

KEY POINTS

- Social and cultural norms continue to influence women's participation in jobs dominated by men (construction, mechanics, metallurgy, etc.) and, by extension, TVET courses.
- Outreach and communication campaigns are essential to provide career and employment information to women and girls so their training decisions and choices may be informed by labor market opportunities and trends rather than social and cultural norms and biases.
- Dismantling gender-based stereotypes that predetermine course selection by male and female trainees must be undertaken early in formal schooling (primary and secondary levels) through gender-sensitive curriculum reforms that depict men and women in professions, alongside vocational counselling from the lower secondary level onward.
- Government TVET policies are intended to be gender-responsive. However, there are gaps in monitoring and reporting, which affect the capacity of the system to improve enrollment, retention, participation, graduation, and school-to-work transition programs for women.
- While the TVET policy framework requires data collection, it remains weak with respect to introducing a systematic process for collecting and analyzing sex- and age-disaggregated data at all levels. This affects the capacities of policy makers to understand and address the barriers women experience when accessing TVET programs in Viet Nam.
- Gender sensitization training is essential for the government, TVET institutions, and the private sector to improve the capacity for TVET programs to respond nimbly to labor market demands, particularly recruitment of male and female trainees in high-skill productive sectors.

Enhancing Gender Responsiveness of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Viet Nam

Viet Nam has committed to transitioning toward a modern and industrialized nation by 2035. For this, the country will require a diverse workforce that is technically qualified, adaptable, flexible, and innovative.

Of 100 countries studied in the *Readiness for the Future of Production Report 2018* of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Viet Nam ranked 90th for technology and innovation and 70th for human capital, demonstrating insufficient readiness for future production demands.¹

There currently is a shortage of skilled workers and technicians with practical training in Viet Nam. This reinforces the importance of having the government actively support the technical and vocational education and training (TVET)² system by:

- improving systematic collection and analysis of disaggregated data for trainees, employers, and institutions (sex, age, course of study, etc.);
- addressing its capacity to adapt to technological developments;
- assessing the ratio of skilled trainers and instructors by course of study with a view to scale up programs;
- understanding how skills mismatch affects productivity at the sector level and in terms of sustainable human capital and economic growth;
- strengthening sector governance systems to ensure institutions are responsive to both industry and trainee needs; and
- improving the availability of current technology in classrooms.³

The sectors with projected high demand for TVET-level qualified personnel include construction, electronics, extractive industries, information technology, mechanics, metallurgy, office occupations, processing, textile, tourism, and transport. Historically, these sectors are traditionally better paid and dominated by male workers in Viet Nam.

To meet the labor market's demand for skilled human resources, the Government of Viet Nam introduced policies to strengthen the vocational education and training system. The Law on Vocational Education and Training⁴ aims to create favorable conditions for young people to access skilled employment and decent work, including through the establishment of gender equality in vocational training.⁵

¹ World Economic Forum. 2018. *Readiness for the Future of Production Report 2018*.

² In Viet Nam, TVET is also referred to as vocational education and training or VET.

³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2018. *TVET Country Profile: Viet Nam*.

⁴ Government of Viet Nam. 2006. *Law number 76/2006/QH11. Law on Vocational Training. National Assembly*. Ha Noi; and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. 2014. *The Law on Vocational Education. No. 74/2014/QH13*. Ha Noi.

⁵ Law on Vocational Education and Training Article 7.7.

With a commitment to train one million rural workers per year, the government introduced policies to support vocational training for disadvantaged groups, including ethnic minorities, the poor, disabled, demobilized soldiers, rural laborers, and women. Further, the TVET Strategy 2011–2020 and the Viet Nam Vocational Training Accreditation Agency were established to support the further development and strengthening of TVET in Viet Nam. Entrenching this commitment, the government introduced Decree No. 49/2018/ND-CP in 2018 that provides for the accreditation of vocational education.⁶

The Viet Nam National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE) (2011–2020) catalyzed the entry of more women into vocational courses, particularly in rural areas. Unfortunately, aside from committing to making TVET more responsive to women, increasing the number of female trainees in TVET was not an explicit outcome of the NSGE.

The lack of routinely collected sex- and age-disaggregated data at the institutional, regional, and national levels, makes it difficult to clearly identify and address the gender barriers to entry, participation, retention, and graduation. Despite their active participation in the economy, women in Viet Nam are disproportionately represented in sectors that require low professional qualifications, such as the service sector and manufacturing of textiles and footwear.

Despite women having closed the educational gap and the existence of equal pay legislation, the gender wage gap persists in Viet Nam. Moreover, approximately 64% of women are classified as family or own-account workers, without salaries or wages; and 41% of female workers are engaged in simple, vulnerable, and low-paying work, contributing to the wage gender gap of about 17.6%.

