



## **A QUESTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MEDIA: The Viet Nam Story**

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**This analysis is a part of UNESCO's activities within the Joint Programme on Gender Equality  
Capacity-building of MIC on gender mainstreaming in written  
and televised media at central and provincial levels**

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*“We must respect women. One of the aims of the revolution is to ensure equality of rights for the women. Lenin taught us: women make up half of society. Society cannot be totally free so long as the women are not freed. Women must fight for their right to be equal with men. Men must respect them. The Party cell must educate its members and the people in respecting equality between husband and wife.”*

Ho Chi Minh<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vietnam Women’s Union. (1969). President Ho Chi Minh and the Emancipation of Women.” *Women of Vietnam*. No. 3, 22–3.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

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Ms. Basgall did her doctoral work in mass communication at The University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa, United States, and was the team leader, as well as the lead researcher and writer on this project. She has been working in the field of gender equality, development planning, and monitoring and evaluation since the late 1970s in the United States and throughout the world.

Ms. Pham recently completed her master's degree in sociology on the emergence of peer groups in Hanoi – Vietnam at National University of Singapore and is at the beginning of her career. Her responsibilities were gathering the data for and writing the content analysis, and commenting on the whole analysis. During the interviews, Ms. Pham also provided interpretation and translation services.

In addition to Ms. Nikulainen and Ms. Nong, the authors would like to thank UNESCO Viet Nam for their support for this research. There were many people from UNESCO Hanoi through Vibeke Jensen, the UNESCO Hanoi Head and Representative, and many others in the UN system who assisted in the research. A special thanks to CSaGa and Oxfam for their earlier work about gender and the media in Viet Nam which paved the way for this research. Also, without the cooperation of those we interviewed in the government, Party, and media, none of this could have been completed.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This study looks at how gender is represented in the media in Viet Nam and how those involved directly and indirectly see the issues around gender equality using methods of content analysis and open-ended interviews. The idea is to gain basic understanding on the current situation of gender issues in the Vietnamese media and to build concrete recommendations for different media stakeholders on improving gender equality in the content of their work and in the workplace. This information is also to be used in capacity-building workshops

This analysis looked at written and televised media, more specifically a sample of newspapers, magazines, game shows and news broadcasts. The study found that although some improvement could be seen in the representation of women and men in written media and televised media especially, there were still challenges and stereotypical gender roles were often perpetuated through-out the examined communications products.

Also, the working and advancing in the media workplace was more challenging to women than men, as men were seen as more suitable to leaderships positions for various different reasons.

Gender equality has a long way to go before it is implemented in any of the media. There are a few articles and programs, but they do not predominate and until the media becomes one of the leaders in Viet Nam in the promotion of gender equality, traditional views will not change in the country. In speaking with those who are involved in the media, women tended to be more gender sensitive than men, but this was not true for either gender universally.

# INTRODUCTION

The role of the media in society is very interesting. Primarily, it, alongside social institutions such as the education system and cultural norms, is what holds society together. It promotes and maintains the dominant ideology of a given society and helps to maintain the cultural formation. But, it also has the ability to challenge social norms and promote paradigm shifts within society.

The UNESCO declaration on Mass Media points out that

The mass media have an essential part to play in the education of young people in a spirit of peace, justice, freedom, mutual respect and understanding, in order to promote human rights, equality of rights as between all human beings and all nations, and economic and social progress.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the 1995 Beijing Declaration clearly recognized the potential of the media to make a greater contribution to the advancement of women. It called on governments and international development organizations to take action to address “stereotyping of women in the media”<sup>3</sup> and as another strategic goal, it called for increased “participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication”. The CEDAW Committee<sup>4</sup> has also encouraged countries to direct the media “to discuss and promote non-stereotypical and positive images of women and promote the value of gender equality to society as a whole, (to use) radio, television and print and encompass both specialised and general programs, (and to adopt measures) to sensitise members of the press, television and other media on gender equality issues.” Such a position aligns with Article 5<sup>5</sup> of CEDAW which requires countries to take all appropriate measures to eliminate prejudices and customary practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for women and men. Furthermore, the CEDAW Committee in General Recommendation 3<sup>6</sup> urges countries to adopt “education and public information programs which will help eliminate prejudices and current practices that hinder the full operation of the principle of the social equality of women.”

In 1995 at the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing and the Government, Viet Nam signed the International Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration which was

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO. (1978). *Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, apartheid and incitement to war*. Article IV. [portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13176&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13176&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

<sup>3</sup> Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace. (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women*. [www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/e5dplw.htm](http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/e5dplw.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Wendy Wright. (2002). *CEDAW Committee Rulings*. [www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=1870&department=CWA&categoryid=nation](http://www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=1870&department=CWA&categoryid=nation).

<sup>5</sup> CEDAW. (1979). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, Article 5. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article5](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article5)

<sup>6</sup> CEDAW. (1979). *General recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, General Recommendation No. 3 (6th session). [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/index.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/index.html).

designed to remove the obstacles to women's public participation in all spheres of public and private lives through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.

The Vietnamese Government always considers gender equality and promoting the advancement of women as **an important goal of national development**. . . . Over the past 10 years, the role and status of Vietnamese women has significantly improved.<sup>7</sup>

Since this date, Viet Nam's efforts to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment can be seen through their legislative endeavours to promote gender equality, most recently with two new laws: Law on Gender Equality of 2006 (from now on GEL) and Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control of 2007 (from now on DVL). The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women 2006 to 2010 specifies concrete targets and measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The GEL addresses the media's role in promoting gender equality in Article 23 as follows:

“1. The information, education and communication on gender and gender equality are the important measures to enhance the awareness of gender and gender equality issues.

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3. The information, education, communications on gender and gender equality shall be conducted through the education programmes, publications, broadcasts and television programmes and other forms.”

This article particularly emphasises the role of the media to promote gender equality through communication products.

The Vietnamese Government has also recently started working together with the United Nations to promote gender equality through its Joint Programme on Gender Equality (2009-2011) which brings together twelve United Nation agencies to assist the Government in the implementation of the two laws. This study, as part of UNESCO's activities within the Joint Program for Gender Equality, aims to assess both of the Beijing Platform of Action strategic goals, namely participation of women in the media and the stereotyping of women through the media. This information will be used in the design of a training package for Capacity Building workshops on gender in the media for both Ministry officials and professionals working in the media. This study does not attempt to evaluate the access of women to expression or new technologies of communication in Vietnam which call for a further research.

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<sup>7</sup> The National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Viet Nam (Ủy ban Quốc gia vì sự tiến bộ của phụ nữ Việt Nam). (2009). [www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129](http://www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129). Emphasis theirs.

# METHODOLOGY

This study looked at both written and televised media representation of gender roles, and interviewed a select group of stakeholders to supplement the findings. So as to access the gender equalities or inequalities in Viet media, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to investigate the situation.

## Content Analysis of Media

We used content analysis to study both written and televised media in order to have a deeper understanding of how gender-sensitive is or is not portrayed in the most popular media in Vietnam. There are many different definitions and views about content analysis, in this research, content analysis is defined as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages.”<sup>8</sup> Hence, we focus on two main indicators which are the pictures and contents of communication products. The pictures and content have been coded and analyzed using a variety of criteria.

The research analyzes the content of communication products through several following indicators:

- Print media:
  - The number of pictures of women and men in each section of newspaper or magazine.
  - The role that women and men play in pictures and their status.
  - Appearance and position of women and men which are portrayed in pictures and articles.
  - The number of articles that talk about gender equality.<sup>9</sup>
  - Content and message of pictures or articles written for women and men.
  
- Television:
  - Sex of the MCs, contestants, guests.
  - Appearance and position of the people who appear on television.
  - Personality traits.

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel Riffe, Stephen Lacy, and Frederick G. Fico. (2005). *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*. Philadelphia: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate Inc.

<sup>9</sup> This would include those articles which specifically speak about gender equality and those by which it is implicitly discussed through their depicting women and men in non-traditional gender roles, e.g., men helping with children or doing housework or women working in non-traditional jobs such as scientist, engineer, etc.



- Role and status that they show.
- Frequency of women and men’s appearance in a show and duration.

## Print Media

We divided the print media into two categories (See Table 1): newspapers and magazines. The newspapers we selected were the *Nhan dan* (People’s) and the *Lao dong* (Labour) *Newspaper* as they are the most popular and oldest in Viet Nam and reflect the official political ideology. We selected three magazines, *Dep* (Beauty), *The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong* (Sport, Culture for Men), and *Dan ong* (Men), as they are considered the leading entertainment magazines in Vietnam

**TABLE 1: The two newspapers and three magazines selected for the study and their distribution dates.**

TYPE	NAMES	DISTRIBUTION DATES
<b>Newspaper</b>	<i>Nhan dan</i> (People’s) <i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Nhan dan</i> (People’s) <i>Daily</i> 7 issues (from 18 to 24 August), <i>Nhan dan</i> (People’s) <i>Weekend</i> (23 August) and <i>Nhan dan</i> (People’s) <i>Monthly</i> (no.148, August 2009)
	<i>Lao dong</i> (Labour) <i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Lao dong</i> (Labour) <i>Daily</i> 6 issues (from 18 to 24 August) <i>Lao dong</i> (Labour) <i>Weekend</i> (21-23 August)
<b>Magazine</b>	<i>Dep</i> (Beauty)	No. 127, August 2009
	<i>The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong Magazine</i> (Sport, Culture for Men)	No.46, August 2009
	<i>Dan ong</i> (Man)	No.45, August 2009.

### Newspapers

According to the website of *Nhan dan* Newspaper<sup>10</sup>, the *Nhan Dan* (People’s) *Newspaper* is the central newspaper of the Viet Nam Communist Party and published its first issue on March 11, 1951. Over the years, *Nhan dan* (People’s) *Newspaper* has contributed to disseminating and encouraging the implementation of the Party's guidelines and the State's policies and laws. It also focuses on reflecting the people's opinions, aspirations, initiatives, and, at the same time, participating in reviewing and perfecting the renovation policy. Currently, *Nhan dan* (People’s) *Newspaper* has five different kinds of publications including:

- *Nhan dan* (People’s) *Daily* with a circulation of about 220,000 copies a day;

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<sup>10</sup> Website: <http://www.nhandan.com.vn/english/about.htm>

- *Nhan dan* (People's) *Weekend*, which has a 16-page format with a run of 110,000 copies per issue;
- *Nhan dan* (People's) *Monthly*, which features 48-page format with 130,000 copies per issue; and
- *Vietnamese Nhan dan* (People's) *Online* and *English Nhan dan* (People's) *Online*, which were officially launched in the internet June 21, 1998, becoming Vietnam's first official electronic newspaper. Both Vietnamese and English versions receive about 800,000-1,000,000 hits per day.

The other national newspaper was selected is Lao dong newspapers. According to the introduction of *Lao dong online*, the *Lao dong* (Labor) is the voice of The Red Union, the precursor of the Vietnam Trade Union. First published on 14 August 1929 with only two pages, by the late of 1980s and early of 1990s, *Lao dong* (Labor) *Newspaper* became a forum for workers in the whole country.

Since 1990, *Lao dong* (Labour) *Newspaper* has published eight pages with nearly fifty sections, reflecting fully all areas of social, economic life throughout the country with its own writing style of the working class. It has ten domestic resident offices. The Newspaper turned from weekly to daily and is printed and published simultaneously at all three regions with a circulation of 29.000.000 copies per year. In 19 May 1999, *Lao dong* (Labour) *Newspaper* was officially launched in the internet.<sup>11</sup>

In this research, we look at a week of publications in each newspaper from 18 August to 24 August 2008. The detailed sampling is as follows:

- *Nhan dan* (People) *Newspaper*: 7 issues (from 18 to 24 August), *Nhan dan* (People's) *Weekend* (23 August) and *Nhan dan* (People's) *Monthly* (no.148, August 2009).
- *Lao dong* (Labour) *Newspaper*: 6 issues (from 18 to 24 August) and *Lao dong* (Labour) *Weekend* (21-23 August)

## Magazines

We also selected three magazines, *Dep* (Beauty) which is a special publication for women and *The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong* (Sport, Culture for Men), and *Dan ong* (Man) both published for men. *Dep* (Beauty) and *The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong* (Sport, Culture for Men), are published by the Vietnam News Agency while *Dan ong* (Men) is a publication of the Culture and Information Publishing House. These three magazines are considered the leading entertainment magazines in Viet Nam. The issues we selected to analyze: are *Dep* (Beauty), No. 127, August 2009; *The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong* (Sport, Culture for Men), No.46, August 2009 and *Dan ong* (Men), No.45, August 2009.

