

Cause	1992-1993		1997-1998	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Economic	20.2	22.0	18.4	18.5
Natural Disasters	37.4	6.5	35.7	5.3
Family	33.8	62.3	37.2	68.5
Other	8.6	9.2	8.7	7.7

Source: U. N. (2000)

Official statistics for the years 1994-1999 put the migration rate at 2.87% for men and 2.83% for women (UN, 2000). As shown in table 20, the most common reason women give for migration is that of family considerations. The percentage of women migrating for economic reasons is very close to the percentage of men migrating for the same reason. A study of legal migration to Ho Chi Minh City conducted in 1994 by Anh, Gubry, Hong & Huguet (1996) found that previous to 1989, 71.9% of women moved for family reasons. The percentage dropped to 57.2% after 1989. Women who moved for economic reasons comprised 24.6% of the migrants before 1989 and 36.7% after 1989.

Of more recent female migrants who moved legally for economic reasons to Ho Chi Minh City, 33% found jobs in trade and sales, 28% in construction and manufacturing and 14.4% as family servants. Over 55% of women migrants work in their own or other family's businesses with only 1.7% working in joint ventures. Females worked approximately 6 hours more than males and earned on average 83.6% of what males did (Anh et al, 1996). Thus, it appears that women who move do as well as more permanent residents of the urban areas. Moreover, moving for family reasons may be an indirect route to moving for economic reasons if the husband or father is the individual who is obtaining the better job.

Given that GDP per capita is as much as three times higher in urban areas than in rural areas and that urban areas are the zones slated for increased economic development and foreign investment, there is a powerful incentive for individuals to migrate to cities even without permission. The official population of the biggest industrial center, Ho Chi Minh City was 5 million in 1996. By 1996, the inflow of migrants to Ho Chi Minh City was estimated at approximately 100,000 per year. The United Nations Development Programme estimates that of these approximately 1.5 to 2.5 million are unregistered and that of these unregistered migrants between 10 and 50% are poor (PWG, 1999). On the other hand, media reports suggest that approximately 800,000 migrant workers are living in Ho Chi Minh City (PWG, 1999). These households are not eligible to receive help under the Government's Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction Program (HEPR) nor can they apply for exemptions from health costs and school fees. They cannot hook up to

urban services such as water and electricity except through third parties at sometimes exorbitant fees. The housing is radically substandard and job security is nonexistent.

As in China, government authorities are concerned that a surge of migration to cities will exacerbate infrastructure and quality of life problems in the urban areas (Djamba, Goldstein & Goldstein, 1999). Given the inequity between standards of living in the rural and urban areas, this concern is not unfounded. Investment and income in the agricultural sector has consistently lagged behind the industrial sector (Dang, Goldstein & McNally, 1997). Rather than explicitly limiting migration to cities and thus giving rise to large urban slums, a more appropriate strategy might be to spread development funding to rural areas in order to encourage people to remain in less populated districts. As women form a large proportion of the workforce in rural areas and poverty is concentrated in the countryside, biasing development funding toward rural areas would have a strong, positive impact on women's lives.

8.2.3 Freedom of Association

There is no freedom of association and peaceful assembly in Vietnam. Citizens are prohibited from establishing independent organizations such as political parties, labor unions and religious or veteran's associations. The Government does not permit demonstrations that could be seen as having political purpose or dissent. Freedom of religion is only tolerated within limits set by the party. Religious organizations must be registered and officially recognized by the government. All religious publishing must be done through government-approved publishing houses. Government permission is

required to hold training seminars, conventions and celebrations outside the regular religious calendar, to build or remodel places of worship, to engage in charitable activities or operate religious schools, and to train, ordain, promote or transfer clergy. Open religious practice by an individual blocks membership in the Communist Party (State Department, 2000).

The Vietnamese Communist Party under the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (VGCL) controls unions. Labor law requires all new enterprises with more than 10 employees to establish unions within 6 months. Although strikes are allowed, law requires that management and workers attempt first to resolve disputes through the enterprise's own labor conciliation council first. If the matter cannot be resolved at this level, it is referred to the Provincial People's Labor Arbitration Council. Further appeal is done in Labor Courts. However, spontaneous, unauthorized strikes have taken place and been tolerated by the government. Retribution against strikers is prohibited. Strikes are prohibited against businesses that serve the public and those deemed important to the national economy and defense. This includes the electrical industry, post and telecommunications. railway, maritime and air transportation, banking, public works, and the oil and gas industry. Individual unions may not associate with international labor bodies; however, the VGCL is involved with overseas labor organizations (State Department, 2000). The trade union organizations at all levels are mandated to have women's work committees, which are special groups designed to represent women's issues (UN, 1999).