A gender-responsive TVET system could shift labor market segmentation by gender and reduce the gap in labor force participation by helping women acquire the skills and education necessary to transition from training into better paying jobs.⁷

Despite the legislative and strategic framework, the TVET sector requires continued system building in order to effectively dismantle gender-based stereotypes affecting course selection, teaching methodologies, and curriculum content. Advancing toward a more equitable and inclusive TVET system will also contribute to meeting the Government of Viet Nam's commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which includes indicators on

(i) participation rates in technical-vocational programs (for ages 15–24) and (ii) percentage of youth and/or adults who have achieved at least a minimum level of proficiency in digital literacy skills.

This brief is based on the findings of the 2017 ADB report and assessment intended to support and help improve the Government of Viet Nam's gender-responsive TVET reforms and programs.⁸ It summarizes the key issues that emerged from the assessment and offers a set of recommended actions to optimize women's equal participation in and benefit from TVET programs across Viet Nam.

International Best Practices: Improving Women's Participation in Nontraditional Trades

Institutions, governments, and the private sector around the world have been seeking to understand the barriers women face in participating in nontraditional trades.⁹ While in many instances, these barriers are rooted in gender-based stereotypes, there are instances where physical limitations related to accessing the programs—time of day, duration, location, and cost—are the key barriers. This literature offers some lessons learned for consideration in the Viet Nam context:

- Short vacation courses, work experience, introductory, and pre-apprenticeship courses for girls where they can try trades in a supportive environment
- Provision of incentives for training programs that meet or exceed their goals for training and placing women in nontraditional jobs
- Training in workplace survival skills such as dealing with sexual harassment; support groups and mentoring programs; and on-the-job support, including grievance response mechanisms

GENDER ISSUES IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN VIET NAM

Social and Cultural Norms Influence Access and Participation

Women's participation in TVET in Viet Nam continues to be greatly affected by gender norms and values that direct women towards unpaid caregiving roles over productive employment. Gender-based stereotypes permeate society and ascribe specific roles and responsibilities to individuals based on their sex, not their aptitudes, interests, or skills.

⁶ Kousha Das. 2018. *Labor Market Trends in Viet Nam*. Viet Nam.

⁷ Korn Ferry Gender Pay Index 2018.

⁸ ADB. 2017. *Technical Report: Gender Assessment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and School-to-Work Transition in Viet Nam*. Manila.

⁹ Wider Opportunities for Women. <http://www.wowonline.org> (accessed 22 October 2013); House of Commons, Canada. 2010. Building the pipeline: Increasing the participation of women in non-traditional occupations. Report of the standing committee on the status of women. <http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/hoc/Committee/403/FEWO/Reports/RP4819341/feworp06/feworp06-e.pdf> (accessed 23 October 2013); F. Sherwing. 2009. *The female 'tradie': Challenging employment perceptions in non-traditional trades for women*. <https://www.ncver.edu.au> (accessed 23 October 2013).

Even where women have successfully completed TVET courses, this assessment found that pervasive stereotypes held by employers and families limited the likelihood that female graduates would pursue careers in their chosen field or trade. As a result, women in Viet Nam are more likely to pursue jobs in the service industry including low-pay, low-skill jobs in tourism, thereby reinforcing gender inequalities at work and in society.

As an example of possible cultural biases, the assessment identified structural inequalities in terms of both the skill levels and length (short vs. long term) of the training selected by female and male trainees, particularly in male-dominated technical courses of study.

Barriers to Participation

The assessment observed a general lack of understanding of the differential opportunities and choices available to women when exploring educational programs due to deeply entrenched sex-based norms and values. Though some institutions offer incentives to female applicants, in practice, this was found to be minimally affecting enrollment and course selection. Though women represent approximately 30% of enrolled trainees in Viet Nam (footnote 9), the available data on retention, drop-out, and completion by sex, age, and course of study limits the capacity for the sector to develop strategic outreach and communication campaigns targeting prospective female trainees.

Sexual harassment, considered a taboo subject, is also not considered when assessing the barriers to women's participation or continuation in TVET programs. While many institutions provided good boarding and other facilities for both sexes, curriculum reforms with the intention of removing bias and stereotypes have yet to be undertaken.

The assessment also observed that the following additional groups were struggling to access TVET: (i) adult women wanting to retrain after having children, or caring for older family members; (ii) mature students seeking further studies who were unable to access equivalencies for their earlier courses/training; and (iii) females from specific ethnic minority groups.

