



SUMMARY REPORT ON

RAPID ASSESSMENT TO INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT (GRP) POLICIES AND PROGRAMMING IN VIET NAM

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

Summary Report on Rapid Assessment to Inform the Development of Gender Responsive Procurement Policies and Programming in Viet Nam

Published 1st edition, 2023

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Applications for permission may be addressed to registry.vietnam@unwomen.org

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Viet Nam Country Office

304 Kim Ma Street, Ba Dinh District, Hanoi, Viet Nam

Tel: +84 24 3850 0100

Fax: +84 24 3726 5520

<http://vietnam.unwomen.org>

The view expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily present the views of UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The information in this Report has been gathered from various sources, which includes a desk review, quantitative and qualitative survey with key stakeholders conducted by SEACONSULT Joint Stock Company (SEACO) with technical support from UN Women.

The Report was produced under the overall management of UN Women and co-authored by Ms. Duong Thi Kim Lien, Ms. Dao Ngoc Nga, Ms. Dang Thanh Mai of SEACO, Ms. Nguyen Kim Lan, Programme Manager on Women Economic Empowerment and WE RISE Together Programme of UN Women Viet Nam, Ms. Katja Freiwald, Programme Manager and Technical Advisor on Women's Economic Empowerment of UN Women Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, with overall supervision from Elisa Fernandez Saenz, Representative of UN Women Viet Nam Country Office.

UN Women gratefully acknowledges the collaboration and support of the Agency for Enterprise Development (AED) of Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) for the survey organization. UN Women would like to thank the Australian Government - the Mekong-Australia Partnership for their financial support for this Report which was developed within the Programme "Creating equal market opportunities for women by advancing Supplier Diversity through Gender-Responsive Procurement (SD-GRP) in Viet Nam - WE RISE Together Programme" developed and implemented by UN Women.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works towards the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners in, and beneficiaries of, development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. In Viet Nam, UN Women contributes to the development objectives of Viet Nam's Socio-Economic Development Plan and the National Strategy for Gender Equality.

WE RISE Together: Creating equal market opportunities for women by advancing Supplier Diversity through Gender-Responsive Procurement, a three-year Mekong-Australia Partnership (MAP) project developed by UN Women, started in March 2022. The programme acts in response to the prioritization of women's economic empowerment by expanding market access for Women-owned Businesses (WOBs) and Gender Responsive Enterprises (GREs) through procurement opportunities. WE RISE Together (WRT) tackles the structural gender inequities which exist within the global procurement market in which WOBs secure a mere one per cent of both public and private procurement spending worldwide. By introducing and advancing increased market access through gender-responsive procurement (GRP), WE RISE Together operates with an overall objective to empower more women to gain equal access, leadership, and benefit from expanded market opportunities within and across the Mekong subregion, namely in Viet Nam and Thailand.

GRP is an important vehicle for enriching supply chains by broadening the range of suppliers of goods and services available to businesses and governments and for advancing women's economic empowerment. GRP promotes the principles of buying from WOBs to enable their equitable access to markets and buying from GREs in order to create further gender-responsive value chains.



Launched in 2010 by UN Women and the UN Global Compact, the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are a set of 7 principles that provide companies with a roadmap to become more gender-responsive throughout their value chain. The WEPs is the only framework that encompasses gender equality at all organizational levels, beginning with leadership and providing guidance for the workplace, marketplace and community.

Action to promote GRP is under Principle 5 of WEPs to *implement business development and supply chain and marketing practices that empower women*. Despite policies, plans, and schemes to encourage women's participation in business and support women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs), there is no formal policy or framework on GRP and limited supporting policies to enable businesses to leverage their purchasing policies and practices in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. As a result, there is an opportunity to add gender data and to consider WOBs in the procurement process.

The WRT programme operates in Thailand and Viet Nam, where the concept of GRP is still in its nascent stages of development. Despite regional and national initiatives prioritizing the financial inclusion of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), currently there is only a limited amount of gender-sensitive data available to promote GRP practices and policies.

WE RISE Together introduces GRP as an opportunity to address and attempt to channel spend to WOBs/GREs while promoting gender responsive practices amongst suppliers.

This report summarizes the key findings and recommendations of the rapid assessment including legislative review, stakeholder mapping and capacity assessment on gender responsive procurement in Viet Nam with the aim of developing GRP policies and programming in Viet Nam.

It is imperative to clarify certain concepts elucidated in the report, most specifically the following:

- **GRP** is the sustainable selection of services, goods, or civil work that takes into account the impact on gender equality and women's empowerment.¹
- **GRE** is an enterprise which incorporates gender equality into their policy and practice, in alignment with UN Women's Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs), ILO standards and other international standards.²
- **A woman-owned** business is defined by the International Finance Corporation for enterprises as one that has (1) at least 51% ownership by women; or (2) is at least 20% female-owned and has (a) at least one woman as a chief executive officer, chief operating officer, president, and/or vice president; and (b) where a board exists, 30% or more females on its board of directors.



- **According to the Viet Nam** 2017 Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Support Law, a women owned SME is defined as an SME in which women own at least 51% of its charter capital and has at least one woman as an executive of this enterprise³.
- **Supplier diversity** is a formal programme which promotes procurement from businesses that are at least 51% owned and operated by a traditionally underrepresented or underserved individual or group.⁴

1 UN Women, 2022. *Building a Path to Gender Equality for the Business Sector through Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs): Summary of Policy Recommendations for Viet Nam*.

2 UN Women, 2017. *The power of procurement: How to source from women-owned businesses – Corporate guide to gender-responsive procurement*.

3 Article 3, Viet Nam's 2017 SME Support Law

4 Bateman, Barrington and Date, 2020 [Page number/s] This reference is missing from the reference list

2. LAWS AND POLICIES RELATED TO GRP IN VIET NAM

2.1. POLICIES LINKED TO PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN VIET NAM

The government has formulated legislation and policy on public procurement⁵, including the **Public Procurement Law 2013** which regulates the state management of bidding; responsibilities of relevant parties and bidding activities, **Decree No. 63/2014/ND-CP (2014)** detailing a number of articles of the Public Procurement Law 2013 on contractor selection clarifying the incentives for domestic bidding, **Circular No. 08/2022/TT-BKHDT (2022)** specifying the provision and posting of information on bidding and contractor selection on the new national bidding network system. Since 2018, Viet Nam has rolled out the **National Procurement Network System (NPNS)** requiring businesses to submit bids online for government contracts at the ministerial level, rendering the process faster, cheaper, and fairer for local companies with internet access. However, there are currently no provisions addressing GRP in all of the above legislations and systems.

Although the Public Procurement Law 2013 includes a provision for the preferential treatment of certain target groups in public procurement, such as businesses with 25% or more female employees, it has not been explicitly incorporated into the specific evaluation criteria for such bids and guided in any Decree and Circular.

The concept of sustainable procurement was first defined in Viet Nam's policy, specifically in Decision No. 4109/QD-BKHCN (2020) by the Ministry of Science and Technology, which also published the **National Standard TCNV 12874 on sustainable procurement**,

5 Public procurement is a form of procurement, regardless of goods, construction works or services, in which the primarily-invited bidders are organizations of the government and state using state budget sources



equivalent to ISO 20400: 2017⁶ that is recommended as a useful tool to achieve sustainability goals, including gender equality. However, gender equality has not yet to be integrated into the procurement system, highlighting the need to mainstream gender within the legal framework on sustainable procurement.

2.2. POLICIES LINKED TO COMMERCIAL OR PRIVATE PROCUREMENT IN VIET NAM

As a free market mechanism, buying activities among enterprises (so-called commercial procurement or private procurement) in the private sector is not covered by the Public Procurement Law. Instead, they adhere to the unique procurement and tender policies of individual corporates, which are shaped by the specific competitiveness of products and services.

The mercantile bidding of goods and services is a commercial activity in which one party (the bidder) invites other traders (the bidders) to compete for the opportunity to provide goods or services to the buyer in accordance with the buyer's specific requirements. The successful bidder (the winning party) is required to sign and execute a contract. This process is governed

6 ISO 20400, Sustainable procurement Guidelines, provides guidance for organizations wanting to integrate sustainability into their procurement processes. <http://www.iso.org>

by Clause 1, Article 214 of **the Commercial Law 2005**⁷. The Commercial Law 2005 has no provisions on gender mainstreaming.