The Vietnamese Women's Union is the prescribed voice of women in Vietnam. It is charged with promoting women's rights, including political, economic and legal equality, and protection from spousal abuse. The VWU also administers micro-credit programs. Organized at four levels in all localities (central, provincial, district and communes), the VWU claims membership of 10.1 million women comprising 62.6% of all women 18 years of age or older (UN, 1999). Although the State Department (2000) contends that the VWU is effective in the eyes of international organizations, the Poverty Working Group (1999) argues that it does not have good outreach in the remote areas and does not have a representative constituency since not all women can afford to be members. Finally, it does not encourage mechanisms that allow women to speak directly for themselves, instead channeling all concerns through the organization.

Involvement in outside activities is severely constrained by the many tasks that women must perform. Although the Government has conducted media campaigns, established law 'bookshelves' in communes, wards, and townships, conducted training in gender issues at all levels of government, and organized grassroots events through the mass organizations, many women do not have the time to become informed of their rights or to exercise them if they knew of those rights (UN, 2000). In a recent survey from the National Committee on Population and Family Planning, 53% of women never read newspapers, 19.8% never watched television, and 25.2% never listened to the radio. On the other hand, 52% of men listened to the radio daily, 50.3% watched television daily, and 18.9% read the newspapers every day (UN, 1999). According to the Vietnam Development Report, despite Government efforts to enhance the status of women, there

is still no perceived need by those in power at the local level to consult with women independent of their spouses or fathers (PWG, 1999).

Under law, women have the same rights and privileges as men in Vietnam. Law enforcement however, is uneven and inadequate. This may be due, in part, to the lack of capital to hire and train individuals in the law and its application. But there are cultural and economic constraints that are making the task more difficult. Abuse of women by their spouses is accepted in Vietnamese society and is especially egregious when families are under economic stress. Men are responsible for most decision-making within the family including fertility decisions. Despite the government's push for more political representation by women over the last 40 years, women have not achieved parity with men. In addition, many women, who may already be working on top of their traditional duties, face time constraints that preclude their participation in law making and their knowledge of the laws that affect them. Finally, under Vietnam's laws, no person has the right of assembly, association or movement.

Chapter Nine

Summary and Conclusion

9.1 Summary

From 1992 to 1998, the average annual GDP growth rate in Vietnam has been a phenomenal 8.4%, which is analogous to South Korea and Japan during their take-off periods. Agricultural GDP grew by 4.5%, industrial GDP by 13%, and the services sector showed a growth rate of 8.3% (PWG, 1999). Vietnam is a signatory to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and has ratified the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women. It is one of the few nations to spell out in a plan of action steps to achieve the proposals promoted at the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. Strong legal commitment to gender equality is evident throughout the Constitution of Vietnam and other legal documents. Since 1995, Vietnam has consistently ranked higher in GDI than in HDI. On the other hand, the GDI rank has gone up over the last ten years from 74 in 1990 to 89 in 1999, while the gap between the GDI and HDI has narrowed from 11 in 1990 to 2 in 1999. Meanwhile, the GDI has improved during the same period, rising from .537 to .68, where 1.0 indicates complete equality. Based on the 92/93 and 97/98 VNLSS measuring per capita expenditure, the incidence of poverty has declined rapidly. The proportion of people living under the total poverty line dropped from 0.58 to 0.37. The number of people below the food poverty line fell from 25% to 15% (PWG, 1999). The GINI coefficient has risen from .33 in 1992 to .35 in 1998, which is a slow rise. However, especially if the difference continues to widen, this rise would suggest that the poor are not benefiting from economic growth as

much as the rich. Further, the incidence of poverty remains rooted in the rural areas. Over 90% of the poor live in rural areas and the poverty there is much deeper.

As illustrated in the section on employment, women form the backbone of Vietnam's economy. Concentrated in the agricultural sector where the work is burdensome; long work hours subject women to exhaustion. Exhaustion and strain are associated with health problems. Overwork also precludes women from participating in the community, including the opportunity for informal learning. It further restricts their ability to participate in decision-making activities and political processes.