The numbers of female trainers to serve as role models and mentors, particularly in nontraditional study area,¹⁰ and inflexible governance structures including male-biased board representation¹¹ limit the ability of institutions to respond to changing market demands and meet the diverse needs of their trainee population.

Ineffective Legislative, Policy, and Strategic Frameworks

While gender-responsive laws, policies, and strategies do exist in some areas of TVET, the challenge lies in their consistent

implementation. Compounding this the Vocational Training Development Strategy does not include gender targets or indicators for monitoring or evaluation purposes.

The Vocational Training Report is populated by limited sex-disaggregated data and does not include a gender-based analysis. More systematic collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data including enrollment by course of study, drop-out rates, and job placements could inform policy makers and employers on the experiences and opportunities for women in the sector.

Despite the passing of the State Budgets Law in 2015 prioritizing expenditures on gender, the lack of committed resources remains a major constraint to legislative and policy implementation of gender-related mandates in TVET.

More accessible and systematic information, data, and resources would guide the development of programs capable of effectively addressing inequalities, while supporting the monitoring and evaluation of sector outcomes on male and female trainees.

Preparedness for School-to-Work Transition

The assessment identified the need for a formal process to consider the differential experiences affecting female trainees, as they complete their courses and transition to work, as well as those who may need additional support when forced to interrupt their studies for economic or other reasons.

Some employers expressed a desire to hire women, yet found women hires to be limited due to the low number of female trainees enrolled in TVET programs. Where jobs were not being secured, trainees complained of being ill-prepared for self-employment due to a lack of entrepreneurial-style courses. Finally, where on-the-job training or internships were available, the assessment observed that paid placements were less likely to be offered to female-dominated service sector areas, as compared to their male counterparts in other sectors.

Labor Market Constraints

Even when employers hired women in male-dominated areas, the assessment observed that women were likely to be relegated to office-based work rather than working in their technical field of study.

This bias is a symptom of deeply held gender-based stereotypes. None of the institutions studied were adopting proactive measures to dismantle stereotypes or support broader understanding of diverse and inclusive workforces among employers.

However, some employers explicitly stated a willingness to recruit women and provide the necessary accommodations

¹⁰ According to the Vocational Training Report 2013-2014, there are 27.3% female managers in vocational training institutes (vocational colleges, secondary schools, vocational centers).

¹¹ Management boards with 86% male and 4% female leadership, and TVET institutes with 33% females in management positions, compared to 67% males.

for family-related pressures and specific health concerns. Partnerships with such employers in developing an awareness-raising campaign could support the dismantling of bias in the workplace.

Despite equal pay legislation contained in the Labor Code, women's wages continue to be 65% less than men's wages across all industry groups and qualification levels as presented in the WEF's *Global Gender Gap Report 2018*.¹²

RECOMMENDATIONS

The gender assessment of the technical and vocational education and school-to-work transition programs in Viet Nam, undertaken by ADB, was intended to provide insight into the continuing challenges of recruiting women and men into training programs and their subsequent capacity to secure lasting employment. The research produced the following seven recommendations to guide the government, educational institutions and facilities, and the private sector to support a more inclusive skilled workforce:¹³

Change social and cultural attitudes and awareness about women working in nontraditional sectors. Following changes to the new general education curriculum in 2018, including career vocational counselling at secondary schools, support, the development and launch of communication campaigns directed at young women and men, parents, community members, decision makers in government and industry groups, instructors and trainers, and institutional management teams.

TVET institutions can complement these efforts by rolling out campaigns intended to challenge and dismantle gender-based stereotypes that will require the use of champions, role models, and mentors alongside social media to reach potential female trainees. Such activities align with ongoing job fair events between institutions and private sector partners as well as community awareness activities on the diversity of TVET programs.

Strengthen information and support to women about education, training, and work options. The government—or other development actors—may need to explore new outreach channels to target female trainees. This could include the provision of pre-enrollment and in-course counseling and support to women on the breadth of training programs available, particularly in male-dominated course specializations. Further, labor market assessments and job placement programs can help to advise women on market demands, niche skill areas, training programs, and career objectives.

Pilot strategies to recruit women into TVET programs with an explicit goal of improving their labor market outcomes.

Evidence from the assessment suggests the need for more effective implementation of potential project pilots and/or expansion of existing TVET strategies, such as:

- expanding free training programs for women (including for women wanting to retrain after having children or caring for older family members);
- initiating and/or supporting recruitment and mentorship programs to support women entering industries dominated by men;
- expanding scholarship and awards programs for women entering areas dominated by men; and
- expanding entrepreneurship training and access to finance initiatives to prepare and support women with starting their own businesses.