Thus, at present, neither public nor private procurement policies have specific provisions on GRP and supporting WOBs in accessing procurement markets.

2.3. POLICIES LINKED TO WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN VIET NAM

Currently, there is a lack of explicit international legal documents or commitments which specifically focus on supporting market access for WOBs and GREs, although related issues are referred to indirectly in conventions and standards such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention No. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), and Convention No.100 on Equal Remuneration. Viet Nam has developed a system of laws and policies to support efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the business sector and to comply with these important international gender commitments, such as the Gender Equality Law 2006, the Labour Code 2019 and the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021 - 2030. Compliance with these international and national gender commitments will enable businesses to become GREs, which would potentially make them eligible for preferential market access. Viet Nam has not, as yet, established standards and certifications to track and identify gender-responsive business practices, i.e GREs.

The Law on Gender Equality (2006) stipulates gender equality in the economic field in Clause 1, Article 12, stating that "Men and women are equal in establishing enterprises, conducting production and business activities, managing businesses, equality in access to information, capital, markets, and labor resources."

The Law on Supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) 2017 ensures equal opportunities for men and women in establishing, organizing and operating businesses. The law defines "women-owned SMEs" and sets out the principles for supporting SMEs: "In case many small and medium-sized enterprises meet the conditions for support under this Law, priority shall be given to selecting women-owned SMEs and SMEs employing more female employees".

The government has adopted and implemented some provisions to support WOBs and enterprises employing many female workers on technical advisory and human resource development support in the **Decree 80/2021/CP 2021**, and **Circular 06/2022/TT-BKHDT** on supporting policies for SMEs. The Government has also formulated national programmes to support the development of WOBs, such as the **Programmes Supporting women to start a business in the period of 2017 - 2025**⁸, **Supporting the national innovation start-up ecosystem until 2025**⁹, and **Supporting students to start a business until 2025**¹⁰. These policies and programmes have contributed to enhancing the capacity and competitiveness of WOBs to access and win procurement opportunities.

2.4. DATABASE OR GENDER-DISAGGREGATED DATA OF ENTERPRISES

At present, there is a lack of regular and official data on WOBs and gender of the ownership of the suppliers (sellers). Further work is needed to gather additional information and build a comprehensive gender-disaggregated database of enterprises, to better inform policy-makers and stakeholders in Viet Nam concerning a GRP policy-making process.

7 Viet Nam Commercial Law 2005 [COMMERCIAL LAW \(wto.org\)](http://www.wto.org) "Clause 1, Article 214: Bidding for goods or services means a commercial activity whereby a party purchases goods or services through bidding (referred to as bid solicitor) in order to select, among traders participating in the bidding (referred to as bidders), a trader that satisfies the requirements set forth by the bid solicitor and is selected to enter into and perform a contract (referred to as bid winner)".

8 Decision No. 939/QD-TTg of The Prime Minister dated June 30, 2017

9 Decision No. 844/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister dated May 18, 2016

10 Decision No. 1665/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister dated October 30, 2017

3. STAKEHOLDER MAPPING ON PROCUREMENT IN VIET NAM

This section presents the key stakeholders and their role in the procurement system in Viet Nam.

3.1. KEY STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE PROCUREMENT SYSTEM IN VIET NAM

Government actors engaged in the procurement system:

For the formulation of procurement legislation and monitoring of procurement practices and business development, including:

- Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI): Public Procurement Agency and the Agency for Enterprise Development.
- Ministry of Finance (MOF): Department of State Budget and the Department of Public Expenditure.
- Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT).
- Other actors such as the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Actors from Demand side:

- Government institutions in the public procurement ecosystem.
- Large national and multi-national businesses
- Enterprises, including the SMEs/women led public and private enterprises, **as buyers** in the procurement ecosystem.

Actors from Supply side:

- Enterprises, including the MSMEs/ women led public and private enterprises **as suppliers** in the procurement ecosystem.
- Workers and subcontractors supplying these businesses.

Supporting organizations

Those organizations working in support of gender equality, the development of WOBs, gender mainstreaming in procurement, capacity building and connecting WOBs/GREs to markets, providing financial support and investment, and facilitating business matching. These include relevant entities beyond women's organizations and includes entrepreneurship support organizations.

3.2. THE ROLE OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROCUREMENT SYSTEM IN VIET NAM

Government: The Government has a dual role: i) as a facilitator which establishes and implements a policy framework that promotes and incentivizes GRP in the private and public sectors, and ii) as a large institutional public buyer that can implement GRP in the public procurement system.

The government needs to introduce a gender-responsive suppliers' policy through regulations requiring all companies willing to participate in public procurement to demonstrate compliance with the minimum gender equality standards. The government needs to issue a circular guiding enterprises and government agencies, making it easier for businesses to sell to the government and improving access to public procurement.

At the same time, the Government needs to have policies that encourage SMEs, local suppliers, and minority groups - most women-owned businesses are concentrated in this group - to participate in government procurement with special preferential terms as measures temporarily boosts GRP.

Enterprises [as suppliers]: with the role of diversifying suppliers to build resilience and diversify risk, increasing the available suppliers to which companies have access and resulting in reduced supply chain risk and more alternate suppliers when needed.

Enterprises [as buyers]: GRP benefits both demand and supply sides. While empowering and enabling WOBs' equitable access to markets, GRP benefits buyers by enriching the supply chain through diversifying and broadening the range of the suppliers of goods and services available to both corporate and institutional buyers.



Supporting Organizations: Socio-political organizations, NGOs, national and international organizations that work on gender equality and women's empowerment, raise the awareness of entrepreneurship support organizations about gender mainstreaming in procurement, capacity building and connecting WOBs/ GREs to markets and facilitating business matching. Whereby, they can play a leading role in mobilizing support and resources, building collaborations, providing technical assistance and capacity building, proposing policy recommendations, facilitating a policy dialogue, and engaging both public and private sectors in promoting GRP and building a GRP policy framework.

4. CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS FOR THE PRACTICE OF GRPS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE DEMAND AND SUPPLY SIDE

Our findings and recommendations are based on (i) analysis of the data obtained from a survey of 212 enterprises¹¹ (87.3% of enterprises in the tourism and the retail sector were owned by women and 12.7% were owned by men) and (ii) qualitative analysis of information collected from 68 representatives of the public and private sector from the five cities and provinces of Ha Noi, Quang Ninh, Thua Thien Hue, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City from October 2022 to January 2023.



4.1. EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES FOR BUYERS

206 out of 212 (97.2%) surveyed businesses participated as buyers of goods and services, of which: 184 businesses are owned by women, accounting for 86.8% and the remaining 13.2% are businesses owned by men.

4.1.1 Considering the gender of the ownership of primary suppliers

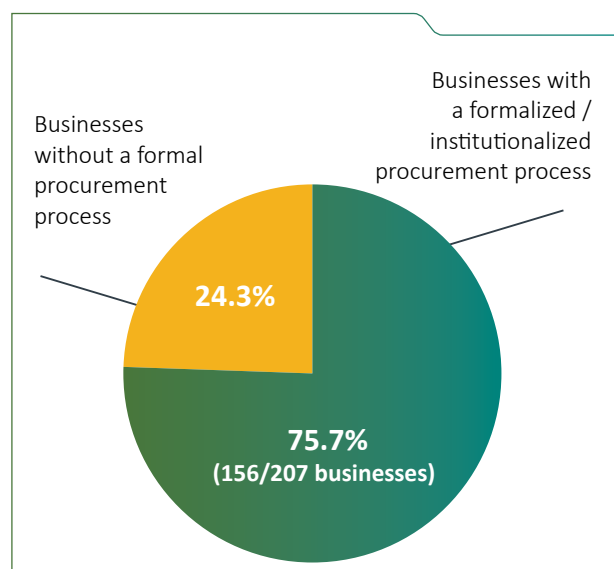
Qualitative survey results reveal that there are no businesses which capture data about or demonstrate awareness of whether their suppliers are businesses which are owned by women or men. Businesses as buyers, including those owned by women, prioritize concerns about the quality and price of goods and services in the first instance.