During land allocation, although wording of the regulations and decrees were gender neutral, results were discriminatory. In the case of female-headed households, women received less land of poorer quality. While female-headed households have not been found to be worse off in consumption expenditures than more traditional families, they depend disproportionately on remittances. Although the law gives women the right to have their name on land certificates, documents registered in both spouses' names remain rare. This practice restricts women's access to the credit necessary to improve their standard of living and limits their intra-household bargaining ability.

Although women currently move most often to urban areas for family reasons, economic reasons motivate relocation in equal numbers with men. In urban areas, women form most of the unskilled and informal sector. The sector is unregulated and not subject to collective bargaining regulations. This void has resulted in low and uncertain

wages and poor working conditions. As in the rural areas, these women work longer hours for a lower average compensation than men do. Minimum wage and equal pay for equal work legislation is not enforced or has been waived in export processing zones. Female workers have obtained equal pay in government and administrative employment however, these sectors employ very few women. In the shrinking state-owned sector, where the government has the best opportunity to pursue its avowed gender equality strategy, no more than 4% of the directors and deputy directors are female. Further, women have been the first to become redundant at the end of war, during restructuring and during economic recessions. In education and medicine, where women are a majority of workers, they have not reached the higher rungs of the promotion ladder. While the pay is equal in these fields, it is so low that most workers are forced to moonlight to earn an adequate living.

There is no current evidence of discriminatory treatment between male and female children in nutrition or health care. Past high sex ratios are probably an artifact of the war years during which large numbers of males died. Evidence of this interpretation is contained in studies regarding the effect the number of sons in a family has on the total fertility rate. Further indications of son preference include divorces granted on the grounds of failure to produce a son and the government's perception that it is necessary to pass laws banning the use of technology to detect the sex of a fetus. While discrimination against female children is not as extreme as in other Confucian countries such as China, neither is Vietnam's population policy as stringent as China's.

Reproductive health programs in Vietnam disproportionately focus on the woman's role in population control. There is little information provided to married women about how to use contraceptives or side effects of such use. There is scant comprehensive sex education for single or married men and women. Almost no weight is placed on male responsibility. High rates of abortion exist due to the lack of information services and government policy to restrict population growth. High rates of abortion produce high rates of RTIs among women. The lack of bargaining power on the part of women, the reluctance of men to take some portion of responsibility for birth control, men's propensity for non-monogamous relationships and poor information services are providing paths for increased rates of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Rising incidence of prostitution and IVDU exacerbate the situation.

Women in both spouse-absent and spouse-present households show lower nutritional status more often than men or children, although the situation is worse in female-headed households. Women tend to start at a lower BMI and there is more incidence of extreme energy deficiency among females. Females report more incidents of illness. Considering their workload and level of exhaustion along with the tendency to be underweight, undernourished and anemic, this is not unexpected. Life expectancy at birth, which is considered to be an excellent indicator of health status, shows little or no suggestion of discrimination against women. However, life expectancy measures the average number of years an infant would be expected to live if health and living conditions remained the same. Given the fact that publicly provided health services have

been eroding, especially in the rural areas and that privately provided services are not affordable for many, this situation may not continue.

Although there was a temporary drop in female enrollment directly after *Doi Moi*, women currently attend primary school at approximately the same rate as men. While women do as well if not better in school, they tend to drop out at a higher rate and complete fewer years than men do. Females account for almost three-quarters of the dropouts in rural areas. Those who do manage to attain higher education are tracked into training for fields considered appropriate for females. Public funding for schools is skewed toward university students. The vocational system, especially in rural areas, is severely underfunded. Agricultural extension services exist only in those communities willing and able to fund programs themselves. Therefore, many women do not receive even the possibility of education and information to improve their situation.

School hours are short and the school year is truncated compared to other countries. While school curriculum, books and materials show no discrimination according to the DRV, early socialization occurs at home. Given that there is a cultural tendency toward violence against women, it is doubtful that efforts at school to counter this bias could be very successful. Other government institutions such as divorce mediators and intervention groups perpetuate the status quo. Role models at home consist of mothers working long, arduous hours to earn income and performing most of the housework, while men dominate the decision making process and have more time for leisure activities.