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<sup>11</sup> Translated from <http://www.laodong.com.vn/new/vebld/index.html> (Laodong online, - the old version)

# Television

Television is seen as one of the most effective types of media because of its reach and appeal. In Viet Nam, VTV channels, the state television broadcasting networks, are still the most popular and widely available channels. They cover almost all regions in the country. According to the website of Vietnam Television, VTV has five main channels: VTV1, VTV2, VTV3, VTV4, VTV5 and one experimental channel VTV6<sup>12</sup>.

- VTV1: General and informative channel. The channel presents all aspects of life including politics, economy, culture and society. Airtime: 18.5 hours/day.
- VTV2: Scientific and Educational Programming. The channel targets at students, pupils and improving community's education. Its contents concentrate on natural and social scientific issues and technology, innovation information. VTV2 is planning to develop distant-learning programs for university level and specific sectors. Airtime: 18 hours/day.
- VTV3: Sports, entertainment and economic programming. This is the most favourite channel in Vietnam with large genres of high quality programs for entertaining viewers of all ages from fantastic international Soccer tournaments for football fans to knowledge competition shows for students and grown-up people or games on house work skills for housewives. The channel contributes a major part in increasing commercial revenues for VTV. Airtime: 18 hours/day
- VTV4: Special programming for overseas Vietnamese. The channel contents are domestic news and information, children programs, Vietnam - Country - People, cultural and tourism specialized programs. It is broadcast nationally in Vietnamese and English or with English subtitles. Airtime: 24 hours/day
- VTV5: Special programming for ethnic minority viewers in their dialects. Since there are over 50 ethnic minority groups living mainly in mountainous and remote areas, the channel is evaluated the most effective way to connect with them and bring them information about Government policies and events, happenings in Vietnam. It helps to narrow the gap in developments between regions in the country. Airtime: 12 hours/day
- VTV6: Special programming for the Vietnamese Youth. Experimental broadcast since April 29, 2007. Airtime: 12hours/day.

Five out of the six channels were chosen for data collection and analysis. Because news programs are informative and widely viewed, it was decided that three programs during the week of 22 to 28 July 2009 would be chosen from the different time slots they were shown. Two game shows, one in which the format was imported<sup>13</sup> and one<sup>14</sup> that was 'home grown' in Viet Nam, were chosen. The other shows chosen were those directly targeted to one gender of the other based on traditional thinking about programme for men and for women. They were all chosen from the week of 22 to 28 July 2009 for convenience (See Table 2).

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<sup>12</sup> VTV:website.. (2009). <http://daitruyenhinh.vtv.vn>.

<sup>13</sup> "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" was originally produced in the United Kingdom and then in the United States.

<sup>14</sup> "We are Soldiers."

- 3 News: 12 pm (Monday - 31 August 2009); 7pm (Tuesday, 1 Sep 2009) and 11.30 pm (Tuesday, 1 September 2009) – VTV1
- “Sức sống mới” (New Vitality): a talk show for women with special features such as cooking, child care, etc., it is shown at 11.am (Tuesday, 1 September 2009) – VTV1
- Game shows:
  - “Ai là triệu phú” (Who Wants to be a Millionaire )<sup>15</sup>: 8.50 am (Thursday, 2 September 2009) – VTV 3
  - “Chúng tôi là chiến sỹ”(We are Soldiers)<sup>16</sup>: 8.00 pm (Saturday, 5 September 2009) – VTV3
- “Thể thao 360<sup>0</sup>,” (Sport 360<sup>0</sup>): 10.20am, Monday, 7 September 2009 – VTV3

**TABLE 2: Four types of programs were selected among the five main VTV stations. The criteria for the programs were their popularity and how much their content would indicate gender roles.**

PROGRAMS		TIMES	CHANNELS	PROGRAMS
News		12.00 pm Monday, 31 August	VTV1	Noon news bulletin
		07.00 pm Tuesday, 1 September	VTV1	Main news Bulletin Re-broadcasted in all other channels
		11.30 pm Tuesday, 1 September	VTV1	End of Day News Bulletin
“Sức sống mới” (New vitality)		11.00 am Tuesday, 1 September	VTV1	Programming for women Frequency: 5 days/week Copyright of Group Endemol – Netherland and Unilever Vietnam
“Thể thao 360 <sup>0</sup> ” (Sport 360 <sup>0</sup> )		10.20am Monday, 7 September	VTV3	Sport News and Events Viewers mainly are men
Game shows	“Ai là triệu phú” (Who Wants to be a Millionaire )	8.50 am Thursday, 2 September	VTV 3	Format imported from the U.S.
	“Chúng tôi là chiến sỹ”(We are Soldiers)	8.00 pm Saturday, 5 September	VTV3	Self-produced

## Selected Interviews

This study also collected information and input from a number of key people involved directly and indirectly with the Viet media. They included (See Table 3) officials from both the Viet government and the Community Party, United National and non-governmental staff, managers, editors, and journalist from television, print media (newspapers and magazines), and radio, a news Web publisher, and a children’s book publisher.

<sup>15</sup> Based on the British and United States shows.

<sup>16</sup> A Viet Nam produced game show.

**TABLE 3: The types of organization, the organization name, titles, and gender of all the people interviewed.**

WHO	TITLE	GENDER
<b>GOVERNMENT/PARTY</b>		
Minister of Information and Communications	Vice Minister	man
MI&C	Deputy Director General	man
PCCIC	Deputy Director	woman
Women's Union	International Relations Department	woman
Women's Union	Head of Propaganda	woman
Women's Union	Head of Policy-Law	woman
Women's Union	Deputy Head of Advancement of Women	woman
Women's Union	Deputy Editor of Viet Nam Women's Newspaper	woman
<b>UN or NGO</b>		
CSaGa	Director & Deputy Director	woman
UN Communications Office	UN Communications Office	woman
UNDP	Gender Advisor	woman
OCFAM GB	Program Coordinator	woman
UN Program for Gender Equality	Gender Specialist	woman
<b>MEDIA</b>		
<b>Television</b>		
VTV	Vice General Director	woman
VTV3	Managing Editor	woman
VTV4	Journalism	man
<b>Newspaper</b>		
Viet Nam News Agency	Director General	man
Dat Viet Newspaper	Managing Editor	man
Thanh Nien Newspaper	Representative	man
<b>Radio</b>		
Voice of Vietnam	Editor	man
<b>Magazine</b>		
Family and Children	Journalist	woman
Labor and Society Magazine	Journalist	woman
Sport, Culture and Men Magazine	Editor	man
Beauty Magazine	Editor	woman
<b>WEB PUBLISER</b>		
Vietnamnet	Journalist	woman
<b>CHILDREN'S BOOK PUBLISHER</b>		
Kim dong Publishing House	Deputy Director	man

The interviews were informational and open-ended in nature. The interviews aimed to concentrate on how the media currently represents gender, what are the particular challenges are in Vietnam to achieve gender equality in both media representations and the media sector as a workplace, and where the media needs to go in the future in relation to gender equality. The interviews were qualitative in nature and they inform this paper through the cultural and social information provided. The interviews were analysed for trends and exceptions. The interviewees received the question framework (See Appendices) prior to the interviews and were asked to provide information such as figures on the distribution of women and men in their company.

Interviews at the Ministry level added to the context of the information collected and gave directions to the questions asked of those who work in the media.

Interviews at the media level varied depending upon the respondent. Those in management provided overall context, but specifically, they provided information about what the gender make-up of the media is today, compared to the past, and where and how they plan to change it in the future. This provided both quantitative and qualitative data. These questions were not about what gender does, but why.

Interviews at the working level looked at the everyday reality of working in the media. Men were asked about what they see as their roles and why. The study looked at the gender distribution in levels of work and when the respondent said there were no or fewer women at upper or middle management levels, the respondent was asked to give their opinion as to why. Women were asked about issues they have faced working in the media and what could be done to change the situation.

These interviews offered valuable information on the existing barriers faced by women and men working in the media due to still persisting gender stereotypes. The interviews concentrated more on the challenges of women in the media, as it was determined early on in the analysis that gender stereotyping was more harmful to women's participation in the media sector.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Historical Context

Viet Nam has an early history of strong women, the two Trung sisters (Trung Trắc and Trung Nãi) and Triệu Thị Trinh (Bà Triệu), who were Viet women warriors.<sup>17</sup> Viet Nam was occupied by China for a thousand years, but for a brief three year period (39-43 AD), their yoke was thrown off in a rebellion lead by the Trung sisters. “The Trung Sisters are highly revered in Vietnam, as they led the first resistance movement against the occupying Chinese after 247 years of domination.”<sup>18</sup> Triệu Thị Trinh (222-248 AD), sometimes referred to as “the Vietnamese Joan of Arc,”

[Raised] an army of at least a thousand women and men. She and her army fought and won more than thirty major battles against the Chinese before she was twenty-one years old. She then set up her own administration in the freed territory which she kept independent for several months. When going to a battle, she lead her troops wearing a golden armor while riding an elephant and with a sword in each hand. The Chinese forces defeated her army in A.D. 248 but Trieu Au committed suicide by jumping into a river instead of surrendering.<sup>19</sup>

Hers was the last rebellion lead by a woman and the legends surrounding these three remarkable women demonize them by turn them into virgins, claiming their unmarried status crazed them and created their aberrant behaviour.<sup>20</sup>

Women were not elevated again until Ho Chi Minh in the 1930s talked about the equality of the sexes and this became a part of the platform of the Indochinese Communist Party.<sup>21</sup> It was not until Madame Nguyễn Thị Định (1959-1975), a Việt Minh<sup>22</sup> guerrilla and logistics officer who

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<sup>17</sup> Marc Jason Gilbert. (2007). “When Heroism is Not Enough:: Three Women Warriors of Vietnam, Their Historians and World History.” *History Cooperative*, The University of Illinois Press. <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/whc/4.3/gilbert.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Wikipedia. (2009). *Trung Sisters*. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tr%C6%B0ng\\_Sisters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tr%C6%B0ng_Sisters).

<sup>19</sup> Danuta Bois. (1969). “Trieu Au or Trieu Thi Trinh.” *Distinguished Women of Past and Present*. <http://www.distinguishedwomen.com/biographies/trieu-au.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Marc Jason Gilbert.

<sup>21</sup> See Hồ Chí Minh's "Hồ Chí Minh, "Appeal Made on the Occasion of the Founding of the Communist Party of Indochina," 18 February 1930, in Bernard Fall, ed., *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966* (New York, 1967): 129-131. Also available at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1930hochiminh.html>.

<sup>22</sup> The term Việt Minh is an abbreviation of *Việt Nam* "League for the Independence of Vietnam" a communist-led national front organization opposed to French colonialism.

ultimately rose to the rank of Việt Cộng<sup>23</sup> battalion commander during the American War in Vietnam, that another woman gained as much prominence.<sup>24</sup>

In 1930 Ho Chi Minh created the Women's Emancipation Association (later renamed the Vietnam Women's Union). This makes it the world's longest-running national machinery for women.<sup>25</sup>

The strong socialist politics led to the enshrinement of gender equality in the first Constitution of Vietnam in 1946, which states: "All power in the country belongs to the Vietnamese people, irrespective of race, sex, fortune, class, religion . . . and that women are equal to men in all respects" (Article 9). The Constitutions of 1959 1980 and 1992 further refine and highlight the rights of women in the context of economic and political equality.<sup>26</sup>

A World Bank Policy Research Report on Gender and Development explains that "Although gender disparities are often attributed to Confucian traditions around women and men's roles, these traditions alone do not explain the variant forms of gender inequality in Vietnam today."<sup>27</sup> They go on to say:

Since the inception of the *Doi Moi* reforms in 1986, gender has emerged as a major category by which to judge the distributive effects of the reform process. Gender not only measures how social and economic reforms have lessened or increased inequality between women and men but also how gender relations in turn produce different outcomes for individuals in terms of access to social services, employment, education, and political representation.<sup>28</sup>

Like many issues, the blame of the difference in gender equality on Confucian thinking, perhaps, obscures the real reasons for the inequality. It is obvious that Viet Nam is changing culturally. Women can no longer stay at home and take care of the household as "households are increasingly dependent on wages of all their adult members."<sup>29</sup> Like other emerging market economies, Viet Nam wants to change, but stay the same in areas which advantage the dominant class or gender. There are larger consequences in women's complete equality in that if there was a 'level playing field,' salaries would rise as women and men were given comparable compensation, men would have less free time as they picked up responsibilities in the home and consequently, would not be able to work as long hours and would not be as free to travel for their job, resulting in the need for more labor, etc. The free production and reproduction of the workforce is currently a non-paying job delegated to women. This 'free labor' advantages the

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<sup>23</sup> Việt Cộng is an abbreviation for the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (*Dân tộc Giải miền Nam Việt Nam*), a broad-based, communist led organization composed of opponents of the American-backed Republic of Vietnam.