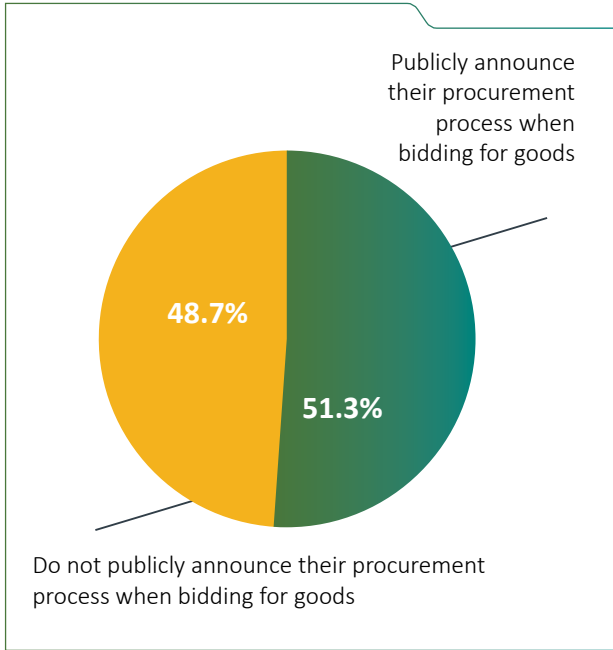
11 In terms of business types, 46.2% of the surveyed businesses were limited liability companies with two or more members, 27.4% were joint-stock companies, 10.4% were single-member limited liability companies, while 7.1% were private enterprises. The remaining 8.9% constituted other types of businesses such as cooperatives and individual household businesses.

In terms of business size, 54.3% were small businesses and 41.0% were micro-businesses. 3.8% were large businesses and 0.9% were medium-sized businesses.

4.1.2 Establishing a procurement process

According to the survey results, the proportion of businesses with a formalized /institutionalized procurement process is relatively high, accounting for 75.7% (156/207 businesses). The remaining 24.3% of businesses do not have a formal procurement process in place. The procurement process can be simply understood as the steps and procedures which businesses follow to make purchasing decisions for necessary goods or services.





Out of 156 businesses that have established a procurement process, 51.3% of them publicly announce their procurement process when bidding for goods, while the remaining 48.7% do not.

Procurement processes vary in scope and form across different businesses. Larger companies, especially those in the tourism industry, have established criteria for selecting service providers such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation services. For these businesses, the procurement process is developed and applied internally.

However, interviews with businesses revealed that the criteria for selecting suppliers do not include or mention the gender of the supplier in the procurement process.

Smaller businesses, especially those in the retail sector, operate with simple procurement processes, such as considering quotes, trial use, analyzing and comparing prices, and seeking high discount conditions. For both tourism and the retail sector, the decision to purchase from a supplier does often not include the gender of the business owner as one of the selection criteria.

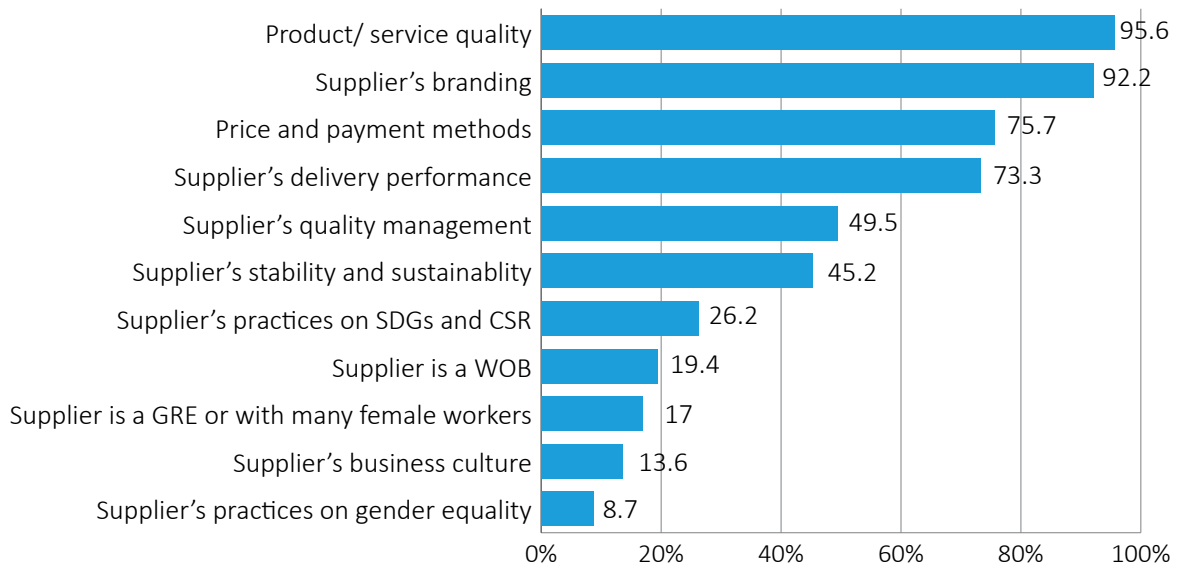
For micro and small businesses in the retail sector, the majority choose to rely on personal judgement when they purchase goods. Survey results reveal that up to **83.3%** of businesses will consider or are open to considering prioritizing purchases from women-owned businesses in their procurement process in the future.

4.1.3 Key factors that businesses consider when making buying decisions

According to a survey of 206 businesses as buyers, 95.6% of respondents rank 'product/service quality' as the most important buying criteria, followed by 'supplier branding' (92.2%), 'product/service price and payment methods' (75.7%), and 'product/service delivery performance' (73.3%).

When making buying decisions, social impact considerations of the suppliers are not a top priority for businesses. Only 26.2% of businesses consider indicators such as whether a 'supplier has an acknowledged performance in sustainable development and corporate social responsibility'; 19.4% of businesses consider the factor of whether a 'supplier is a women-owned business'; 17.0% consider whether a 'supplier employs many female workers'; and only 8.7% consider a 'supplier has good gender equality policies and practices in the workplace and in business' as an asset.

Figure 1: Key factors that businesses consider when deciding to purchase (N=206) (%)



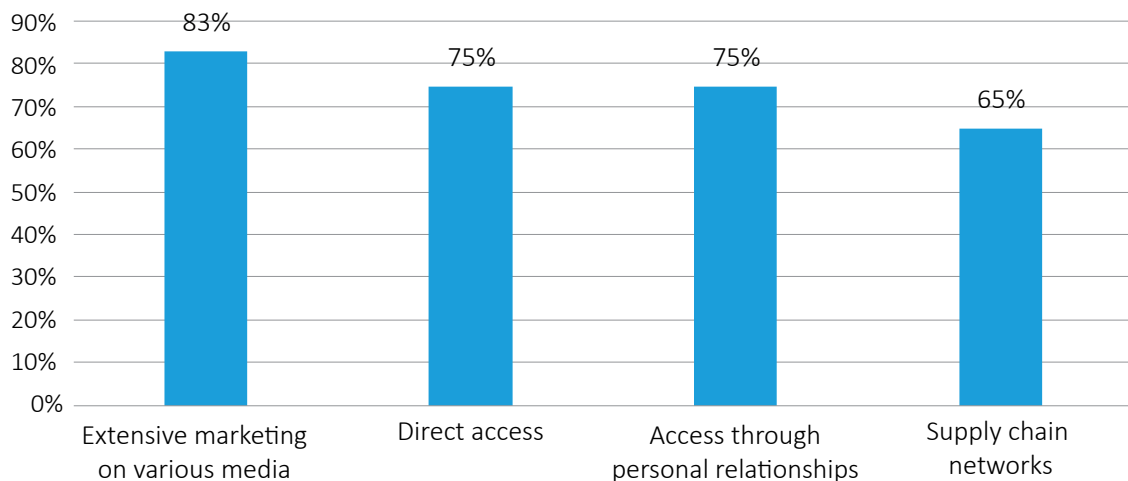
4.2. EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES FOR SELLERS

There were 204 out of 212 (96.2%) businesses who participated in the survey as sellers of goods and services, 87.3% enterprises were owned by women and 12.7% were owned by men.

4.2.1 Opportunities and challenges of accessing markets

The survey results showed that 'extensive marketing on various media' is the most important channel for businesses to reach out to buyers/customers, accounting for 83%; followed by 'direct access' and 'access through personal relationships' with both rates at 75%; and finally through 'supply chain networks' (65%).

Figure 2: The sellers' methods of accessing the market (N=204) (%)





The first thing I care about when deciding to make a purchase is the quality of the goods, price, payment conditions... I truly don't care if the seller is a male or female-owned business, but if there are many sellers bidding for the same type of product, I also consider and prioritize purchasing from female-owned businesses as a form of 'sisterhood'... helping each other.