Actively reach out to female students from ethnic minority groups. The assessment noted challenges to targeting ethnic minority groups, as this requires a culturally-sensitive approach toward challenging social norms and overcoming barriers to participation at the community level. This may best be piloted by working with teachers in primary, lower, and upper secondary schools, along with community leaders. Subsidies and scholarships, language support, and targeted recruitment approaches are other programs that might better address the needs of this interest group.

Implement a gender mainstreaming strategy and action plan for the TVET sector as an integral part of the TVET strategy. The assessment observed the need for more systematic gender mainstreaming strategies with specific actions, targets and/or quotas, responsibilities across stakeholders and ministries, committed resource allocations, mandated sex- and age-disaggregated data collection, curriculum and resource material reforms, teacher sensitization and training, gender-responsive learning environments, and a system to prevent and respond to sexual harassment of trainees and trainers.

This approach should include strengthened partnerships with industry to maximize labor market outcomes for women.

Improve collection and reporting of labor market and TVET relevant data by sex and age group in the vocational training report.

The assessment recommends an expansion of labor force surveys to better inform course development and offerings through sex- and age-disaggregated data on the following:

- employment outcomes by occupation and course of study
- assessment of national occupational skills
- internships (costs and benefits) by industry/employer, course of study, duration, paid/unpaid, etc.

¹² World Economic Forum. *Global Gender Gap Report*. 2018. http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/data-explorer/?doing_wp_cron=1569563716.7980298995971679687500#economy=VNM.

¹³ ADB. 2019. Gender Assessment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training and School-to-Work Transition in Viet Nam (internal).

- labor force by socioeconomic region
- labor force distributed by qualification
- unemployment by qualification
- employed workers by qualification, including formal, informal, employee/self-employed status
- quantity and structure of labor distributed by forms of enterprises
- enterprise labor structure distributed by forms of enterprises and qualifications
- distribution of workers in enterprises by economic sectors
- quantity of workers in enterprises, by Level 1 economic sectors and qualifications

Further, disaggregated data on staff in the vocational training report should also be strengthened to include the (i) number of teachers by sex, age, professional qualification, and institution; and (ii) number of management staff by sex, age, professional qualification, and specific role (in ministries and sectors, provincial departments, and TVET institutions).

Strengthen relationships with industry to promote better labor market outcomes for TVET female graduates. Responsiveness to future skill needs and projected labor market demands should be the driving force behind TVET in Viet Nam. This requires a nimble sector with strong and diverse industry relations and partnerships to validate course curriculum, teaching materials, pedagogical approaches, and facilitate on-the-job learning opportunities for trainees.

Institutions and industry could work with women trainees to identify training approaches that respond to dual productive and reproductive roles of women such as consideration to flexible hours and work arrangements.

CONCLUSION

Women represent approximately half of the current workforce in Viet Nam. As such, the government should focus on determining how to best facilitate the participation of women to avoid stereotypes affecting their consideration in particular trades, and encourage recruitment by employers to ensure that diversity of the country's human capital is channeled toward sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

To increase the participation of women in TVET, the government, TVET institutions, and employers must be aware of the differential barriers that women face in accessing TVET, particularly in nontraditional trades. Influential actors must also enact and/or implement legislation, policies, and strategies to address these barriers, and expand national awareness of the aptitudes, skills, and potential of all male and female trainees to excel in TVET programs. Finally, labor market modernization, digitization, and technological advancements require an agile, adaptable, and flexible TVET system and workforce.

For Viet Nam to fully benefit from the economic growth potential of a fully functional and highly skilled workforce, dismantling sex-based labor market segmentation needs to be at the forefront of communication and outreach activities and education—from primary to secondary levels and onward—as well as mass media campaigns that encourage market reentry by women who were previously caring for young or older family members, and both men and women who seek to expand their existing skill set or train in new fields.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

ADB Briefs are based on papers or notes prepared by ADB staff and their resource persons. The series is designed to provide concise, nontechnical accounts of policy issues of topical interest, with a view to facilitating informed debate. The Department of Communications administers the series.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of ADB or its Board of Governors or the governments they represent. ADB encourages printing or copying information exclusively for personal and noncommercial use with proper acknowledgment of ADB. Users are restricted from reselling, redistributing, or creating derivative works for commercial purposes without the express, written consent of ADB.

Asian Development Bank
6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City
1550 Metro Manila, Philippines
Tel +63 2 8632 4444
Fax +63 2 8636 2444

www.adb.org/publications/series/adb-briefs



Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO license (CC BY 3.0 IGO)

© 2020 ADB. The CC license does not apply to non-ADB copyright materials in this publication.

<https://www.adb.org/terms-use#openaccess>

<http://www.adb.org/publications/corrigenda>

pubsmarketing@adb.org