<sup>24</sup> Marc Jason Gilbert.

<sup>25</sup> Mitchell, Suzette. (2000). "Women in Leadership in Vietnam." *Development Bulletin* 51, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Suzette Mitchell. (2000). Women in leadership in Vietnam. *Development Bulletin* 51, 30-32.

<sup>27</sup> Lynell D. Long, Le Ngoc Hung, Allison Truitt, Le Thi Phuong Mai and Dang Nguyen Anh. (2000). *Changing Gender Relations in Vietnam's Post Doi Moi Era*. World Bank Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, Working Paper Series No. 14, 1.

<sup>28</sup> :ibid, 129

<sup>29</sup> :ibid, 130.



money-makers as they get new laborers for their workforce and the existing labor is nurtured and taken care of without any cost to the employers.

## Media and Gender Roles

The current role of women in Viet Nam is at a dichotomy. Stephanie Fahey's<sup>30</sup> research:

[F]ound images of women as war heroes "appearing alongside new images of women as objects of beauty to sell 'modern' commodities" and that, "while souvenir shops might sell wall hangings of the famous Trung sisters . . . and the Women's Museum in Hanoi still displays photographs of female war heroes; in nearby streets, the magazine *Tiền Phong* (*Pioneer*) reports on forthcoming beauty contests sponsored by foreign firms such as Kodak, Singapore Airlines, and Samsung."<sup>31</sup>

Early studies looking at how Viet women were viewed in the media<sup>32</sup> were written from a Western perspective and took on the tinge of the West's anathema for Communism and was very Western biased. It was not until Viet Nam and Viet scholars began to look at itself that women were viewed within the context of the country and not through the eyes of those who censored the country and its politics.

Sidney Ruth Schuler et al<sup>33</sup> was one of the first studies which fairly represented the role of women in Viet Nam: "Vietnam has advanced far beyond most other developing countries and, indeed, surpasses many developed countries in adopting a legal framework based on gender equality, and in creating institutions and programs to support women's advancement." They are not absolutely glowing in their praise as they accurately go on to say: "In egalitarian gender norms have also persisted, however."<sup>34</sup> They blame this on gender inequality, domestic violence, the 'double burden' of economic and household maintenance, and women's subservient role in the family and State because of the long, ingrained hold that Confucian thinking has had on Viet Nam.

Confucianism historically assigned women the values of hard work, chastity and proper behavior, and focused on women's roles as daughters, mothers and wives. According to the Confucian moral code of the 'three obediences', a woman must show obedience to father before marriage, to husband when married and to the eldest son when widowed.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Stephanie Fahey. (1998). "Vietnam Women in the Renovation Era." In *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*, edited by Maila Stivens, Krishna Sen. London: Routledge, 222-247.

<sup>31</sup> Marc Jason Gilbert, 10.

<sup>32</sup> Christine M. Pothier. (2003). "Propagandist Representation of Vietnamese Women: A Comparative Study." *Review of Vietnamese Study* 3:1.

<sup>33</sup> Sidney Ruth Schuler, Hoang Tu Anh, Vu Sone Ha, Tran Hung Minh, Bui Thi Thanh Mai, and Pham Vu Thien. (2006). Constructions of gender in Vietnam: In pursuit of the 'Three Criteria'. *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 8:5, 383-395,

<sup>34</sup> :ibid, 395.

<sup>35</sup> :ibid, 385-386.

It was not, though, until CSaGa and Oxfam's three germinal studies in 2007<sup>3637</sup> and 2008<sup>38</sup> that women's depiction in the media was studied. The first study, basically, looked at the law and how it had been implemented within the various media organizations. The second study focused on a "review is the programs and projects working with communication on gender equality in Vietnam from 2002 to date (2007)"<sup>39</sup> with the goal that "Their good experience and lessons shall help the decision-maker to have better orientation in preparing communication strategy for gender equality enhancement in the coming time."<sup>40</sup> They found uneven implementation of the law and often that the media was perpetuating the traditional gender roles in their articles and programs.

The 2008 study was similar to this study in that they did a content analysis of three of the five main television channels and interviewed staffs and reporters who worked directly for the studied programs. Their findings showed:

1. Gender stereotype remained in program organization:<sup>41</sup>

The media organizations tend to follow traditional staffing formats with all the men having positions of power and women having the subservient/helping roles. Men are given positions in which they have to analyse important events: economic, political and sport issues and women take over "over less important positions, suitable for family's issue or simple information and issues that do not require much analysis."<sup>42</sup> In programs using master of ceremonies (MC), women and men are represented equally in the 80 programs reviewed, but again men tended to be the MC for the shows which feature economic, political and sport, while women host those shows which are in the prevue of traditional women's work: household, family, food, etc.

When both woman and man join one program, whether as an editor, manager or MC, it seems that woman is not appreciated as highly as man. . . . (A)lthough there are male and female MCs and their roles are equal, if pay attention to, viewers can see that man keeps higher power than woman, it means that man is production manager and woman is program producer. Maybe, this fact depends firstly on their position in the Vietnam Television, however, it can be confirmed that in television activities, male has more power than female.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> CSaGa and Oxfam. (2007). *Review of Policy and Laws on Role and Responsibility of Communication and Instruction and Management Mechanism of the State for Communication in the Improvement of Gender Equality*. Ha Noi: Oxfam.

<sup>37</sup> CSaGa and Oxfam. (2007). *Report on Reviewing Programs/Projects Working with Media Extension to Raise Community Awareness on Gender Equality*. Ha Noi: Oxfam.

<sup>38</sup> CSaGa and Oxfam. (2008). *Report on Gender Sensitivity in Television Shows of Vietnam Television*. Ha Noi: Oxfam.

<sup>39</sup> CSaGa and Oxfam. (2007). *Report on Reviewing Programs/Projects Working with Media Extension to Raise Community Awareness on Gender Equality*. Ha Noi: Oxfam, 4.

<sup>40</sup> :ibid, 4.

<sup>41</sup> CSaGa and Oxfam. (2008). *Report on Gender Sensitivity in Television Shows of Vietnam Television*. Ha Noi: Oxfam, 7.

<sup>42</sup> :ibid, 8.

<sup>43</sup> :ibid, 9 and 10.

2. Gender stereotype reinforced through characters on television shows:<sup>44</sup>

The reported characteristics of women and men are reinforced in the media. Men are shown as **“strong and brave man (who) has victorious aspiration and is always successful”**<sup>45</sup> while **“women are mentioned in television programs as tender or graceful persons.”**<sup>46</sup>

In family affairs, **woman is the key person to take care children's learning and keep family's budget**, when talking about family expense, people will ask woman. . . . **the men often take part in high-income and much-influenced fields, and the women take part in less-income and less-influenced fields.**<sup>47</sup>

They go on to say that these images and actions continue to reinforce the gender stereotypes and promote gender inequality which leaves women responsible for the household and men responsible for the external world.

3. Gender prejudice through comments of staffs, editors and MCs of television programs:<sup>48</sup>

The study goes on to state that the gender stereotypes are also reflected in the attitudes and beliefs of the staff so they do not see that there are any other ways to depict women and men or divide women and men's work. If a woman is successful, they find ways to point out what sacrifices to home and family they had to make to achieve this success and that their success is because they are 'beautiful' and not because they are smart.

4. Themes of VTV programs less directly relate to gender equality and their message less challenge gender stereotype:<sup>49</sup>

Of the 80 programs reviewed, “only one program directly discusses the gender equality.”<sup>50</sup> There were only a few programs which showed women and men in non-traditional gender roles.

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<sup>44</sup> :ibid, 11.

<sup>45</sup> :ibid, 11, emphasis theirs.

<sup>46</sup> :ibid, 12, emphasis theirs.

<sup>47</sup> :ibid, 13, emphasis theirs.

<sup>48</sup> :ibid, 16.

<sup>49</sup> :ibid, 20.

<sup>50</sup> :ibid, 20.

# FINDINGS

## Print Media

Formerly, women's images were primarily of housewives serving the family and of other subordinate roles. In the media, women usually were depicted as wives and mothers rather than people of importance such as politicians, scientists, etc. Recently this has begun to change. Instead of showing only traditional gender stereotypes, journalists have started to care about portraying both women and men in new and non-traditional roles and attention is being paid by Vietnamese NGOs to train journalists and other media stakeholders in gender-sensitive reporting.

Findings from the two national newspapers and three magazines indicate that to some extent, print media agencies have begun to incorporate gender sensitivity in their articles, particularly the two national newspapers; still many challenges remain and stereotypical gender roles are being perpetuated in the newspapers and magazines.

### Changing Roles – New Status for Women

In the seven issues of *Nhan dan Daily*<sup>51</sup>, three out of ten pictures of women show women in non-traditional roles. One woman is depicted as an athlete, another as a scientist and the third as a soldier. Previously, this was rare. In the *Nhan dan (People's) Weekend*, three out of five pictures women were policewoman, a female dioxin victim typing on a computer in order to illustrate how disabled people can overcome their afflictions, and a female athlete who has won many medals. We can see that, in these pictures, women appear as strong, self-confident, smart and positive. They are no longer shown as weak or dependent.

In *Dep (Beauty)*<sup>52</sup>, eleven pages were devoted to “Women and Cars.” In this section, there are many pictures of beautiful women standing by luxurious cars but in a different way from using them to promote car sale. Rather, here the story is about the experience of the Gala Royale Company director and information on women with their high-class cars. Sharing knowledge among women in the “Women and Car Club” indicates that women now have attained a certain status in society. In such pictures and stories, they appear as successful, independent and modern women.

The newspaper *Lao dong (Labor)*<sup>53</sup> also paid some attention to the non-traditional role of women by introducing the 2009 list of 100 most powerful women in the world. Particularly, in *Lao dong*

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<sup>51</sup> *Nhan dan (People's) Weekend*. (August 23, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> *Dep Magazine (Beauty)*. (August 2009), 234-244.

<sup>53</sup> *Lao dong (Labour) Newspaper*. (August 21, 2009), 6.

(Labor) *Weekend*<sup>54</sup>, the number of women's pictures surpassed men's. In this instance that the journalists were offering more space for the images of women. In addition there is a picture of a female teenager on the front page. This big-size picture (23.7x18.6cm, newspaper size is 31.5x28.7cm) with the title "An Active 90s Girl" describes a well-known singer-actress who has won several talent contests and is not sexual in nature. Presenting this type of image can motivate young girls to think about alternate new goals they can achieve.

Besides portraying women in non-traditional roles, several print media products simultaneously show men doing housework or taking care of children, which is a new model. In *Dep* (Beauty),<sup>55</sup> one story shows a father playing with his daughter, which illustrates the story "Don't Teach Children to Have Prejudice". This is a good example illustrating new male roles in society and in the home.

More evidence comes in an article about fathering in *Dan ong* (Men)<sup>56</sup> in which there are two big size pictures of men playing with little babies. These photos come together with the story "Papa, Please Play with Me." This story illustrates not only new responsibilities in fatherhood but also the joy of a father with his child. This story said

Playing with children is the greatest award of fathers since being with children, listening to their laughter and looking at their sparkling eyes, you (fathers) will realize that you are the luckiest people in the world.<sup>57</sup>

Such photos and articles can influence the readers' thinking about the role of men in their family and contribute to changing traditional thinking about gender roles. This improves the status of women, as well as creates new positive values for both women and men in roles that will become 'traditional' with time.