[Women-owned retail business, Ho Chi Minh city]

Accessing markets, maintaining and expanding sales channels are the top priority for enterprises, especially for women-owned micro and small enterprises. They use multiple channels to access markets, however, the main channel for product sales is through direct contact and personal relationships. Interviews with businesses have shown that accessing markets through personal relationships often helps businesses maintain long-term, sustainable commercial relationships. However, it is difficult for businesses to continue to expand through personal relationships and as such, there are few businesses which sizeably expand the market.

Enterprises which are connected through formal supply chains (including through formal procurement schemes) to market access are still difficult. This was especially the case during and after the COVID-19 pandemic whereby supply chains were disrupted and changed. This was most especially the case in the retail and tourism sectors which were the most heavily

impacted by the pandemic and a large proportion of WOBs operated within these sectors. For the retail sector, before the COVID-19 pandemic, most trade was conducted through distribution channels and distributors (agents) who would often accept a partial payment before delivery, which meant that retailers had to bear some of the costs. Retail businesses owned by women (stores, mini supermarkets, convenience stores, etc.) often face difficulties in generating capital and most maintain business within this format. However, due to the pandemic, retail businesses that were unable to sell their products, had to close or downsize because distributors had difficulty collecting capital. Many distributors changed their payment methods, specifically not accepting partial payment before delivery for genuine products with good quality. This has negatively impacted on retailers because they are unable to obtain good products for retail or obtain small quantities of each item, which greatly affects their business.

We purchase goods from many sources and vendors, including both men and women. However, we have not paid attention to gender factors, whether the primary representatives of the suppliers are men or women. We are more concerned with other important factors for businesses.

[Business owner, Quang Ninh province]





We have established criteria for selecting accommodations to book for customers who purchase our tour packages. These criteria are applied universally to evaluate the selection of rooms based on different standards. After each tour, our staff evaluates the satisfaction and responsiveness of the service provider, and this is the basis for the company to continue using their services for future tours.

[Tourism business in Ho Chi Minh City]

4.2.2 The constraints and barriers for WOBs accessing markets as sellers.

Limitations on the use of information technology to understand the market and sales channels, especially for micro and small businesses owned by women. There are not many women-owned businesses investing time and finances in using information technology to understand buyers' needs and to access the market.

Micro and small businesses owned by women lack skills in presenting, displaying, and promoting their products and services to attract buyers. One of the main reasons for this is that they do not have the money to engage in professional promotion and marketing consequently they mainly do it themselves based on personal understanding and experience.



My business is very small, I have to do many tasks myself, and as a business owner, I face the same challenges. Personally, I have not found enough suitable time to invest in learning about information technology, even though I know that applying information technology and digital transformation is a necessary requirement for business development nowadays.

[Female business owner, Ha Noi city]

Challenges in expanding the sales networks and business relationships

Even when actively participating in business associations or local network organizations, women-owned businesses still face difficulties in finding new partners. This limits their opportunities to access new customers in different regions or higher-end segments.

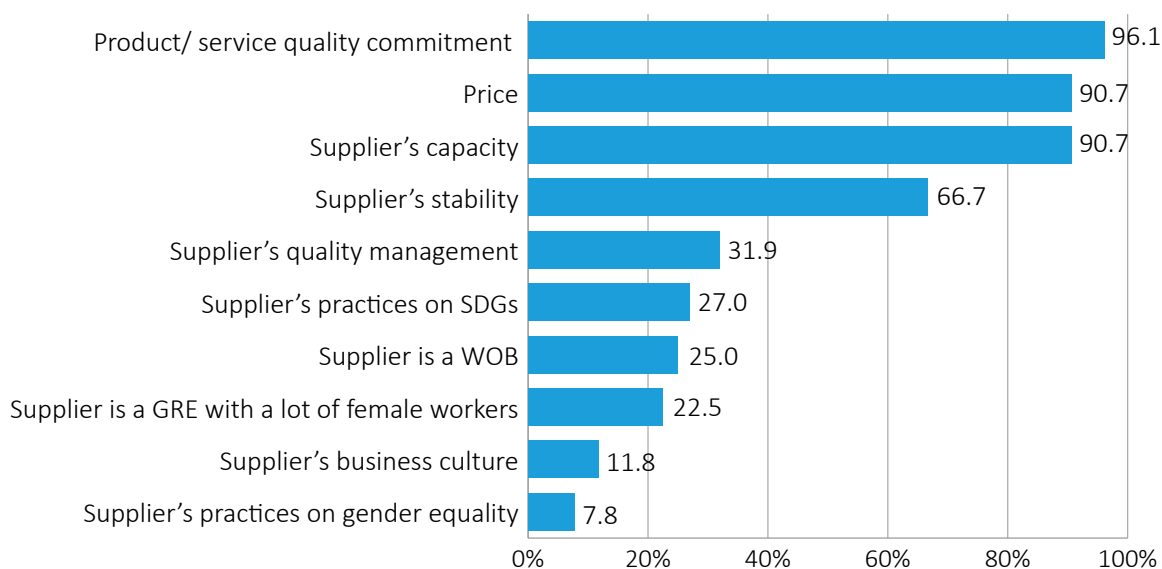
The 'Small is beautiful' mentality

Some female entrepreneurs felt satisfied with the size of their business because they believe it fits their capabilities and conditions. Moreover, they are hesitant to expand their business due to being risk averse, having difficulty in managing the business, work and family balance concerns and other factors. Many female entrepreneurs have this mindset, which hinders their desire to expand their business.

4.2.3 Key factors influencing buying decisions (from sellers perspective)

According to the survey results, 96.1% of sellers selected 'commitment to quality of goods and services' as the most important buying decision criteria factor; followed by 'price' and 'supplier's capacity,' both at 90.7%; and a 'supplier's stability' (66.7%). Sellers thought that buyers were far less concerned about "Supplier is a WOB" (25%) and "Supplier's practices on gender equality" (7.8%).

Figure 3: Key factors from suppliers on what they think that buyers are concerned about (N=204) (%)



CASE-STUDY TOURISM

For tourism and hospitality businesses, the market segmentation is quite clear.

The tourism local value chain

Accommodation	Food & Beverages	Souvenirs	Transportation	Excursions
Hotels/Lodges / Camps, etc.	Restaurants	Souvenir Shops, Markets, Sellers	Regional & Local	Guides, Tour, Operators, Travel Agencies, etc.
	Market, Wholesaler, retailer, Producer, farmer	Craftsmen, local producers	Bus, Taxi, Car, Rental, etc.	

For example, in the case of high-end hotels and restaurants, supplying goods and services to this segment requires high-quality products and services and a high level of professionalism of the suppliers. Micro and small businesses often demonstrate a lack of trust in these qualities.



As a small business owner myself, I participate in events with other small businesses, but still hope to connect with larger businesses to understand their needs, preferences, and requirements for product and service standards. However, it is difficult to reach out to these larger businesses.

[Group discussion of female entrepreneurs, Quang Ninh province]

The most commonly purchased product for our business is food, which we buy from various sources. Quality and price are the top factors that we are concerned about, but what's important is the supplier's ability to control the quality and quantity of the food provided. For large events where we serve hundreds of people, we are worried about whether small suppliers can provide enough high-quality goods or if they will have to purchase from unreliable sources, which will affect the quality of our service. With larger suppliers, we can be more confident because they always have a large source of diverse and abundant goods, and they have the resources to ensure good quality control. For food service businesses, if there are any issues with the food that customers consume, it will negatively impact our reputation and have a significant impact on the company's operations.