The DRV continues its efforts to increase the numbers of women in politics, repeatedly setting goals over the years. Even in a one party state however, there has been difficulty in meeting these objectives. Leadership roles for women at the grass roots level remain sparse and local authorities remain reluctant to consult with women independently. Without this basis as examples for girls and as a training ground for higher political aspiration, it is doubtful that efforts to expand female participation can be accomplished or sustained.

On the other hand, Vietnam has accomplished several important goals. Life expectancy for all citizens has risen dramatically. Vietnam is now able to export rice and feed its population. Literacy rates and primary school attendance are very high and males and females are equally literate.

9.2 Conclusion

According to the United Nations, in no country are women equal to men. This dissertation provides no empirical or theoretical support for Vietnam, notwithstanding its avowed socialist commitment to gender equality, as any different from any other country in this respect. Despite a large increase in GDP per capita, women's situation has not shown concomitant progression. This result supports Forsythe, Korzeniewicz and Durrant's findings of a tenuous relationship between economic growth and gains in equality between men and women. Further, it corroborates the UN's contention that a correlation between economic growth and human development is not assured.

Heyzer contends that in addition to high growth in GDP, relatively equitable distributional structures, social cohesion, people's participation and targeted interventions are necessary to assure that the growth is advantageous to human and thus gender development. Relatively equitable distribution structures, although given much lip service in the socialist environment, are disappearing due to budget constraints and the unintended discriminatory consequences of some programs. For instance, the necessity of imposing fees for education and medical care has resulted in the more impoverished cohorts, especially in rural regions, receiving poorer services.

Social cohesion has been strong in Vietnam amid its majority Kinh population however, the minority groups face a different reality. They are limited to the poorest, most remote rural areas. The education and health care systems in these areas face the largest shortfalls. The women in these groups are among the worse off individuals in Vietnam. Additionally, since the conflicts have been over, women have been encouraged to make way for men analogous to the situation faced by women upon cessation of hostilities in other countries. In other words, they have been and continue to be treated as a source of flexible labor supply without being able to maintain many of the gains made during war years. Thus the social cohesion that Vietnam exhibits may be a fragile construct which does not include the minorities and is based on the ability to exploit women's labor and encourage their submission and docility.

People's participation is the lynch pin of any socialist economy and that participation has been ordered by the State. Mandatory participation does not ensure popular support of objectives however. A case in point is the failed attempts to dictate levels of female membership in the political arena. While a few more women have been inducted into the higher rungs of government and more women are becoming members of the Party, it is still uncommon for women to gain leadership positions at any level. Further, it is at the grassroots level that women are making the least gains. Thus, a top-down oriented state that dictates goals is not always the best arbitrator of sound and effective policy to improve individuals' lives.

Finally, while the DRV has always engaged in considerable targeted intervention in terms of government planning and implementation and has consistently stated in official documents the importance of gender equity, that intervention has not been dependably enforced. Labor laws concerning working conditions and minimum wages are ignored or waived in order to attract foreign investment. There is no mechanism to enforce child maintenance regulations. Laws prohibiting domestic abuse are enforced by agencies charged with maintaining social order and preserving the status quo.

Based on the available data, a political agenda of gender equality does not appear to completely master generations of a cultural and social background of gender inequality. Therefore, it is not only that these four conditions along with high growth must be present. The conditions must be implemented in such a way that the realities of women's lives in each particular culture are deeply investigated when planning and

implementing development programs and the decrees that implement the conditions must be enforced. The approach used by the DRV is peculiar to its political orientation of centralized, top-down decision making and goal setting. While this strategy can serve to improve certain indicators, such as national political representation in a one party state, it is not an appropriate means to truly improve the lives of women. Development economists generally agree that to be effective, targeted programs must involve the targeted group in design of the projects (UN. 1995). Further, there are often unintended consequences when non-participants, even with the best of objectives, establish programs.

Although the State has consistently reiterated its commitment to gender equality in the years since *Doi Moi*, there is little evidence of concrete, enduring results at this time despite the strong growth in GDP. During the transition to a market economy, many of the advances made by women, particularly in education, employment and the provision of social services, have deteriorated. While it is probably the case that too little time has passed to see if a socialist commitment to equality can endure or even prosper under a capitalist economic model along with a Confucian cultural background, currently indications are not all favorable. However, social, economic, and human development is a protracted process. If the DRV continues to focus on equality and adjusts its programs as necessary, they may well achieve an equitable society.

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