### **Mass Communication in Which Women Are Praised and Valued**

In addition to portraying women and men in non-traditional roles in the five print media, this research found that women are also shown as highly valued for what they do and their contribution to society. Articles praising women for their success and self-confidence and articles which depict active women are becoming more popular. This is a way of recognizing women's contribution to society which helps to improve the position of women.

In two issues of *Lao dong* (Labor)<sup>58</sup> there are two articles praising two outstanding female local Youth Union officials for their contribution to Youth Union tasks. This section is a periodical one, which is good strategy to compliment women's contribution and work. Also in the 21 August edition,<sup>59</sup> a list of 100 most powerful women in the world, according to Forbes ranking,

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<sup>54</sup> *Lao dong* (Labour) *Weekend*. (August 21-23, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> *Dep Magazine* (Beauty). (August 2009), 192.

<sup>56</sup> *Dan ong Magazine* (Man). (August 2009), 42-43.

<sup>57</sup> Translated from *Dep Magazine* (Beauty). (August 2009), 42-43.

<sup>58</sup> *Lao dong* (Labour) *Newspaper*. (21 August 2009), 4 and (22 August 2009), 4.

<sup>59</sup> *Lao dong* (Labour) *Newspaper*. (21 August 2009), 6.

was introduced in order to show the capacity and success of women. This turns them into mirror for other women.

In the *Nhan dan* (People's) *Weekend*,<sup>60</sup> there was an article about an excellent female athlete who had gained national and international competitive awards. Such an image of a strong and successful woman can be a positive example. This article occupied one-third of the sport section, showing the attention paid by the editors to her efforts.

In *Nhan dan* (People's) *Monthly*,<sup>61</sup> there was an article complimenting a meritorious female artist on her contribution to Ca Trù<sup>62</sup> (a kind of art performance). This article is the token of respect to a master of the art and the value of a talented woman was – again – recognized.

This research shows some similarities with the conclusion of CSAGA and Oxfam research on gender in communication products that the images of courageous, self-confident and active women are becoming more and more popular. It would be interesting to see if the non-traditional images are becoming more prevalent, remaining the same, or are less than they found in their 2008 study.

### **Mass Communication Contribute to Gender Equality Awareness**

From the analysis of newspapers and magazines within a week, it was found that both national newspapers have educational articles which provide helpful news and information on gender issues, particularly the *Lao dong* (Labor).

Within this seven day period, *Nhan dan* (People's) *Daily* had one article about specific gender issues. Noticeably in *Nhan dan* (People's) *Monthly*, they published two articles on gender issues:<sup>63</sup> one about “Women and Gender Inequality” and the other about “Domestic Labor Division”.

In one front page of *Lao dong* (Labor) *Newspaper*<sup>64</sup> there is a very big drawing. This drawing depicts a family with parents and 3 daughters. In that picture, the father is pointing at the instructions teaching how to have a son. It is an example about the current situation of population and family planning in Viet Nam. With that image, the writer refers to and partially criticizes the thinking of son preference existing in many Vietnamese people's minds which results in the unnaturally high sex ratio at birth, of 112 boys to a hundred girls.

In addition, the article “Don't Teach Children to Have Gender Prejudice”<sup>65</sup> in *Dep* (Beauty) is an educational article on gender issues. In this article, the author states:

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<sup>60</sup> *Nhan dan* (People's) *Weekend*. (23 August 2009), 111.

<sup>61</sup> *Nhan dan* (People's) *Weekend*. (August 23, 2009), 11.

<sup>62</sup> Ca Trù can be defined as ceremonial/festival song. It is an original art performance of academic character - has been preserved for the past ten centuries. To appreciate Ca Trù is to appreciate poetry and music.

<sup>63</sup> *Nhan dan* (People's) *Daily*. (August 2009), 20 and 21.

<sup>64</sup> *Lao dong* (Labour) *Newspaper*. (21 August 2009), 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Dep Magazine* (Beauty). (August 2009), 192.

Attaching boys and girls to special gender stereotypes helps to sustain the stability but also limits the comprehensive development of children, constraining the role of men in taking care of housework and the role of women in participating in the social sphere,

Such instruction is a good lesson to improve people's knowledge of gender issue in general and to disseminate information on gender equality more broadly.

### **Challenges and Shortcomings in Print Media**

Even though there are several good signs for gender equality in Viet media germinating, there are still many existing challenges which need to be addressed.

#### **Difference in Women and Men's Photos**

From the findings of the analysis show that the number of men's pictures in most media is much greater than that of women's (See Table 4). The difference between the number of men's pictures and women's pictures is analyzed by counting the quantity of pictures in which are the image of only men or only women. Those pictures which contain both men and women, landscapes, animations, drawings are not counted and defined as "neutral". Regarding the number of picture, the analysis found that the number of men's photos in the two national newspapers is 127 while that of women's is only 60. Men in those photos are often scientists, politicians, sport athletes, or other publically successful icon while women are often shoppers, teachers, dancers, or artists. Women's image mainly appears in the culture, arts, or social affairs sections rather than in political, business, or sports sections. Furthermore, most of front pages of the *Nhan dan* (People's) and of the *Lao dong* (Labor) there are pictures of men. In all these daily newspapers, only four front pages have women's photos compared to seventeen with men's photos.

That may be because of the characteristics of these two newspapers rather than the intention of the newspaper. For example, *Nhan dan* (People's) is the voice of Communist Party and the Government, so they often put pictures of Party and government leaders on the front page and most of them are men. However, that illustrates another gender issue which is the lack of females in decision-making positions in general and in areas traditionally dominated by men in particular.

There were three pictures of women appearing in the front page of *Nhan dan* (People's) in total within the week of study, but all three pictures showed women in traditional roles. One showed female garment workers;<sup>66</sup> another<sup>67</sup> had a picture of women working in handcrafters; and the third<sup>68</sup> presented women as teachers. All this work is seen traditionally as women's jobs.

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<sup>66</sup> *Nhan dan* (People's) Newspaper. (18 August 2009), 1.

<sup>67</sup> *Nhan dan* (People's) Newspaper. (20 August 2009), 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Nhan dan* (People's) Newspaper. (21 August 2009), 1.

**TABLE 4: The two newspapers broken down by daily, weekend, and monthly from 18 to 24 August 2009 and the number of pictures counted by man, woman, or neutral shown, and the number of pictures of man or women on the front page during this period.**

NEWSPAPER NAME	PICTURES			FRONT PAGE	
	MAN	WOMAN	NEUTRAL	MAN	WOMAN
<i>Nhan dan (People's) Daily</i> -Size: 57.4x41.7 -Page: 8	39	10	42	15	3
<i>Nhan dan (People's) Weekend</i> -Size: 41.5x28.5 -Page: 16	11	5	15	1	0
<i>Nhan dan (People's) Monthly</i> -Size: 20x28 -Page: 52	14	8	30	0	0
<i>Lao dong (Labour) Daily</i> -Size: 57.5x41.6 -Paper: 8	56	26	141	1	1
<i>Lao dong (Labour) Weekend</i> -Size: 31.5x28.7 -Page: 24	7	11	28	0	1

For three magazines, the number of men or women's picture depends on the feature. For *Dep* (Beauty) which is for women, most characters in the pictures were women, even on the front and the back page. Meanwhile, in *Dan ong (Man)* and *The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong* (Sport, Culture for Men), most of pictures are men, including front page and back page as well.

### *The Abuse of Women's Images*

As mentioned previously in the magazine for women, most of photos are of women and in magazines for men, most of photos are of men. Nonetheless, there is a noticeable point in the two magazines for men that were reviewed, men in those photos usually appear in elegant and noble outfits with strong, straight postures, but many of the women's photos show sexual positions of women with short and seductive clothes, particularly in advertisements. Even though there were not many pictures of women in the two men's magazines, those that were there showed women in sexy poses. In *The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong* (Sport, Culture for Men),<sup>69</sup> a model wearing a tight revealing top is lying on the roof of a car. This was used as an illustration in the column of "Pretty women." As a rule, women's bodies were used to advertise commercial products with no real purpose. Using women as the symbol of sexuality this way resulting in women being devalued with their only purpose as a method to attract men to what is being sold. Readers have a perception that "pretty women" equates with sexy women or women in sexually available positions. Men, on the other hand, are not posed in sexually provocative positions selling the product, but as strong, successful men. These sexually provocative images of women help to maintain the stereotype that women are available for a man's pleasure.

<sup>69</sup> *The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong Magazine* (Sport, Culture for Men). (August 2009). 84-87.



The images of women in sexual positions could be seen also in the magazine for women. The pictures in the column about “Beauty” in *Dep* (Beauty)<sup>70</sup> which is allegedly about instructions for hiking, we see a female model with very short pants and tight sexy top. In addition, her positioning was sexual in expression. Later in the magazine<sup>71</sup> is an eyewear advertisement, where we see models wear in a bikini tops. A few pages later is an ad for a new cell phone, a man is depicted as taking a picture with his cell phone of a woman in a sexy pose.<sup>72</sup>

Traditional, stereotypical images of women and men were also found in the newspapers that were reviewed. The results indicate that men are often portrayed as scientists, politicians, sport athletes, or in other successful roles while women are often shoppers, teachers, dancers, artists as well as sexually available women. Even within the industry section, men usually appear as working in heavy industry while women are seen working in light industry section. Here, heavy industry jobs are defined as including engineers, construction workers; while light industry works are garment, handicraft work. Particularly, women’s image mainly appears in the section of culture, arts, or social affairs and, in fact, make up more than 90 percent of the pictures. That does not only strengthen the idea of what jobs men and women should do but also reinforces the belief that women are weaker than men physically and mentally. See the table below.

**TABLE 5: This shows the types of images shown in the four main selected newspapers by gender and role.**

ROLE	Nhan dan Daily & Weekend				Nhan dan Monthly				Lao dong Daily				Lao dong Weekend			
	MEN		WOMEN		MEN		WOMEN		MEN		WOMEN		MEN		WOMEN	
Leader/Politician	22	44%	0	0%	10	72%	0	0%	5	9%	0	0%	1	15%	0	0%
Military/Police force	4	8%	0	0%	2	15%	0	0%	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Heavy Industry worker	7	14%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	5	9%	0	0%	1	15%	0	0%
Light Industry worker	0	0%	3	20%	0	0%	1	13%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Farmer	1	2%	2	14%	0	0%	0	0%	3	6%	2	8%	0	0%	0	0%
Fisherperson	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Forest manager		0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Artist - Entertainer	0	%	2	14%	2	15%	4	50%	1	2%	13	50%	1	15%	9	82%
Officer	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	6%	4	16%	0	0%	0	0%
Scientist	1	2%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%	2	4%	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%
Sport Athlete	3	6%	2	14%	3	22%	0	0%	7	13%	0	0%	2	29%	1	6%
Teacher	0	0%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Shopper	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%
Housework doer	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%
Business person	0	0%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	15%	0	0%

The difference between the role of men and women in newspaper pictures could result from the fact that those two newspapers are national and political newspapers which focus more on

<sup>70</sup> *Dep Magazine* (Beauty). (August 2009). 142-143.

<sup>71</sup> *Dep Magazine* (Beauty). (August 2009). 171-177. One wonders to what the readers will pay the most attention.

<sup>72</sup> *Dep Magazine* (Beauty). (August 2009). 180.

political news, policies and guidance of the Communist Party and government, so the pictures in those are often portrays and activities of government and party leaders. However, it on the other hand reflects the gap between the number of men and women in leadership position in Vietnam currently.

### ***Ethnic Minority Issue***

From the analysis, there is a notice that the number of pictures and articles about ethnic minorities is rare. Based on the traditional classification way which mostly relies on the outfits, it was realized that among many pictures and articles in series of two newspapers analyzed, there were 2 pictures of ethnic minority people: one in *Lao dong weekend*<sup>73</sup> and one in *Nhan dan Monthly*<sup>74</sup> and there was one article in *Lao dong weekend*<sup>75</sup>. That could reason from the fact that newspapers analyzed are national and political newspapers so they reflect the universal Vietnamese generally rather than concentrate on only one ethnic group. Moreover, nowadays it is difficult to distinguish Kinh people and ethnic minority people because physical and appearance differences are small if they dress similarly. Furthermore, the difference between the northern and the southern Vietnamese people is also unclear because of the same reason.

