



**Spotlight
Initiative**
*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*



POLICY BRIEF

Mainstreaming gender and Women Migrant Workers issues into the National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training Development of Viet Nam (2021-2030)

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ABBREVIATION

ILO	International Labour Organization	WMW	Women migrant workers
VET	Vocational Education and Training	SAF	Safe and Fair
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals	ADB	Asian Development Bank
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids & Social Affairs	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	DVET	Directorate of Vocational Education & Training

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1. BACKGROUND

In International Labour Organization (ILO) Viet Nam, there have been strong collaboration efforts between with the ILO/G20 Training Strategy Project and the Safe and Fair (SAF) Project to advocate for the inclusion of gender responsiveness, women's rights and needs of women migrant workers' and other vulnerable groups in the upcoming Strategy for Vocational Education and Training Development 2021-2030 which is being drafted under the coordination and leadership of the Directorate of Vocational Education and Training (DVET) of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). This is a strategic policy document guiding resource planning and the delivery of Vocational Education and Training (VET) services in Viet Nam in the next decade. The Safe and Fair Project, in particular, focuses on addressing the needs of women especially women migrant workers and women in informal employment in this policy document while advocacy interventions of the G20 project target other marginalized groups such as people with disabilities and ethnic minority groups. The interventions on gender equality, gender and labour migration are in line with Viet Nam's commitments on these issues through ratification of International Labour Standards, UN CEDAW and at ASEAN level (ASEAN Consensus, ASEAN Declaration on Ending violence against women among others)

While there are different factors that contribute to the exclusion of women from VET policies and services, evidence shows that gender stereotypes, dominant notions on "women's work", occupations best suited for women, narratives of gender identity play an important overarching role that creates several barriers for women. The unequal participation of women and girls in higher education, access to training and skills development opportunities, access to decent work jobs during labour migration as well as gender-based violence hampered their access to and advancement in education, making them less prepared for VET. Thus, they have less opportunities to access decent work, and even when women migrate and be employed they may only have access to jobs that have lesser legal protection, which exacerbates their pre-existing inequalities.

In 2020 with support from the Safe and Fair programme, a legal gaps analysis as well as community assessment on inclusion of women migrant workers and those working in the informal sector in Vocational Education and Training services were undertaken. As a next step, it is critical to utilize findings of those studies to inform development and finalization of the Strategy for Vocational Education and Training Development (2021-2030).

2. OVERVIEW

of related critical issues in Viet Nam

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Action Plan of Viet Nam emphasize on the requirement that the education sector has to enable people of all levels to learn from anywhere, anytime and lifelong learning. One of the guiding directions of Resolution No.29 of the 8th Central Party Conference (Session XI) is to renovate the education system towards being open, flexible, and permeable between education levels and qualifications, and among education and training formula. Accordingly, an important mission is to improve the national education system toward the direction that facilitates openness, lifelong learning and building a learning society. In practice, there are several institutional challenges to move forward to that direction.



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Results from the legal gaps analysis on VET show that at the legislative level, although some laws and policies have been amended towards being more gender sensitive such as the Labour Code, Social Insurance Law, Health Insurance Law, and recently amended Law on Overseas Vietnamese Workers under Contracts there are a number of laws and policies that are still quite gender-neutral such as the Employment Law^[1]. It is critical to note that the Law on Vocational Education and Training stipulates that only women learners who participate in training course of elementary qualifications or under 03 month-courses are supported with training costs (following detailed regulations of the Prime Minister). However, Vietnamese migrant workers in general are unable to access vocational training services on the ground because VET policies often target people with permanent residential status in their home localities. For example, Decision No.1956/2009/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister dated November 27, 2009 approving the National Scheme on Vocational Training for Rural Labourers are only applied to rural population groups who live in their homeland. This means that migrant workers including those who migrate for overseas jobs do not benefit from this policy because they live and work in other areas where they do not hold a permanent residential status.

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[1] Nguyen Quang Viet et al. 2017 Job Market Scan Empowering Female Migrant Youth to Succeed in the City and Workplace (SAFE) Project Ha Noi, Viet Nam

2. OVERVIEW

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Gaps in existing legal and policy frameworks have contributed to the lack of access to VET services among women in general and women migrant workers in particular. As revealed in existing statistical data, there are large gaps in access to vocational training services at all levels among different populations groups from the perspectives of gender and geographical area (urban vs. rural). According to ADB (2020), although gender equality in VET is being addressed in the national policy frameworks, further efforts are still needed to further address policy and technical capacity gaps especially in adopting strategic policy approaches on VET. Having access to VET and better skills development opportunities also increases possibilities of migrating to diverse occupations for Vietnamese women.