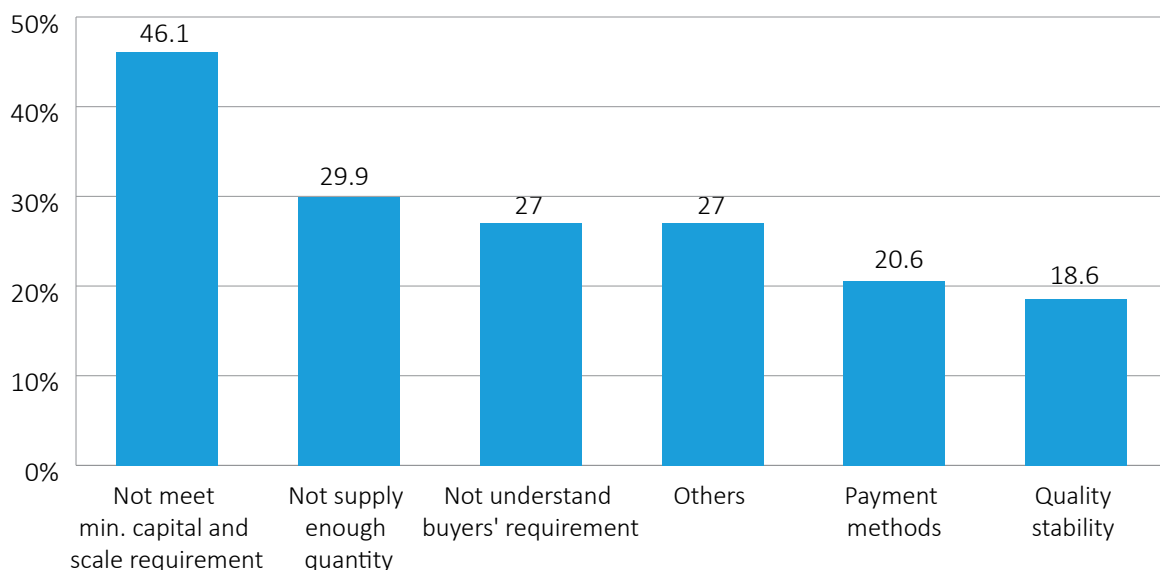


[Owner of a wedding and banquet restaurant, Quang Ninh province]

The main challenges faced by SMEs as sellers are reflected in survey data, such as 'not meeting the minimum requirements for capital and scale' (46.1%); 'not supplying enough quantity' (29.9%); 'not understand buyers' requirement' (27.0%); 'payment terms do not fit with purchasing businesses' (20.6%); and 'not having sufficient stability of goods in terms

of quality' (18.6%). In addition, 27.0% of businesses still face other challenges such as difficulties in communication, developing their brand, planning capital and communication, high competition from domestic and imported goods, and business management issues.

Figure 4: Challenges encountered by sellers (N=204) (%)



4.2.4 The sellers' experience in the bidding process

According to the survey results, only 66 out of 204 (32.3%) businesses as sellers have experience in supplying goods and services through the bidding process. Of these, two thirds of the businesses participated in commercial bidding and one third participated in public procurement bidding. 67.7% of businesses have never participated in bidding to supply goods and services. The top three reasons businesses cited are 'not being able to access information about bidding packages,' accounting for 69%; followed by 'not understanding bidding procedures' (60%); and 'lack of experience and capability to participate in bidding' (48%). Other reasons include 'the business does not meet the requirements (in terms of legal entity)' (19%); 'failure to demonstrate adequate capacity to meet the criteria for bidding' (17%); and 'not applicable to the type of goods/services that the

business produces or supplies (for example, common goods that are not of sufficient scale, or do not meet the standards of goods/services, etc.)' (10%).

Challenges and barriers for sellers in commercial procurement bidding process

The survey results showed that sellers (especially WOBS) are facing barriers when participating in commercial procurement bidding including: 'difficulty accessing information on procurement from buyers' (42%); 'insufficient time to prepare (submit) bidding documents/proposals' (38%); 'difficult contract performance condition' (31%); 'bidding information and TOR not widely publicized' (29%); and 'inviting party sets elevated standards for capacity and experience, making it difficult' (27%).

Figure 5: Reasons for businesses have never participated in bidding to supply goods and services (N=204) (%)

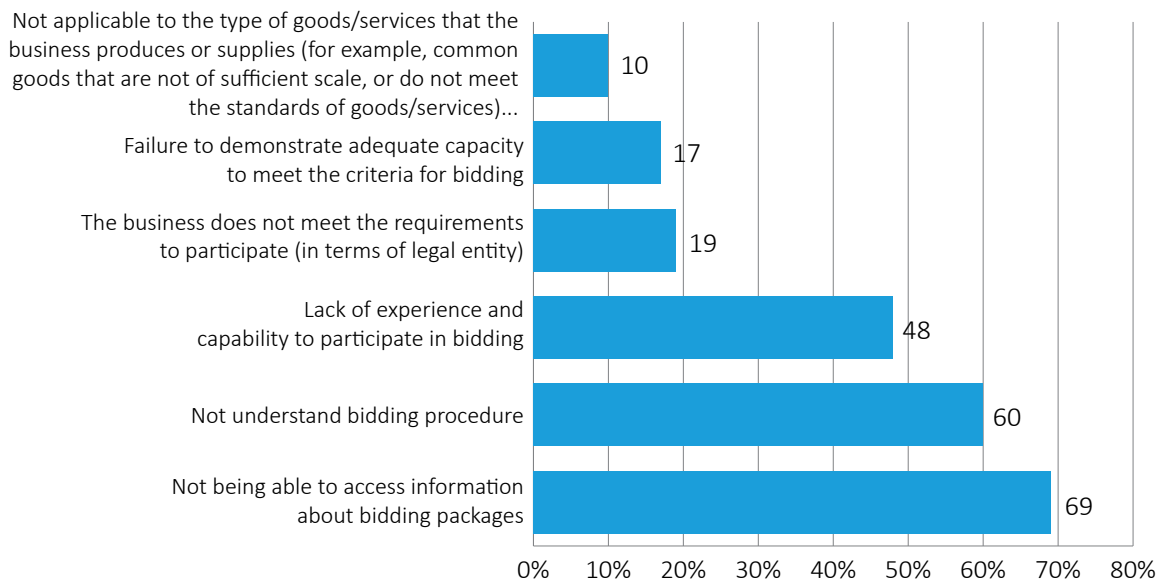
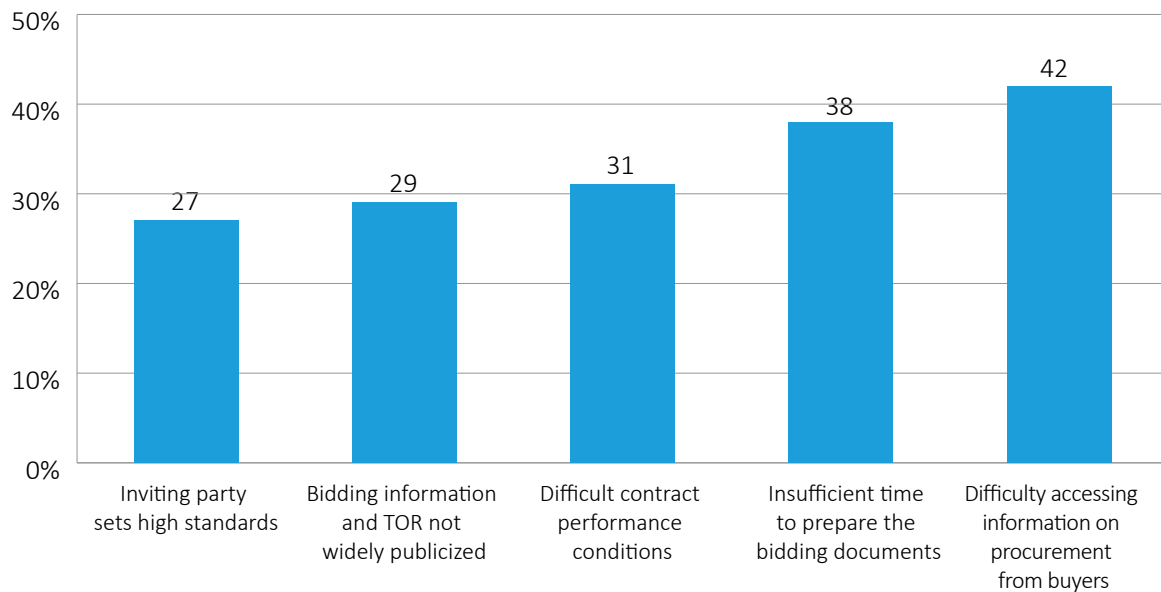


Figure 6: Difficulties and obstacles encountered by businesses related to the inviting party (N=45) (%)



The qualitative research results showed that other difficulties faced by SMEs as sellers participating in commercial bidding include lack of skills to write and present bids that meet the requirements of the inviting party. In addition, some female entrepreneurs who participated in the interviews expressed concerns about the low chance of winning the bid, so they were hesitant to invest time and effort in engaging in the process of writing bids and fulfilling the requirements of the inviting party. Some opinions suggested that large companies may prefer and prioritize purchasing from other large companies, thus women-owned SMEs are not confident in their capacity to participate in the bidding process.