### ***Age preference***

Age is another important indicator when looking at the process towards gender equality, especially in a society that respects age like Vietnam. In all media products selected to analyze, most of women in pictures are young, approximately from 20 to 40. In publications of two newspapers, there were only 2 pictures of middle age women and 2 pictures of old women, probably over 65 whereas the rest of pictures are about young women and teenagers. On the contrary, the image of men is quite different. Many of pictures in newspapers are of male leaders, politicians, successful businessmen who are at the age of over 50. Unconsciously this creates gender expectations that it can be better for men to be old to get more important or leadership positions while for women to be young to be attractive and paid more attention. That would be able to result in gender stereotypes which disadvantage women.

### **Necessity of Eliminating Gender Stereotype in Print Media**

It is undeniable that print media could contribute a great deal to the process of progressing towards gender equality in Vietnam by their efforts in changing their arrangement of and nature of women's and men's images and publishing articles on gender equality, but it is just as important to eliminate the gender stereotypes and bias in the general content of the print media.

In *The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong* (Sport, Culture for Men),<sup>76</sup> there was an interview with a famous female model. In the interview, the writer asked her

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<sup>73</sup> *Lao dong weekend*. 21-23 August 2009,8.

<sup>74</sup> *Nhan dan Monthly*. No. 148, August 2009,1.

<sup>75</sup> *Lao dong weekend*. 21-23 August 2009,8.

<sup>76</sup> *The thao, Van hoa-Dan ong Magazine* (Sport, Culture for Men),. (August 2009), 85.

Men usually dignify their intelligence while women value their beauty. . . . Does it mean that men don't need to be beautiful and women don't need to be intelligent?"

In the next question, she was asked: "Is there anyone both beautiful and intelligent?"

The way the writer asked these questions reinforces the gender stereotype in which women are valued simply for their beauty, especially in magazines for men. This limitation means that women need not participate in intellectual areas as their role is to be beautiful (for men) and this reinforces the traditional subordinate role for women. The implicit message is women are for men who are the intellectuals in society and who through their success win the 'beautiful, sexy' woman.

In their column of "Family Culture,"<sup>77</sup> *Nhan dan* (People's) *Monthly* raised the discussion topic and presented opinions on women and gender equality. In this article, the author wrote

Abnormal family patterns which are non-traditional are germinating and causing problematic social issues such as cohabitation without marriage, no need of having children, single life or homosexual marriage which results in many negative consequences.

This article also added

In Oriental tradition, women are the "backstage" of men, the fire which warms up the family, the people who take care of husbands. Sacrifice is one of the precious virtues of Vietnamese women

Although this article is about women and gender equality, it calls for the return of traditional family model in which women and men keep playing their stereotypical roles. Valuing the sacrifice of women means that men do not have to carry any of the additional burdens that women have as they have entered the workforce. It means that women work harder and longer than men in the home and public work place. Now they must work in both home and at a job, but there is no adjustment that men must make. This puts more pressure on women and simultaneously makes them more vulnerable and men still have all of the power.

There were several articles which sustained the gender stereotypes. In *Dan ong* (Men),<sup>78</sup> there is a story about male adulterer which is called "Heart-Compartments." According to the article, men have a heart with many compartments which makes it easy for them to be in a relationship with more than one woman. The author perpetuates here the stereotypical views on men who are adulterers. This thinking creates a situation in which men are shown they cannot help themselves when they engage in this type of behavior and that it is natural behavior for a man but not for a woman.

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<sup>77</sup> *Nhan dan* (People's) *Monthly*. (August 2009), 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Dan ong Magazine* (Man) . (September 2009), 94-95.

In contrast in the article “Young Adulteress” in *Dep* (Beauty),<sup>79</sup> the adultery of women was criticized. After cited many folklore stories in which women are shown as losing when they are adulterers, the author ends the article saying:

When being seduced, many young women now agree to get into a relationship hurriedly. However, when their partners asked for the things they gave them back (sometimes, diamond ring or land certificate), some women return them, but burst into tears. It’s hard to say they regret the property or their partner

This conclusion makes people think that when women who are the adulterers they deserve a bad ending and they should blame on themselves for what they did. The opposite is true, though, for men. This continues the myth that men cannot help themselves and that their adulterous behavior is fine, but that women are held to a different standard in which they are punished when they have affairs. This is a belief that is held in many cultures and has a long history. In the popular press, there are little discussions in which both women and men are held to the same standard and if there is, it is that women should have sexual freedom which can also be seen as advantaging men while also empowering women. There is very little discussion about fidelity of both sexes in relationships.

Another evidence came from *Lao dong Weekend* in the agony column. One reader shared her story about being betrayed by her boyfriend and asked what she should do. The reply was “You yourself made “mistake” by being too easy to have sex with a man and then you took care of that seed of “misery” by raising hope which would never come true<sup>80</sup>.”

Instead of looking at the betrayal behavior of that man, the writer seemed to draw attention to and then blame on the compliance of the girl. The way that the writer said made other readers think that girl was spoilt. In addition, the writer apparently criticized and advised her how to behave rather than sharing and offering positive advice and encouragements.

### **Let Women and Men be Free to make their Choices**

Traditionally in Viet Nam a wife must be younger than her husband. This creates a hierarchy in social relations and older have little opportunity to get involved with younger men and also promotes the idea that a woman’s value is defined by her age. Despite the fact that the situation has improved some, there is still a social stigma to the. In *Dan ong* (Men,<sup>81</sup> there are two articles on the topic of the wife being older than her husband. In an interview with an actor-model, the author proposed a question: “When you decided to get married, what did you say to your mother since women in previous generations were concerned about their daughter in-law’s profile, but you are younger than your wife?”

This question perpetuates the idea that it is problematic and less desirable to get married to an older woman.

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<sup>79</sup> *Dep Magazine* (Beauty). (August 2009), 218-219.

<sup>80</sup> Translated from *Lao dong Weekend*. (21-23 August 2009), 14.

<sup>81</sup> *Dan ong Magazine* (Man) . (August 2009), 58-61.

In the same magazine,<sup>82</sup> there is an article titled “The Fact that a Wife is Older than her Husband is not Fashionable.” Even though this article shows sympathy and radical opinions on this issue, the conclusion is that women are at a disadvantage compared to their husbands. It makes the reader sympathize with women rather than to change their perception which would create a favorable environment for all to make their own choice. Since traditionally men have been allowed to marry younger women (sometimes many years younger) this is again an example of the double standard. This supports the above-mentioned idea that people are supposed to value young women more than old ones, which is completely different standard for men.

## Television

### Advancement of Televised Media

When comparing print media and television, it is obvious that gender equality is being carried out better in television. This research found that some of the producers have had gender sensitivity training and gender was mainstreamed in some of the programs that were selected to be analyzed.

In both game shows, “Who Wants to be a Millionaire”<sup>83</sup> and “We are Soldiers,”<sup>84</sup> the number of women and men chosen was equal. In the 2 Sep 2009 “Who Wants to be a Millionaire” show, the producers selected the sex of the players equally. Out of ten candidates selected, five were male and five female and of those who completed, one was a woman and the other a man. The questions asked ranged from the natural sciences, physics, to social sciences, literature, and history. This allows to meet the interests of all people regardless of gender. In Vietnam, it is thought that men are better at natural sciences and women at social sciences because they think the natural science are “hard” and more intellectual. Natural science is perceived as a masculine subject while social science is seen as feminine subject. Subsequently, many parents orientate their children to take courses which fit their gender roles. If looking at the current context, we can see that still happens today. In many natural science universities, the number of male students is much larger than female ones. On the contrary, that number of female students in social science universities is higher than male students. As a result, offering such diverse questions will probably create more favorable environment for both women and men regardless of the orientation in studies they were encouraged to take.

“We are Soldiers” shows soldiers as contestants and the studio audience and is reported as the most widely watched game show last year, according to the MC of that game show. In the 5 Sep 2009 show, they had two MC couples, each couple were one man and one woman. The amount of airtime and what they had to say was fairly equal. Because that particular show was celebrating its third anniversary, there were no contestants or games. However, the selection of

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<sup>82</sup> *Dan ong Magazine (Man)* . (August 2009), 84-87.

<sup>83</sup> Based on the British and United States shows.

<sup>84</sup> A self-produced Vietnamese show.

performances expressed the gender sensitivity number-wise fairly well as the number of performances of women and men were the same in the show. Moreover, in several performances, their outfits were similar – military uniforms. Hence men and women had the same power. However, they had only one woman guest compared to four VIP male guests. That could be because of the characteristic of this particular show, but would have been better if the producer had invited more female guests.

There were similarities in the “New Vitality” program at 11 am, Tuesday, 1 September 2009. Although this program is specifically geared for women, the content and appearance promoted new roles for men.

Again they had two MCs: one male and one female. The air time each was allowed was relatively equal, around eight minutes each. In the section about decoration and cooking, the guests were all male. In the decoration section, the male instructor taught how to arrange flowers and in that of cooking, the instructor was a male chef, activities normally done by women.

Importantly, gender issues had been paid more attention in all seven programmes at a certain level. Out of the three news shows selected, two had a female announcer, even in the main 7 p.m. show. In “Sport 360°,” which targets mainly men, one announcer was a man and the other a woman. The speaking duration was the same, less than three minutes, but often what the man had to say was more important than what the woman had to say. Also both women and men appear on television in serious positions and outfits. The abuse of women’s bodies is not prevalent among the programs that were selected to be analyzed.

## **Limitations of Televised Media**

### **Less programs for women than for men**

Traditionally, women are supposed to watch programs on cooking, shopping, beauty, fashion, family issues, raising and educating children while men are supposed to watch sport, discovery-adventure, science and technology, business and political programs. Besides programs which define themselves as targeting to men or to women, such as *Suc song moi* (New vitality) or *Con yeu cua me* (My little baby), this analysis, based on traditional thinking, also divided TV programmes into 2 categories: programmes for men and programmes for women to examine, though in the stereotypical view, how many programmes could be given to women and to men.

**Category 1:** Programs for men included sport, discovery-adventure, science and technology, business, and politics.

**Category 2:** Programs for women included cooking, shopping, beauty, fashion, family issue, and raising and educating children.

**TABLE 6: When comparing the number of shows available to men compared to women, there are 120.7 hours or 82 percent for men, but only 26 or 18 percent for women**

CHANNEL	PROGRAMS FOR MEN						PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN	
	SPORT	BUSINESS	SCIENCE-TECHNOLOGY-DISCOVERY	LAW	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%
VTV1	0	6.6	9.6	1.5	17.7	69%	7.9	31%
VTV2	0	1.5	40.8	0	42.3	87%	6.4	23%
VTV3	42.7	2	3.2	0	47.9	97%	1.5	3%
VTV4	0	1.7	7	0	8.7	55%	7.2	45%
VTV6	0	0	5.3	0	5.3	64%	3	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>65.7</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>121.9</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18%</b>

From the television schedule of the five channels within the week of 22 July 2009 to 28 July 2009, there were 120.7 hours devoted to Category 1 or male viewers (See Table 6), while the total hours for Category 2 or women was just 26 hours or 18 percent for men compared to 18 percent for women with VTV3 having the most programming for men at 47.9 hours or 97 percent and VTV1 having the most for women at 7.9 hours, but only 31 percent. This means that there is much more programming for men than those for women, based on the stereotypical thinking on what interests women and men. Furthermore, the number of hours for science, technology, and discovery programs and sport programs each individually is more than all programs for women.

In addition, the programs for men are more diverse. For instance in the area of business, there are many different programs as “Vietnam and Indices,” “Weekend Stock Market,” “Financial Bulletin,” “Real Estate News Bulletin,” “Improve Trademark,” and others. For women, the program content is around less focused and more general on cooking, fashion and beauty, and raising and educating children.

### **Gender stereotype still exists in assignments**

Male and female announcers are used to cover the areas that are traditionally considered suitable for their gender role. For example, men often cover areas of business, politics, and sport whereas women cover education, shopping, and culture. This means that issues of the public sphere are given to men whereas women are given issues of the private sphere and of a softer nature.

On the 11.30 p.m. news show on 1 September 2009, the female announcer and reporter had the most air time. Nonetheless, in sport, the male announcer had 54 seconds while the other female was only given 23 seconds.

