

The activities of Vietnamese women for Gender Equality LE Thi (Vietnam)

The first Constitution of Vietnam in 1946 states the equal rights of men and women in all aspects. Moreover, in 2007, the law on gender equality was released in an effort to realize the gender equality in the country. It is expected a law on domestic violence will be promulgated soon in the near future. Vietnamese women are present remarkably in various sectors. Accordingly, some 68.5% of women are working in agriculture sectors in comparison with 75% of men. There are 46 women in every 100 agricultural workers against 39 men. Similarly, the majority of workers in light industry, service, and trade sectors are women. Women account for some two million of workers in garment factories. Female entrepreneurs make up 20% of total that is exclusive of household-based service activities which are almost managed by women.

Women account for 27% of the National Assembly members in the 11th term. However, the proportion of women in leadership at lower levels is quite small. In 2002, the proportion of female cadres at communes was 1.9%; at districts 6.2%; and at provinces 8.9%. Female members of communal people's committees account for 19.5%; district people's committee 23%; and provincial people's committee 23.9% for the term 2004-2009¹.

In 2002, women's average income was low at 85% of that of men. In agriculture, women earned 60% of what men did and women in industries could get at 78% earnings of men. This difference in income between men and women is attributed to the disparity in education attainment, qualification, working experience, and gender-based treatment.

Women participate in labor market but their working time in families is some 2.5 times higher than that of men. Frequently, men make most of the important decisions in the family, being entitled to household property certificates and use of family's assets. Domestic violence is still a problem. The son preference is blamed for the existing serious gender imbalance. For every 110 male babies born, there are 100 female babies². Presently, the implementation of gender equality requires equal opportunities for Vietnamese women. It also requires gender equality in the execution of obligations and enjoyment of legitimate interests. Accordingly:

1. It is necessary to have a concrete policy on the implementation of the gender equality law in order to attain some 30% of women in the National Assembly; local people's committees at all levels; and leadership in industrial sectors. It is hoped that this expected policy will create more jobs and support for women to reduce poverty.
2. Women should be provided with more equal opportunities to participate in social and economic activities. To that end, women must be provided with opportunities to better education and training, improve their capacity, skills, and employment access, especially rural women.
3. The equal rights between husband and wife must be secured. Efforts should be made to prevent domestic violence. Both husband and wife are responsible for making a decision about their number of children.
4. Women should be fully aware of their capacities, responsibilities; and interests in the family and society.
5. Vietnam Women's Union functions advance gender equality in the country. Members of Vietnam Women's Union at localities are the cadre who work for women's well-being, preventing any gender-based discrimination, and fostering the implementation of gender equality law.



◀ Women in handicraft

¹ Vietnam gender statistics in the earlier 21st century (2005). Hanoi: Women's publishing house.

² Lao Dong (Labour) newspaper dated 11 July 2006.