Difficulties and obstacles related to the ability to participate in public procurement

The main difficulties include a lack of skills and knowledge to prepare bidding documents; ‘a lack of feedback or difficulty in accessing officials to help understand the procurement process’; ‘unclear contact points when searching for information or when needing to clarify information posted on bidding documents’, and ‘difficulties in submitting and posting bidding documents on the National E-Procurement System (NEPS) platform’. In addition, businesses also face difficulties due to ‘limited resources to invest in the bidding process’.

5. CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS FOR THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO PROMOTE AND IMPLEMENT GRP

5.1. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR BUYERS

The large, medium and small businesses participating in the market can be both seller or buyer. In the context of this study, the buyers surveyed were relatively larger-scale businesses because their purchasing methods and processes are more strategic and formalized, or at least clearer than those of smaller enterprises.

Qualitative research results show that leaders/owners of purchasing businesses have not yet recognized the necessity and opportunity of integrating gender considerations into their procurement activities. Individuals participating in the interviews had little or no understanding of gender responsive procurement (GRP). After explaining the concept of GRP, almost businesses supported the view that GRP promotes equal market and social impact. However, business leaders need to be equipped with clearer and more specific knowledge and awareness of the necessity and benefits of GRP for both their businesses, the market and the community.

Procurement is considered a 'sensitive' field and a 'very important' work for businesses, so a high commitment from business owners is needed to implement GRP. A communication campaign needs to be developed to transform thinking and practice in GRP, helping buyers promote and prioritize GRP in their purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, to put GRP into practice, businesses need to be equipped with knowledge and tools to integrate gender into the procurement policy and process.

For large businesses, the starting point for initiatives and promoting the implementation of GRP should be combined with the standards that businesses are currently implementing or striving to implement, such as the Sustainable Procurement Standard (ISO 20400). This standard provides guidance on integrating



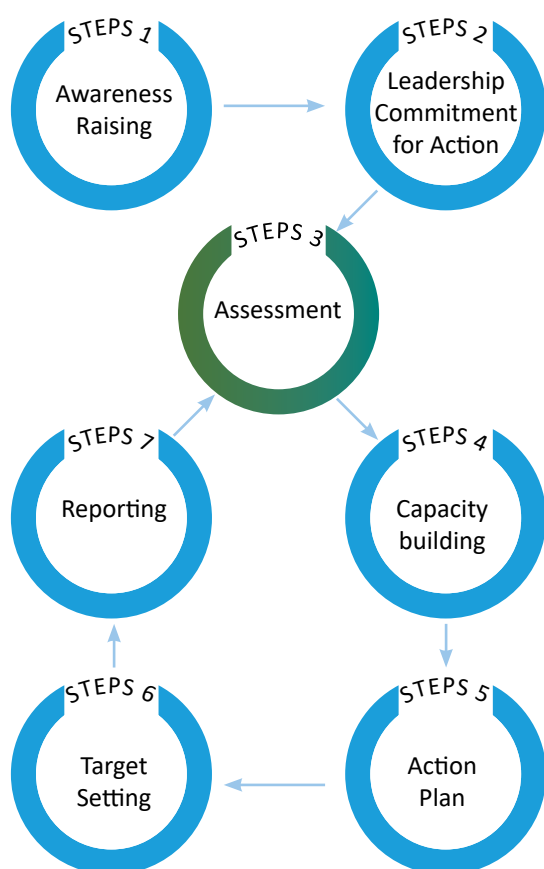
sustainable factors into the procurement activities of a unit, regardless of the field, public or private, or the scale and location of the unit. The standard applies to all stakeholders participating in or affected by procurement decisions and processes. The standard refers to a principle of 'full and fair opportunities' according to which procurement decisions should not be biased or discriminatory towards any particular party. All suppliers, including local and small-scale suppliers, need to have full opportunities to compete fairly. However, it is important to make clear that despite the existence of ISO 20400, GRP is not addressed, therefore clearer frameworks, guidance and company procurement policies needed to explicitly promote GRP and Supplier Diversity (i.e. Supplier Code of Conducts, Inclusive Procurement Policies and Actions as well as clear targets)

For buyers in Viet Nam, the first essential step will be to raise awareness and commitment from business leaders to create gender-responsive procurement policies, processes and practices. Secondly, it is

important that the buyers' procurement teams and the wider business will have access to the right capacity building to drive the implementation forward. Guidance and capacity-building for buyers should focus on the following aspects:

- Providing concepts of GRP, identifying the benefits and impact of GRP for business and society, address the issue of lack of awareness and recognition among business leaders/owners with respect to the necessity of integrating gender into commercial procurement activities.
- How to conduct a GRP baseline assessment and leveraging, for example the UN Women WEPs GRP assessment tool designed to assess the current situation and progress on businesses' policies and practices on gender-responsive procurement.

Develop GRP action plans for companies for their individual GRP journey to implementing GRP is a behavioral change process, which includes different steps:



It is a process of change which moves from awareness to change in procurement processes etc. Training, technical guidance, or equipping GRP tools for businesses can only create an impact on changing awareness. Businesses also need technical advice and coaching from gender and business experts to support gender analysis, develop specific GRP plans, implementation roadmap, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. GRP is a new concept for most businesses in Viet Nam, as such there is a need for advocacy and encouragement for some businesses to pioneer in this field.

Moreover, a significant feature in Viet Nam is the establishment of associations and clubs for WOBs in various localities. These entities serve as proactive business support organizations (BSOs), facilitating commercial collaboration and networking opportunities for their members and other local WOBs. Buyers are encouraged to engage with these BSOs to disseminate information about procurement opportunities to WOBs in the region. To streamline this process, it is advisable to compile and provide a detailed list of the above-mentioned BSOs, including contact information in localities. This resource would significantly aid buyers in implementing GRP strategies effectively.

5.2. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUPPLIERS (ESPECIALLY WOBs)

For suppliers, particularly WOBs, there are several capacity gaps that should be filled, including:

- Limited financial resources are a major obstacle for most WOBs. WOBs are usually small in scale, so obtaining loans is quite difficult because they do not have suitable or sufficient collateral, or there are restrictions on the support of their husbands and families in the use of collateral assets. Therefore, it is necessary to promote and more closely monitor gender equality in the family and property division. The government has some funding and support programs for women in business are based on the business plan of the enterprise as a condition for lending, but many micro and small which WOBs fail to develop a good business plan. Therefore, there is a need for capacity building support for WOBs in writing their project proposals/business plans, how to present loan applications, etc.

- Female entrepreneurs often encounter distinct challenges in establishing and expanding their business networks. These challenges are largely attributed to time constraints, stemming from their multifaceted roles, both in their professional pursuits and within their families. Additionally, societal expectations and traditional gender roles can further impede their networking opportunities. As a result, female entrepreneurs may struggle to access critical information, networks and the resources needed to grow their businesses and expand their markets, hindering their potential for success. Training courses which build up the leadership of female entrepreneurs should be offered. The leadership of female entrepreneurs is decisive in offering essential capacity development for WOBs. These training courses should focus on leadership, confidence building, decision-making, networking, and the management of change.
- Female entrepreneurs have fewer opportunities to participate in trade promotion activities, primarily due to a comparative lack of information. This shortfall is a consequence of insufficient relationships and networking opportunities compared to their male counterparts. To address this gap, targeted capacity-building initiatives are essential. These should include specialized training programs in online networking, mentorship schemes pairing female entrepreneurs with experienced business leaders, and access to exclusive trade promotion events. Workshops focusing on strategic communication and marketing could also be beneficial, enabling these entrepreneurs to effectively promote their businesses. Furthermore, creating platforms for peer-to-peer support and collaboration can help in building a more robust and inclusive network. By implementing these focused capacity-building strategies, female entrepreneurs can gain the necessary skills and opportunities to actively and equally participate in trade promotion activities.
- Technological capability: female entrepreneurs and small businesses have limitations in this field and need support in accessing technology in order to expand their markets. Technological capability remains a significant hurdle for female entrepreneurs and small businesses, who often face constraints in accessing and effectively utilizing technology. This limitation not only restricts their market expansion but also impacts on their competitive edge. To address this, comprehensive support in the form of training programs on digital tools and e-commerce platforms is crucial. Initiatives should include hands-on workshops for mastering new technologies, digital marketing, and online business management. Additionally, facilitating access to affordable technology solutions, offering financial grants or subsidies for technology upgrades, and creating partnerships with tech companies for resource sharing can greatly assist these entrepreneurs. Moreover, establishing a support network that provides ongoing tech support and advice can ensure that female entrepreneurs and small businesses are not only able to access technology but are also equipped to leverage it effectively for business growth and market expansion.
- Female entrepreneurs often encounter challenges in comprehending procurement opportunities and in understanding the processes to access them. This limitation can stem from a lack of targeted information and guidance tailored to their specific needs. To address this issue, it is essential to develop and implement educational programs and resources focused on procurement processes. These could include workshops and seminars on how to navigate procurement systems, understanding tender requirements, and bidding effectively. Additionally, creating accessible online resources, such as webinars, tutorials, and comprehensive guides, can provide ongoing support. Mentorship programs, where experienced professionals guide newcomers through the intricacies of procurement, can also be invaluable. Further, establishing networks and forums for female entrepreneurs to share experiences and advice on procurement can foster a supportive community, enhancing their collective understanding and ability to successfully engage in these opportunities.