During the 7 p.m. news show on 31 August 2009, the female announcer was responsible for the domestic news, shopping, business, agriculture, environment and social issues while the male announcers were in charge of political news and administration reform. This is a good example of how predominant gender stereotyping is on the news. To highlight the issue further, the female announcer in the elementary education story was a woman while news on higher

education was done by a man. In addition, most of images appearing on television news were male. The images of women appeared only in a garment industry story.

The analysis found similarities in “Sport 360” shown at 10.20 a.m. on 7 Sep 2009. It could be because of the characteristic of this program, however, male announcers accounted for twelve minutes while female announcers only had three minutes. Among the many people interviewed, only one was female who talked about physical education in preschools. Many countries have encouraged both women and men to be active in sports, even at the professional level, and many women view sports in those countries, so it is not the case that sports only interest men, but that Viet Nam has not valued women’s roles in either viewing or playing sports, and, certainly not, in reporting sports.

### **Disparity between the number of male and female guests**

One more point that we discover from this analysis is that in all three news shows, the number of male interviewees is more than that of female interviewees (See Table 7).

**TABLE 7: Sex of interviewees in three news broadcasts.**

SEX	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES		
	12 P.M.	7 P.M.	11.30 P.M.
Male	8	20	1
Female	2	1	3

In addition to the difference in the number of interviewees, the interview time is also different for the two sexes in the examined three news broadcasts in 7 p.m. news, the total speaking time of male interviewees reached nine minutes while time for one female interviewee was only 40 seconds.

## **Interviews**

Those interviewed came from a cross section of people involved directly or indirectly with the media from the Ministry, practicing media professionals and NGO’s dealing with gender in the media.

Although the respondents have different beliefs on how well gender equality is being integrated into the media, they were all in agreement that the major reason it was taking so long to change perceptions is because of Viet Nam’s Confucian thinking and long feudalism history. Gender inequality, like all forms of discrimination, is caused by economic, political, social, and cultural factors which are rooted in the past and psychologically codified to advantage one group against another. They are insidious in nature and by narrowing them down as “Confucian thinking” can further hide the origins and limit the ability to change. Although the causes of gender inequality were of interest during the interviews, more attention was paid on how this plays out in society and what can be done to change the societal and cultural norms to promote equality for all.



## **Women's Representation in the Media**

The director general of one of the main media outlets reported that between 2001 and 2008, there have been about 700 specific articles on gender equality or about 100 a year. Not enough to make much of an impact.

Although promoting gender equality is required to be done by the media in the GEL, it has not been well implemented. It was reported that not all of the journalists see the issue as compulsory and there is no mechanism to make sure the media is implementing the law. One of the female respondents explained, "Journalists themselves still have stereotypical thinking of women and men's roles which is reflected in what they write or produce."

One of the respondents who programs for ethnic minorities explained why it was so hard to interview an ethnic minority woman: "We really want to interview a woman, but they cannot speak Vietnamese, as a result, we have to talk with a man. Silence becomes a disadvantage for these women in the fight against prejudice."

Many of the stories and programs follow traditional gender roles. For instance one male editor said women cover stories about childcare, family issues, or education and men the rest. As an example of non-traditional gender roles, he told the interviewees he had one woman working on sports. A male television producer explained, "For instance for men, we have specific programs on gender, menology, and sexology; and for women, we have beauty and spa corner programs."

"A male MC often hosts important programs while the female MC usually hosts entertainment programs." One woman explained. She went on to say: "If there are two MCs, the male MC plays the main role while the female MC plays a subordinate role. Also, when they were celebrating Vietnam Teacher's Day, the producer invited four guests. The three men were university lecturers while the female guest was an elementary teacher."

At the Women's Union, one of the women said: "Predominantly, images of women and men shown in traditional ways. For example in advertising, women are often shown as housewives or appear in household appliance advertisement. Men are often depicted as decision makers. In addition, advertisers also make use of female bodies to turn them into the symbol of sexuality. You can see this everyday in magazines or newspapers." She goes on to say: "Vietnamese men want a lot of things from women: they want their wives to be beautiful, modern, knowledgeable, skillful, and flexible at work, but still take good care of the family and children at home."

Another respondent criticized school textbooks in that they "often guide or orientate girls to become teachers and boys to work as pilots or engineers."

## **Double Burden and Advancement**

Many of the respondents believe that the greatest difficulty women face is the double burden of having to work in the marketplace and also having the responsibility for unpaid domestic labour. The double workday in practice means that women work harder and more hours than men and that their being tied to domestic chores means that they are 'not available' or not considered

available to work overtime or to go on assignment. Consequently, men get more opportunities to work which also means they have the opportunity to advance faster than women.

The interviews and the literature both agree that men get better assignments more frequently, they advance faster in the organization, and they are paid more than women because they work more. The income disparity increases as the employee ages as men advance faster meaning they earn more money than women their own age because they have better jobs. One male editor stated: “Women are less available than men because of their family responsibilities. This poses some problems because they cannot work late and they are not available for assignment in the field as they cannot stay away from home that long.” He goes on to say that he really tried to promote women, but until “men get involved in labour sharing at home, women’s condition will not change.”

Another male editor told us that he had to postpone the chance of advancement for one of his women employees for two years because of family issues.

Another respondent, a very successful woman in television explained her success because: “I worked harder and longer than the rest of the staff. I participated in and did a lot of things to create new shows. After 10 years of hard work, I was recognized and got promoted.”

She said that when she was offered the promotion, she went home and discussed it with her husband and they made an agreement that he and his mother<sup>85</sup> would help with the children and housework. She said that as she has risen within the organization, she does not have to work as hard and it is easier on everyone, but that she could not have done it then nor could she have done it today if it were not for her husband and mother-in-law being willing to take on much of the family responsibility.

She reported also that she had an opportunity to go to Australia or the United Kingdom to further her education, but she had to refuse because of her family and did her master’s degree in Viet Nam, which is the case for many Vietnamese women.

One woman journalist told us that one of the issues around promotion is that “after birth, women will not receive their certificate for progressive labour for two years. We lose rewards and benefits.” She went on to say: “Some women, after giving birth, become weaker so they have to take a leave without pay. They will have more difficulties about advancement, but they have to just accept it.”

Several of the women reiterated that the family responsibilities influence women’s careers. They stated that when they are offered a chance to further their education abroad, they decline and do it in Viet Nam, but that this is not true of their male counterparts who benefit from the exposure, experience, and broader education. Still many state that there is “no difference between male and female staff.”

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<sup>85</sup> A question not asked was how much of the work does the husband do in comparison with his mother. It may again be that the woman (mother) is responsible for the home and the children and that the husband does not do as much work.

Interestingly, many of the men talked about how women physically are not able to work in the field. One young journalist said, “Middle aged women and the older generation are reluctant to change. For instance, they are not willing to do technical work.” When challenged by this as these women might not be as computer savvy as their male counterparts because of their lack of education and experience, he stated: “The younger generation is more eager, but women still cannot do some specific kinds of work. They are hard to train.” One editor said that if they went into the field, “They would be exhausted.” This same man, though, said, “I want to help my wife do housework, but my parents don’t want me to help her.” A woman called men “stronger” and that “women are limited by their menstruation period, pregnancy, and giving birth.”

The double burden is also linked to the fact that most women move into the husband’s household after marriage and are responsible to their mother-in-law. One of the women stated: “When women live with their husband’s family after marriage, they play the role of servant.” This other layer of supervision in the household makes it harder to make changes in society even if both the husband and wife are willing to be responsible for the household and children.

“Gender bias limits women to healthcare and education,” one woman reported. “Few women in the labour force are successful and they stay at a low level. Women have no chance since gender bias prevents them from getting promoted.” She goes on to state: “When a woman does get promoted, people often call that ‘protection’ or ‘priority’ instead of thinking that it was her ability or contribution that got her the higher position.”

One of the women from the Women’s Union made a very interesting comment. She said, “We need to call for the ‘participation’ of men in doing housework rather than just ‘sharing’. The term ‘sharing’ makes it seem that women still need to play a dominant role.”

The interviewers tried to get information about how many men or women are employed in each organization comparing them at all levels, but the information was uneven at the best and non-existent at the worst. It appears, though, that many organizations have a fairly equal distribution of women and men as employees, but that men are the majority at the upper levels of management. One male director said that there will be a large number of men retiring soon at this level in his organizations and that women will have more opportunity then.

One woman respondent explained the larger number of women as journalists: “The cultural thinking is that women are good at social sciences and men at natural sciences so there are more female journalists than male.” She goes on to say: “However, at the decision making level, the number of females goes down.” One of the males reported many of his employees are women especially in the editing department. “Men,” he explained “choose more active challenging work – not just sitting around. Editing requires more patience.”

One newspaper had five employees, four female reporters and their managing editor. One of the electronic media directors stated that there are four top leaders in her organization and only one is a woman. A newspaper editor has 49 employees of which fifteen were women. He only has one female deputy-chief. Another journalist reported her company had a chief director and two deputy directors and all of them are men. At the director level, only one woman is a female and she is in the accounting division. There are a total of 20 journalists, eight are women and twelve are men. Another journalist reported they had a total of 20 employees, seven men and eighteen

women, but only has two assistant directors who are women. One of the largest organizations reported they have 807 women compared to 1047 men. Of those 114 junior managers are women compared to 131 men, and 23 women are senior managers compared to 60 men. A television producer stated he had 49 people working for him, 41 women and eight men who were managers. One of the publishing houses has two male directors and 110 other employees of which more than 60 percent are women

### **Retirement Age**

Many women complained that they are forced to retire at 55 while men retire at 60. They felt that this meant they could not advance as high in the organization and that their total salary would be less than men who had five more years of employment. One woman further explained: “According to this rule, women will retire five years earlier than men. If they have two children, they will spend two to four additional years at home. This means that women have around ten years less than men working. This clearly disadvantages women.”

“I think,” one woman said, “that age and experience should be an advantage for women because at that age (retirement), their children are grown, so they have more time to work. In addition, they had a lot of experience. The early retirement age discourages them from seeking higher positions.”

One woman thought it was good. She stated “Because of health, psychology, and other distinct characteristics of women, that age (55) is suitable for women to go back and take care of the family.”

### **Gender Equality Training**

Few people in organizations have formally been trained in gender equality. One respondent told us that even within the Central Committee of the Communist party, “there is training, but it is not mandatory.” She went on to say that in her experience, it is not the journalists who need to be trained, but their managers. She believes the managers should “have to sign a commitment” and they should “be monitored to see they comply.” Her experience is, in working with HIV prevention, “When I trained journalist, there was no change (in how HIV was viewed in the media), but when I trained editors, directors, and other decision makers, the media became more responsive to the issue and perceptions and coverage changed.”

“There should be more training courses because if we talked about it (gender equality) more, people would care about it more” Another woman said. “Today, some people still do not know enough about this matter and they do not reflect it in their writing. We need more workshops for reporters.”

“The training courses are not effective,” one woman complained “because they are offered only once a year and the form and content is the same each year. Moreover, the duration is so short and lectures cannot disseminate the information fully.”

In asking about gender training, interestingly, it was the male editor of a men's magazine who had attended the most gender equality trainings as had the rest of the staff in the other magazines produced by his company. He was only responsible for about one-fifth of the pages of each magazine, but he made it a point to make sure that his section showed a lot of women and men in non-traditional roles, e.g., men having time with their children or helping with the house and their wives having important jobs. There were also articles about empowered women and their relationship with the family.

He and another editor had some constructive criticism about the gender equality training in that the lecture format is not a good way to learn. He also stated that some of the trainers are very militant and this is problematic because a journalist needs to look at things from many angles and the dogmatic attitude meant there could be no discussion or active learning.

### **Changes in Gender Inequality in Viet Nam**

Although, there seemed to be a positive tone about the gains in gender equality, all felt there could be improvement. Some blamed the lack of movement on the fact that the Gender Equality and Domestic Violence Prevention Laws are so new that there has been little time to implement change. At the same time Ho Chi Minh 1930 quote "one the aims of the revolution are to ensure equality of rights for the women," was often stated as the start of the process in Vietnam towards gender equality. One of the respondents noted that, "The laws look good on paper, but not in reality."

"Currently, the gender issue is much better," explained one woman. "Previously, if a woman got a master's degree, it was hard for her to get married."

One of the male editors explained, "The media now does a better job in reflecting accurately and fairly the image of women and men."