5.3. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

GRP is considered an important vehicle for building a more equitable and sustainable market and society. Support organizations, such as related central ministries, local departments, business support centers, business associations, and NGOs operating in the field of promoting gender equality and supporting women's business development are working to advocating and promoting GRP practice as part of their work to support entrepreneurship, gender equality, and women's economic empowerment in the country. The results of group discussions and in-depth interviews reveal that the challenges and barriers faced by supporting organizations in facilitating connections between the demand and supply sides in the practice of GRP stem from a limited understanding of gender equality. There is currently no specific guidance on the analysis and evaluation of gender integration in the procurement process. Consequently, they lack the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct gender analysis and assessment in procurement and bidding activities. Thus they are lacking in awareness of GRP and access to updated information and resources on GRP practices.

Therefore, the following capacity building needs for supporting organizations include:

- Strengthening capacity around promoting and raising awareness about the opportunities for GRP
- Expanding knowledge and expertise on GRP: including gender analysis, gender mainstreaming, and gender-responsive procurement: concept of GRP and supplier diversity (SD), business cases and legal requirement on SD-GRP.
- Technical assistance and training skills: as supporting organizations need to provide technical assistance and training to both buyers and sellers regarding various aspects of GRP. This needs to be framed around capacity building and technical understanding to train their stakeholders and buyers and sellers, market actors etc.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Develop monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress in the implementation of GRP policies and practices. Baselines/assessments on GRP, how to develop action plans etc.
- Capacities to build partnerships and collaboration: Build partnerships and collaborate with other



stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and private sector actors, to promote GRP and advance gender equality in procurement processes.

5.4. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GOVERNMENTS

Government has two roles - as regulators and as buyers.

After legislations review, focus group discussion and interviews with representatives from various Government agencies, several key findings have emerged.

In the role as a regulator:

- *A lack of clear criteria and a legal framework to promote gender equality in public and commercial procurement processes:* Without clear guidelines and legal requirements, it can be difficult to ensure that gender equality is integrated into procurement processes. This can lead to inconsistent practices across different departments and agencies, as well as the continued exclusion of WOBs and GREs.

- *There is a willingness to support GRP as a means of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment:* Respondents acknowledge that GRP is a new concept, but they are willing to participate in training programs to deepen their understanding of the related issues. This positive attitude towards GRP suggests that there is a growing recognition of the importance of gender equality in procurement processes.

In the role as buyers:

- *Promoting the practices of GRP:* Gender equality is essential for sustainable development, and promoting GRP or engaging WOBs and GREs in procurement practices can contribute to achieving this goal. By supporting WOBs and GREs, the Government can empower women entrepreneurs, assist WOBs in improving their economic participation, and promote their inclusion in the business sector. Moreover, GRP practices can help the Government ensure that public spending contributes to promoting gender equality and sustainable development.
- *Promoting and enforcing WOBs and GREs' access market practices:* Access to markets is a crucial factor in the success of WOBs and GREs, especially the Women-owned Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (WMSMEs), and promoting market access practices is critical for their growth. By providing support and creating an enabling environment for WMSMEs to access markets, the Government can help to create a level playing field for these businesses to compete and grow.

National and provincial government officials require specialized training focused on gender standards and the integration of gender perspectives into legal frameworks. This training program should be targeted towards economic policymakers, development planners, researchers, and middle to senior-level managers who are involved in policy formulation within their respective domains. The curriculum of this program should encompass several critical areas:

- **Gender and Economics:** Understanding the intersection of gender issues with economic principles and practices.
- **Gender and Development:** Examining how gender plays a role in broader development strategies and outcomes.



- **Gender-Responsive Public Procurement:** Learning how to create and analyze budgets that consider the different impacts of government procurement on WOBs.
- **Gender-Responsive Policy Analysis:** Techniques for analyzing existing and proposed policies from a gender perspective, ensuring that policies are equitable and support gender equality.

Additionally, there should be a focus on strengthening the institutional capabilities of organizations and associations dedicated to women entrepreneurs. This could include providing resources for capacity building, facilitating networks for knowledge sharing, and offering tools for effective advocacy and policy influence. Such training and enhancement measures are crucial for ensuring that gender considerations are seamlessly integrated into economic and development policies at all levels of government.

6. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LEGISLATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GRP AND WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO ACCESS MARKET AND PROCUREMENT

To promote the implementation of Gender-Responsive Procurement in Viet Nam, state management agencies and related stakeholders should institute the following solutions:

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Definitions of GRP, GRE:** Advocacy policy to gradually introduce the formal definitions of GRP, GRE in related legislations and policies in Viet Nam.
- **Establish a gender-disaggregated database of enterprises:** This is especially important to obtain analysis and assessment data on the access of WOBs in the provision and procurement of services and goods. These data are published on the National Procurement Network System (NPNS) where all private and public buyers can access.
- **Improve the monitoring of indicators of the (NPNS):** Monitoring indicators of the NPNS need to be observed and supplemented with indicators on the number of procurement contracts awarded to WOBs and businesses adopting gender-responsive business practices. This is particularly important to obtain analysis and assessment data on the access of WOBs in the provision of public services and public goods in order to have priority policies to encourage WOBs to participate in procurement such as tax incentives and credits, etc.
- **Conduct researches on the impact of GRP,** provide evidence-based analysis, economic benefits of GRP and disseminate research findings to responsible agencies. Such researches can help inform policy decisions and shape the development of effective strategies to enhance gender equality in procurement practices.
- **Develop a comprehensive, government-wide strategy for GRP implementation:** The strategy should involve collaboration between government agencies and stakeholders, including WOBs, to ensure effective implementation.
- **Legislate gender-responsive procurement:** Specific GRP regulation is a proactive measure to support WOBs and confirm the right to use preferential treatment for them. GRP legislation can provide clarity that such mechanisms do not violate the principle of equal treatment.
- **Use set-asides specifically for WOBs** as well as for disadvantaged groups, e.g., small businesses, marginalized groups businesses. Governments see set-asides as a useful measure and have established specific policies that clarify the right to reserve contract amounts for specific groups.
- **Adapt scoring methodologies and evaluation grids:** Preferential methods of scoring and evaluating bids can be used to facilitate the participation of WOBs and GREs in supply chains and procurement. For example, additional points may be assigned to WOBs and GREs when scoring and evaluating bids received.



FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT LEGISLATION

- The current Public Procurement Law needs a gender and social impact assessment with explicit consideration of preferential target groups including women-owned SMEs (WSMEs)
- Circular No. 08/2022/TT-BKHDT¹² should be adjusted to include gender-responsive procurement requirements and compliance with gender equality regulations in bid applications and contract forms. Regulations on proposing information on the capacity and experience of key personnel to be posted on the NPNS (point d, clause 1, Article 11) should include information on required knowledge on gender equality and training courses on gender equality in which he/she participated.
- Add indicators to the NPNS to track contracts awarded to WOBs in line with the official definition of WOBs and incentivize gender-responsive practices. This will be important to ascertain and analyse WOBs' access to public goods.
- The criteria on gender equality should be integrated into the national level procurement system, including procurement planning, contractor capacity assessment, contract preparation, management, and performance monitoring.
- Simplify e-procurement systems: E-procurement systems can have positive impacts on SMEs and WOBs. Advocate for the integration of gender-responsive procurement within the government standard on sustainable procurement, specifically detailing those standards related to promoting gender equality.
- The Vietnamese Standard on Sustainable Procurement TCVN 12874 (equivalent to ISO 20400) issued by the Ministry of Science and Technology includes the principle of equality, should mention the criteria for evaluating precisely what is gender-responsive procurement.