### **Issues Facing Women in Viet Nam**

Earlier we spoke about the double work burden women have to carry, but there are also other issues affecting women. A number of people spoke about domestic violence which, according to one study, affects one woman in three<sup>86</sup> and a woman dies from domestic violence every three days in Vietnam.<sup>87</sup> The Health Action Information Network explains:

Social norms and cultural attitudes pose a challenge in program intervention. Violence against women is a socially acceptable behavior amongst Vietnamese men; it is seen as a punishment for their wives when they transgress the traditional roles. In addition, Vietnamese women are expected to quietly endure the

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<sup>86</sup> "Domestic Violence in Vietnam: Situations and Challenges." (10 June 2009). *Health Action Information Network*. <http://hain-news.blogspot.com/2009/06/domestic-violence-in-vietnam-situations.html>

<sup>87</sup> "Domestic Violence in Vietnam: Fewer Beatings Thanks to Group Sessions." (2009). *Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation*. [http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Projects/Domestic\\_violence\\_in\\_Vietnam](http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Projects/Domestic_violence_in_Vietnam)

hardships and protect the harmony and reputation of the family. Many abused women, therefore, do not seek support.<sup>88</sup>

There is a concern that as more women enter the workforce, the number of women facing domestic abuse will increase. When looking at the statistics, though, it is a case of more women beginning to speak up about a condition that has been going on for centuries. There are numerous articles in the press, such as “Vietnam Women Break the Silence on Domestic Violence,”<sup>89</sup> about women who have been abused and are leaving their husbands.

When discussing the reasons for the rise in the number of reported domestic abuse, the consensus seems to be that the publicity has given others the courage to report the abuse and to leave the abusive relationship. This is a case where the media has changed women’s perceptions that they are victims who need to suffer in silence.

The male birth preference is a big issue which has major repercussions for the future as the sex ratio at birth is 112 boys to 100 girls with the rate increasing one percent each year in Viet Nam.<sup>90</sup> This demographic imbalance is because male offspring represent continuity of lineage and protection in old age while daughters are seen as ‘outsiders’ and they will leave the family and go live with her husband’s family. This sex imbalance will, if Viet Nam is like other countries with a similar situation, lead to more domestic violence, increased trafficking of women and sex work.

One woman stated that “Domestic violence is only one of the many issues women have to face. The more serious problem is the bias against women. Bias is an umbrella concept that includes domestic violence.”

It was pointed out that because of the economic crisis, “Women work incredibly hard. They work even harder and longer to ensure their families are taken care of because of the crisis.”

One male editor interestingly enough said “Gender inequality still happens within families because women are inferior to men economically. As a result, the most important struggle is the struggle for economic autonomy. In urban families where women can earn as much as their husbands or even more, the status of women is completely different.”

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<sup>88</sup> “Vietnam Women Break the Silence on Domestic Violence.” (16 September 2008). *AFP*.  
<http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iG3SzEIVKwYkc4sWemNjSTD35UQQ>

<sup>89</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>90</sup> “Vietnam Birth Trend may Fuel Sex Work, Trafficking-UN.” (9 September 2009). *Reuters*.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically, Viet Nam has been in the forefront of the development of gender equality. Ho Chi Minh at the inception of the country confirmed that women and men have equal rights; Vietnam has signed the 1995 Beijing Declaration; further, they passed the Gender Equality Law in 2006 and Domestic Violence Prevention and Control Law in 2007 and the 2006-2010 National Strategy for the Advancement of Women specifies concrete targets and measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Because of their history and current commitment in promoting gender equality and the unique relationship between the government and the media, Viet Nam seems like an ideal country in which gender equality could develop.

Within Viet Nam, the government plays an important regulatory role in the media as it is State owned and each media outlet is attached to a particular arm of the government or Party. With the development of a free-economy in Viet Nam, the control on the media has lessened, but they still have to follow government and Party policy and directives. In a recent study about Viet Nam's media, they explained:

Vietnam's media operates in a complex political environment, in which State ownership of news organisations is paramount and policymaker opinion divided regarding the merit of media liberalisation. The Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and Government of Vietnam (GoV) have identified the media as a corruption-fighting tool of the State (the print and online media are particularly active) and are now struggling to develop a compromise between the editorial freedoms required if the media is to fulfil that role and the controls some officials think are necessary to ensure the media's loyalty to the State.<sup>91</sup>

Even though according to the GEL the media is one of the main duty-bearers to disseminate information, education, communications on gender and gender equality within Vietnam, the results are still mixed as to its implementation and this study's findings point to similar conclusions than those of the CSaGa-Oxfam study last year.<sup>92</sup>

This research showed that there are few stories and television programs which promote gender equality. The media is better at making sure there is an equal number of women and men on television game shows than ensuring gender-sensitive reporting or actively promoting unconventional gender roles for both women and men.

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<sup>91</sup> Culpin Planning Limited, UK. (2009). *Understanding Vietnam's Media: Opportunities for Advancing the Role of Media in Curbing Corruption*. UK Department for International Development and the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

<sup>92</sup> CSaGa and Oxfam. (2008). Report on Gender Sensitivity in Television Shows of Vietnam Television. Ha Noi: Oxfam.

If Viet Nam really wants to be the leader or one of the leaders in the promotion of gender equality, they must initiate several initiatives to address the biggest challenges as identified by the interviews and content analysis.

## **Recommendations**

### **Policy-makers, the Ministry of Information and Communications**

1. Obligatory Gender Equality training for all staff
2. Installing Family friendly practices, such as flexible working hours, breast-feeding rooms
3. National Plan of Action as requested by the GEL
4. Mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress
5. Affirmative action to ensure equal opportunities for promotion for both men and women
6. Elimination of different ages of retirement for men and women
7. Elimination of delays to Progressive Labour Certificate due to giving birth or maternity leave
8. Promotion of paternity leave balancing the costs of having children to both parents' employers

### **Media professionals, managers**

1. Ensure that all staff have necessary capacity to do gender sensitive reporting and make it a requirement
2. Put in place mechanisms to monitor and evaluate staff's performance on gender sensitive reporting.
3. Put in place measures to promote non-traditional roles for men and women, support publishing articles and stories which promote gender equality

### **UN, NGOs**

1. Ensure all media communications, press releases are gender-sensitive
2. Improve coordination of gender training to relevant media professionals and gender in the media activities by establishing a network of organizations working in the media
3. Invest on more Capacity Building of media stakeholders on gender



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## **APPENDICES**

## Interview Themes for Government Officials

As you know, in 1995 at the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing and the Government, Viet Nam signed the International Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration which was designed to remove the obstacles to women's public participation in all spheres of public and private lives through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.<sup>93</sup>

The Vietnamese Government always considers gender equality and promoting the advancement of women as **an important goal of national development**. . . . Over the past 10 years, the role and status of Vietnamese women has significantly improved.<sup>94</sup>

Since this date, Viet Nam's efforts to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment can be seen through its legislative endeavours to promote gender equality (2006) and the domestic violence act (2007). "The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women 2006 to 2010 also sets out specific targets for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women."<sup>95</sup> Viet Nam also has been recognised as the Southeast Asian country with the best record in eradicating the gender gap over the last 20 years and has the potential of being the first or one of the first countries in the world who can say that they have gender parity.<sup>96</sup>

With this in mind, UNESCO is conducting an assessment of gender inequalities in the media in Viet Nam. The material will be used to develop an activity handbook and training materials to be used in capacity-building workshops to further gender equity in Viet Nam.

Further, the role of media in society is very important. Primarily, it promotes and maintains the dominant ideology of society and helps to maintain cultural formation. But, it also has the ability to challenge social norms and promote paradigm shifts within society. It is, therefore, important to see if the media in Viet Nam is primarily a promoter of the cultural norm or is promoting a paradigm shift toward gender equity. If it is the former, it is important to see what can be done to develop social action towards gender equality in the media; if it is the latter, it is important to see how the media can be supported to step up their efforts.

The purpose of our visit, then, is to find out from you what you think are the major issues facing women in Viet Nam and if these issues were to be resolved would gender equality be a possibility. As the media is the 'mouthpiece' of the country and culture, it is very important that it is a strong part of the solution. We want your input in how the media can become a catalyst in transforming the country.

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<sup>93</sup> United Nations. (1996). Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration. New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 17.

<sup>94</sup> The National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Viet Nam (Ủy ban quốc gia vì sự tiến bộ của phụ nữ Việt Nam). (2009). [www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129](http://www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129)

<sup>95</sup> United Nations. (2009). Gender Briefing Kit. Vietnam: UN Gender Program Coordination Group., 1.

<sup>96</sup> Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan. (02/27/2009). Radio the Voice of Vietnam.

Your viewpoint is very important and we hope for a discussion that is candid and open. This will help all of us develop a media strategy toward gender parity.

With this in mind, some of the topics we would like to talk about will be:

1. How many employees do you have? Women? Men?
2. At the different levels of your organization, how many are women and how many men?

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Average Age</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Average Age</b>
<b>Entry Level</b>				
<b>Management</b>				
<b>Middle Management</b>				
<b>Senior Management</b>				
<b>Director</b>				

3. How many training opportunities a year do you have and how are participants chosen? How many women receive training? How many men?
4. How do employees advance within your organization?
5. Is there a different track for women and men?
6. What do you think is the most important problem(s) facing women in society?
7. Do you think this problem is affecting equality between women and men?
8. What can be done to solve this problem?
9. Do you think that the media accurately and fairly reflects the images of women and men?
10. If not, what do you think should be done to make the media more accurate and fair?
11. If media was more accurate and fair, would this help solve the problems women face?
12. As gender equity is an issue that the government has made a commitment to, what methods are you using to implement the mandate? Your insight into the issues is very important and it would help to know what successes you have made and what obstacles you have faced.

## NỘI DUNG PHỎNG VẤN<sup>97</sup>

Như chúng ta đã biết, vào năm 1995, tại Hội nghị lần thứ 4 của Liên Hiệp Quốc về vấn đề Phụ nữ tại Bắc Kinh, Việt Nam đã ký vào Chương trình hành động Quốc tế và Tuyên bố Bắc Kinh hướng tới việc xóa bỏ rào cản đối với sự tham gia của phụ nữ vào tất cả các lĩnh vực thông qua việc chia sẻ quyền quyết định với phụ nữ trong các lĩnh vực kinh tế, xã hội, văn hóa, chính trị một cách đầy đủ và công bằng.<sup>98</sup>

*Chính phủ Việt Nam luôn coi vấn đề bình đẳng giới và khuyến khích sự tiến bộ của phụ nữ là một mục tiêu quan trọng của phát triển quốc gia... Trong 10 năm qua, vai trò và vị thế của phụ nữ Việt Nam đã được cải thiện đáng kể.<sup>99</sup>*

Kể từ đó đến nay, những nỗ lực của Việt Nam nhằm đạt được bình đẳng giới và trao quyền cho phụ nữ đã được phản ánh thông qua những cải thiện về các văn bản pháp luật nhằm hướng đến bình đẳng giới (2006) và chống bạo lực gia đình (2007). “Chiến lược quốc gia Vì sự tiến bộ của Phụ nữ giai đoạn 2006-2010 cũng đề ra những mục tiêu cụ thể hướng đến bình đẳng giới và trao quyền cho phụ nữ”.<sup>100</sup> Việt Nam cũng đồng thời được ghi nhận là một quốc gia Đông Nam Á thành công nhất trong việc xóa bỏ khoảng cách giới trong suốt 20 năm qua và có thể trở thành quốc gia đầu tiên trên thế giới đạt được bình đẳng giới.<sup>101</sup>

Chính vì vậy, UNESCO quyết định tiến hành một đánh giá về thực trạng bất bình đẳng giới trên các phương tiện truyền thông đại chúng ở Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu này sẽ được sử dụng để xây dựng sổ tay hướng dẫn hoạt động và các tài liệu tập huấn sử dụng trong các hội thảo nâng cao năng lực, nhằm thúc đẩy hơn nữa bình đẳng giới ở Việt Nam.

Bên cạnh đó, vai trò của các phương tiện truyền thông đại chúng rất quan trọng. Truyền thông đại chúng có thể giúp phát huy và duy trì hệ tư tưởng chủ đạo của xã hội và hỗ trợ sự hình thành văn hóa. Tuy nhiên nó cũng có thể thách thức các chuẩn mực xã hội đang tồn tại và thúc đẩy các mô hình khác trong xã hội. Do vậy, việc cần thiết là phải tìm hiểu xem liệu truyền thông đại chúng ở Việt Nam là phương tiện củng cố các chuẩn mực văn hóa hay nó đang dần tạo ra một chuẩn mực mới hướng tới bình đẳng giới. Nếu truyền thông đại chúng là phương tiện duy trì các chuẩn mực xã hội, thì chúng ta cần tìm hiểu xem sẽ phải làm gì để phát triển hành động xã hội hướng tới bình đẳng giới trong truyền thông đại chúng, còn nếu nó đang xây dựng nên một mô hình khác thì điều quan trọng là làm thế nào để hỗ trợ các nỗ lực của truyền thông đại chúng phát triển trong những giai đoạn tiếp theo.

Mục đích của buổi trao đổi này là tìm hiểu quan điểm của ông/bà về những vấn đề quan trọng mà phụ nữ ở Việt Nam đang phải đối mặt và liệu khi những vấn đề đó được giải quyết, bình đẳng giới ở Việt Nam có thể thực hiện được hay không. Vì truyền thông đại chúng là “tiếng nói” của mỗi quốc gia và văn hóa nên nó đã trở thành một phương tiện quan trọng để giải quyết vấn đề về

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<sup>97</sup> Viet translation of “Interview Themes for Government Officials.”

<sup>98</sup> United Nations.(1996). Chương trình hành động và Tuyên bố Bắc Kinh. New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 17.

<sup>99</sup> Ủy ban Quốc gia vì sự tiến bộ của Phụ nữ Việt Nam (2009). [www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129](http://www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129)

<sup>100</sup> United Nations. (2009). Gender Briefing Kit. Vietnam: UN Gender Program Coordination Group., 1.

<sup>101</sup> Bộ Lao động, Thương binh và Xã hội (MOLISA), Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan. (02/27/2009). Đài tiếng nói Việt Nam.

giới. Chúng tôi hi vọng nhận được ý kiến của ông/bà về việc làm thế nào để truyền thông đại chúng có thể trở thành một chất xúc tác quan trọng trong quá trình biến đổi của đất nước.

Ý kiến đóng góp của ông/bà đặc biệt quan trọng, vì thế chúng tôi hi vọng buổi trao đổi sẽ diễn ra một cách thẳng thắn và cởi mở. Điều đó sẽ giúp tất cả chúng ta có thể phát triển chiến lược truyền thông đại chúng hướng tới bình đẳng giới.

Dưới đây là một số nội dung cần trao đổi:

1. Cơ quan/Tổ chức của ông/bà có bao nhiêu nhân viên? Bao nhiêu nam? Bao nhiêu nữ?
2. Có bao nhiêu nam, bao nhiêu nữ ở từng cấp khác nhau trong cơ quan/tổ chức?

	Nữ	Tuổi trung bình	Nam	Tuổi trung bình
<b>Nhân viên</b>				
<b>Quản lý cấp 1</b>				
<b>Quản lý cấp 2</b>				
<b>Quản lý cao cấp</b>				
<b>Giám đốc</b>				

3. Một năm đơn vị của ông/bà có bao nhiêu khóa tập huấn nghiệp vụ và bao nhiêu ứng viên được lựa chọn? Trong số đó, có bao nhiêu nữ và bao nhiêu nam đã được tham gia?
4. Các nhân viên được đề bạt như thế nào trong tổ chức của ông/bà?
5. Có gì khác nhau trong quá trình thăng tiến giữa phụ nữ và nam giới hay không?
6. Theo ông/bà, trong số những vấn đề mà phụ nữ đang phải đối mặt, (những) vấn đề nào là quan trọng nhất?
7. Theo ông/bà, vấn đề đó có ảnh hưởng đến việc bình đẳng giữa nam và nữ không?
8. Theo ông/bà, chúng ta cần làm gì để giải quyết vấn đề đó?
9. Theo ông/bà, truyền thông đại chúng có phản ánh chính xác và công bằng hình ảnh của phụ nữ và nam giới không?
10. Nếu không, theo ông/bà, cần phải làm gì để truyền thông đại chúng trở nên chính xác và công bằng hơn?
11. Nếu truyền thông đại chúng chính xác và công bằng hơn nữa thì điều đó có giúp giải quyết các vấn đề mà phụ nữ đang phải đối mặt hiện nay hay không?



12. Bình đẳng giới là một vấn đề mà chính phủ cam kết thực hiện, vậy Việt Nam đang sử dụng phương thức nào để thực hiện đầy đủ giao ước đó? Những hiểu biết sâu sắc của ông/bà về vấn đề này có nghĩa rất lớn, giúp chúng tôi thấy được những thành công đã đạt được cũng như những rào cản mà Việt Nam đang phải đối mặt.

## Interview Themes for Print Media

As you know, in 1995 at the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing and the Government, Viet Nam signed the International Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration which was designed to remove the obstacles to women's public participation in all spheres of public and private lives through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.<sup>102</sup>

The Vietnamese Government always considers gender equality and promoting the advancement of women as **an important goal of national development**. . . . Over the past 10 years, the role and status of Vietnamese women has significantly improved.<sup>103</sup>

Since this date, Viet Nam's efforts to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment can be seen through its legislative endeavours to promote gender equality (2006) and the domestic violence act (2007). "The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women 2006 to 2010 also sets out specific targets for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women."<sup>104</sup> Viet Nam also has been recognised as the Southeast Asian country with the best record in eradicating the gender gap over the last 20 years and has the potential of being the first or one of the first countries in the world who can say that they have gender parity.<sup>105</sup>

With this in mind, UNESCO is conducting an assessment of gender inequalities in the media in Viet Nam. The material will be used to develop an activity handbook and training materials to be used in capacity-building workshops to further gender equity in Viet Nam.

Further, the role of media in society is very important. Primarily, it promotes and maintains the dominant ideology of society and helps to maintain cultural formation. But, it also has the ability to challenge social norms and promote paradigm shifts within society. It is, therefore, important to see if the media in Viet Nam is primarily a promoter of the cultural norm or is promoting a paradigm shift toward gender equity. If it is the former, it is important to see what can be done to develop social action towards gender equality in the media; if it is the latter, it is important to see how the media can be supported to step up their efforts.

The purpose of our visit, then, is to find out from you what you think are the major issues facing women in Viet Nam and if these issues were to be resolved would gender equality be a possibility. As the media is the 'mouthpiece' of the country and culture, it is very important that it is a strong part of the solution. We want your input in how the media can become a catalyst in transforming the country.

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<sup>102</sup> United Nations. (1996). Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration. New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 17.

<sup>103</sup> The National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Viet Nam (Ủy ban quốc gia vì sự tiến bộ của phụ nữ Việt Nam). (2009). [www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129](http://www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129)

<sup>104</sup> United Nations. (2009). Gender Briefing Kit. Vietnam: UN Gender Program Coordination Group., 1.

<sup>105</sup> Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan. 02/27/2009). Radio the Voice of Vietnam.

Your viewpoint is very important and we hope for a discussion that is candid and open. This will help all of us develop a media strategy toward gender parity.

With this in mind, some of the topics we would like to talk about will be:

1. How many employees do you have? Women? Men?
2. At the different levels of your organization, how many are women and how many men?

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Average Age</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Average Age</b>
<b>Entry Level</b>				
<b>Management</b>				
<b>Middle Management</b>				
<b>Senior Management</b>				
<b>Director</b>				

3. How many training opportunities a year do you have and how are participants chosen? How many women receive training? How many men?
4. How do employees advance within your organization?
5. Is there a different track for women and men?
6. What do you think is the most important problem(s) facing women in society?
7. Do you think this problem is affecting equality between women and men?
8. What can be done to solve this problem?
9. When news stories are assigned by the editor, how do you determine who will report on and write the stories? Do you give different types of stories from women to cover than men? Can you give me examples of stories that you give to women? To men?
10. In special areas, do women or men cover these areas, such as sports, stock market, economy, government, international news, etc?
11. If you have a special story you plan to write about, how do you determine who to interview? Do you make a special effort to find a woman who is an expert in the area or do you just go with the men you know?
12. Do you try to develop stories that reflect the interests of only women or only men and to you balance the numbers offered? How do you know these stories are of interest primarily to one gender or the other?
13. Do you specifically try to develop stories which show that it is okay for men to do housework and for women to have jobs that are traditionally male? And for women to have meaningful home lives as well?

14. On a scale of one to ten with one being not at all and ten being 100 percent, how gender sensitive do you think your stories are?
15. Do you think that the media accurately and fairly reflects the images of women and men?
16. If not, what do you think should be done to make the media more accurate and fair?
17. If media was more accurate and fair, would this help solve the problems women face?
18. As gender equity is an issue that the government has made a commitment to through the Law on Gender Equality, what methods are you using to implement the mandate? Your insight into the issues is very important and it would help to know what successes you have made and what obstacles you have faced.

## Interview Themes for Television Media

As you know, in 1995 at the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing and the Government, Viet Nam signed the International Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration which was designed to remove the obstacles to women's public participation in all spheres of public and private lives through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.<sup>106</sup>

The Vietnamese Government always considers gender equality and promoting the advancement of women as **an important goal of national development**. . . . Over the past 10 years, the role and status of Vietnamese women has significantly improved.<sup>107</sup>

Since this date, Viet Nam's efforts to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment can be seen through its legislative endeavours to promote gender equality (2006) and the domestic violence act (2007). "The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women 2006 to 2010 also sets out specific targets for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women."<sup>108</sup> Viet Nam also has been recognised as the Southeast Asian country with the best record in eradicating the gender gap over the last 20 years and has the potential of being the first or one of the first countries in the world who can say that they have gender parity.<sup>109</sup>

With this in mind, UNESCO is conducting an assessment of gender inequalities in the media in Viet Nam. The material will be used to develop an activity handbook and training materials to be used in capacity-building workshops to further gender equity in Viet Nam.

Further, the role of media in society is very important. Primarily, it promotes and maintains the dominant ideology of society and helps to maintain cultural formation. But, it also has the ability to challenge social norms and promote paradigm shifts within society. It is, therefore, important to see if the media in Viet Nam is primarily a promoter of the cultural norm or is promoting a paradigm shift toward gender equity. If it is the former, it is important to see what can be done to develop social action towards gender equality in the media; if it is the latter, it is important to see how the media can be supported to step up their efforts.

The purpose of our visit, then, is to find out from you what you think are the major issues facing women in Viet Nam and if these issues were to be resolved would gender equality be a possibility. As the media is the 'mouthpiece' of the country and culture, it is very important that it is a strong part of the solution. We want your input in how the media can become a catalyst in transforming the country.

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<sup>106</sup> United Nations. (1996). Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration. New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 17.

<sup>107</sup> The National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Viet Nam (Ủy ban quốc gia vì sự tiến bộ của phụ nữ Việt Nam). (2009). [www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129](http://www.ubphunu-ncfaw.gov.vn/?lang=E&func=newsdt&catid=129&newsid=1495&MN=129)

<sup>108</sup> United Nations. (2009). Gender Briefing Kit. Vietnam: UN Gender Program Coordination Group., 1.

<sup>109</sup> Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan. 02/27/2009). Radio the Voice of Vietnam.

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4. How do employees advance within your organization?
5. Is there a different track for women and men?
6. What do you think is the most important problem(s) facing women in society?
7. Do you think this problem is affecting equality between women and men?
8. When news is reported, is the announcer a woman or a man? How do you decide?
9. How are story assignments given out? Do you give different types of stories from women to cover than men? Can you give me examples of stories that you give to women? To men?
10. In special areas, do women or men cover these areas, such as sports, stock market, economy, government, international news, etc?
11. If a guest is selected to be on a show, is gender a consideration in selecting that guest? Do you make an effort to find a woman who is knowledgeable in the area you want to talk about to be the guest?
12. Do you try to develop programs that reflect the interests of only women or only men and to you balance the numbers offered? How do you know these programs are of interest primarily to one gender or the other?
13. Do you specifically try to develop programming which shows that it is okay for men to do housework and for women to have jobs that are traditionally male? And for women to have meaningful home lives as well?

14. On a scale of one to ten with one being not at all and ten being 100 percent, how gender sensitive do you think your programs are?
15. Do you think that the media accurately and fairly reflects the images of women and men?
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