12 This Circular details the provision and posting of information on bidding and contractor selection on the new national bidding network system



- Strengthen capacity on gender equality and gender responsive procurement for specialized staff in charge of the public procurement of government agencies (buyers) to promote sustainable procurement and gender-responsive procurement. Integrate the content of gender equality and gender-responsive procurement into training programs on bidding skills for enterprises (suppliers).

FOR COMMERCIAL/ PRIVATE PROCUREMENT LEGISLATIONS

- The upcoming revision of the Commercial Law 2005 should carry out a gender impact assessment and consider the nature of the differential impact on men and women. A gender impact assessment will provide recommendations on gender mainstreaming provisions and gender responsive procurement in the revised Commercial Law. There are regulations encouraging businesses to report on procurement spent towards WOBs as one of the criteria for selecting suppliers.



- Provide training to procurement personnel from both state agencies and enterprises [buyers] on bidding activities, emphasizing the importance of including gender in their procurement i.e. sourcing from diverse suppliers especially WOBs and from GREs.
- Conduct self-analysis and assess the impact of the business's procurement system and practices on both women and men.
- Promote efforts to implement the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPS) as a means of advancing gender equality.
- Encourage businesses to adopt and implement ISO 20400:2017 to ensure that procurement activities align with customers' needs while minimizing environmental, social, and economic impacts. While the ISO 20400:2017 has not specifically mentioned criteria for gender equality, and state management agencies need to develop specific criteria and indicators on GPR, businesses who adopt and implement this standard will meet at least one of the pre-conditions to competitively join the procurement and/or the supply chain.

SOLUTIONS TO PROMOTE GRP IN THE CORPORATE SECTOR:

- Businesses, including state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private sector enterprises, need to be informed and to advocate for GRP practices to increase the number of women-owned suppliers and gender responsive suppliers in their procurement activities in the following ways:
- Develop Supplier Diversity Policies.
- Develop and introduce incentives for procuring from suppliers who are WOBs and GREs.
- Improve access to procurement opportunities and procurement documents by establishing a gender-responsive online procurement system. Such systems are essential to simplify the ability of suppliers to search for and collect tender information. For example, when enterprises prepare bidding documents, it is necessary to consider their ability to meet the requirements on selecting contractors of investors and contractors which are women-owned SMEs.
- Include gender equality terms and obligations in supplier contracts to ensure that the suppliers themselves are gender responsive.

SOLUTIONS TO PROMOTE WOBs TO ACCESS MARKET AND PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Women-owned SMEs account for about a quarter of the number of SMEs in Viet Nam and face many difficulties: a lack of management skills, digital skills, market information, access to financial resources; difficulty in accessing the State's support policies and programs; and including difficulties in balancing family work and business operations.¹³ Solutions should be developed and implemented by the Vietnamese government to promote WOBs and to access market and procurement opportunities:

- Establish a monitoring and evaluation system, a database of gender-disaggregated data of all enterprises, a database of SMEs accessing support services (especially market access support).
- Strengthen the capacity of national and provincial agencies in disseminating information/guidance and encouraging SMEs and especially women owned SMEs (WSMEs) to access and benefit from market access policies.

¹³ VCCI & Australian Aid, 2022. *Resilience through the waves: Results of a survey on women-owned businesses under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

- Provide resources and support to WOBs to enable their access to the procurement system; special priority should be given to WOBs in business support programs, supporting access to credit and ICT.
- Provide market information updates for SMEs/WSMEs categorized by industry (e.g, retail, tourism) and consumer trends in goods and services.
- Deliver support which enhances the capacity of SMEs/WSMEs to comply with regulations on product standards.
- Develop and implement national programs to improve the operations/ competitiveness of SMEs/WSMEs.
- Establish and execute communication programs to raise awareness among SMEs/WSMEs about inclusive business practices that align with gender equality and other regulations on social responsibility.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE INDUSTRY SECTOR TO BE PRIORITIZED

Current research results show that women-owned businesses are highly concentrated in the retail of fast-moving consumer goods industry (FMCG), hospitality and tourism, which have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the research team has selected these two disciplines on which to focus the survey activities. We recommend the Programme WE RISE Together¹⁴ to design and implement activities in these two sectors.

14 WE RISE Together: Creating equal market opportunities for women by advancing Supplier Diversity through Gender-Responsive Procurement, a three-year Mekong-Australia Partnership (MAP) programme developed and implemented by UN Women, started in March 2022

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS TO SUPPORT GRP

Recommendations potential implementing partners are:

- Government Organizations led by MPI will collaborate with others on developing the policies and criteria on GRP in Viet Nam; policies to enhance the competitiveness of WOBs and GREs and legalize the definition of GRP and GREs. MOIT will collaborate with others on gender mainstreaming in Commercial Law and trade promotion.
- International supporting organizations:
 - Financial & technical support to develop guidelines for GRP practices.
 - Guidelines for standards or mainstreaming of gender responsibility criteria should be studied specifically to apply to each stage of the procurement process, and suitable for application to the procurement system.
 - Raise awareness of GRP.
 - Disseminate the UN Women corporate GRP assessment and action planning tool.
- National supporting organizations will collaborate on raising awareness, providing training in GRP knowledge and skills for enterprises, encompassing both buyers and sellers in the market. The focus is on enhancing capacity and competitiveness for WOBs and GREs to better access the market and facilitate business matching between buyers and sellers.

Additionally, the review of the Vietnamese WEPs signatories show that they are primarily large enterprises in the field of manufacturing, and a small number of WEPs signatories are in the field of tourism, travel, hospitality and FMCG. Therefore, in the upcoming period, stakeholders should necessarily work together to introduce WEPs in the tourism, travel, hospitality and FMCG sectors.

6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS ON GRP PRACTICES IN VIET NAM

Our research and survey findings show that GRP constitutes an important measure to empower and enhance economic opportunities and competitiveness for female entrepreneurs and WOBs in Viet Nam. GRP can be successfully implemented with the support of the Government and cooperation between Ministries and agencies across sectors once concrete policies and documents guiding GRP implementation are decreed. The concept and criteria of gender equality and gender-responsive procurement should be mainstreamed in Viet Nam's legislation and policies on public and private procurement to support women-owned MSMEs as part of Viet Nam's broader effort towards achieving equality, resilience, and sustainability.

We strongly recommend that the Government review its legislation and policies on public and private procurement, to develop an appropriate framework and timeline to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment criteria in its procurement system. We suggest relevant central government authorities collaborate with WOBs/ MSMEs supporting organizations to develop media programs to publicize GRP and generate an elevated level of awareness in the society and corporate community on the impact of GRP towards gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

The success of GRP practice in Viet Nam relies upon the establishment of a well-functioning GRP framework; the resilience of the procurement ecosystem's stakeholders; the collaborations and partnerships between stakeholders; and the presence of a gender-disaggregated database to track performance, narrow the gender gap in policy making, and disseminate knowledge of and best practices in GRP. As such, the need for capacity building is critical, to strengthen a stakeholders' understanding, resilience, and collaboration in the ecosystem:



- **For medium and large enterprises as buyers,** training should be provided to help them understand gender equality and women's empowerment concepts, the business case for GRP, as well as the responsibilities and requirements for compliance under GRP.
- **For MSMEs especially for WOBs as sellers,** technical and financial assistance should be provided to enhance their competitiveness and thus ensure their success in GRP implementation. Key areas of capacity training for MSMEs should include gender responsive business, access to market information; technology & innovation; business management skills; access to finance; marketing; networking & linkages.
- **For institutional stakeholders,** there should be training to strengthen their capacity in implementing, enforcing, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on GRP.
- **For supporting organizations,** training should be provided to improve their capacity on GRP knowledge and expertise, technical and training skills (as trainers for both buyers and sellers), monitoring and evaluation; together with partnership and collaboration building between stakeholders.

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All communication will carry the hashtags: #WEE #WERISETogether and after we launch the wider Women's Economic Empowerment campaign #BuyEqual (TBC), we will complement the posts with the same hashtag.