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2. OVERVIEW

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Furthermore, results from the qualitative analysis highlight several challenges in access to VET services among women, especially women migrant workers (WMW) as shown below:

CHALLENGES

1. Lack of access to adequate information

Most WMW do not have access to adequate information on labour market and counselling support on vocational training hence they are not able to take the suitable training occupation or career that meets their training needs and economic condition.

2. No individual development plan in place

WMW face many challenges in looking for better jobs with higher incomes because most of them do not often have individual development plans to improve their skills and qualifications. Therefore, their employment status is not improved.

3. Lack access to insurance programmes

Some WMW working in the informal sector wish to participate in voluntary social and health insurance programmes. However, they do not have information about it, and do not know where to seek help.

4. Limited technical knowledge and skills

The technical knowledge and skills of WMWs are quite limited. Majorities of the WMW who are working in the informal sector have not been technically trained.

5. Obstacle in having professional training

Due to unstable employment, low income and long working hours, WMWs have fewer opportunities to study and improve their qualifications. They have also received very limited support from employers; thus they have few opportunities for having further professional skills training.

2. OVERVIEW

of related critical issues in Viet Nam

CHALLENGES

6. No official recognition

Some WMWs have built up working experiences and technical skills but they may have not any training certificate for official recognition in the labour market. Therefore, if WMWs are given opportunities to participate in formal vocational training courses, they will be able to improve their professional knowledge and skills. This would also help them to be officially recognized which can enable them to find better jobs.

7. Lack of stable shelter

In addition to the challenges in obtaining release permit at workplace, in finding training opportunities as well as ensuring work life balance, the lack of stable shelter is also seen as a major obstacle for WMWs. They have to rent accommodation, pay for their own living cost meanwhile they don't receive much support from their families.

8. Limited networking and union opportunities

Young WMW lack family's care and support. They are also disadvantaged in establishing and maintaining new social relations due to the lack of life skills and networks. Consequently, they have fewer friends and limited opportunities to participate in unions or organizations.

9. Lack of essential job searching skills

The lack of essential job searching skills among migrant workers including WMW is a main factor that hampers their opportunities to access to decent work. On the other hand, ease of finding skilled employees has been considered as one of the biggest challenges facing enterprises, just behind their high turnover. Thus, it is critical to create a mechanism for win-win solutions in providing VET services for WMW by enterprises.



3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

for consideration in the National VET Strategy (2021-2030) from the gender/WMW perspective

3.1 ENHANCING GENDER SENSITIVE VET GOVERNANCE

1. Continued efforts should be made to improve policies and guidance on VET and employment generation for WMW in particular and women in general. It is critical to promote diverse forms of communication through multiple channels to ensure WMWs can access information on skills development, career guidance, career counseling, and employment.
2. An effective coordination mechanism should be developed between branches and units within the VET sector as well as with other sectors in order to ensure coordinated actions on VET planning and service delivery. Having specific goals and targets on gender equality, focusing on women's empowerment and inclusion in vocational education is a critical step to guide adequate resource allocation for implementing VET activities in the best interest of women including WMW.
3. The role of local leaders is critical to ensure the VET plan is integrated into local development plans with concrete gender sensitive indicators and targets on VET to guide local resource planning and allocation. In addition, it is important to strengthen the accountability of each concerned organization and individuals in implementing and completing the assigned tasks, ensuring women are not left behind.
4. Adequate attention should be paid to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of policies on labour and employment and skills development in the informal sector especially those relating to production, trade, and service establishments which tend to employ more women than men, with specific attention given to ensuring results on gender equality and women's empowerment are achieved. In addition, an independent M&E mechanism should also be developed to facilitate collection of objective and reliable information from different angles.
5. Manuals for sex, age and other disaggregated data collection should be developed ensuring that they are easy to understand and apply. Importantly, adequate efforts should be made to improve the capacity of statisticians and professional staffs on disaggregated data collection and use, and to digitalize statistics and archives.

3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

for consideration in the National VET Strategy (2021-2030) from the gender/WMW perspective

3.2 ENHANCING GENDER SENSITIVE VET SERVICES

1. Flexible training programs on VET should be developed to meet the needs and address unique circumstances of women particularly specific groups such as WMW, keeping in mind the care burdens of women, issues of mobility, affordability and accessibility among women and girls.
2. Special attention should be paid to formal recognition of transferable skills in occupations that employ a large number of women workers and especially those repatriating from abroad or from large cities.
3. Special attention should be paid to developing and applying a gender appraisal process to the VET development plan of the training institution, the locality and the ministry/branch. In addition, gender analysis should be promoted to among VET staff, especially VET service providers to build their knowledge and understanding on gender equality and women's rights including women migrant workers rights in the VET sector serving as a basis to inform VET plan and service delivery.



4. CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS

for improving the gender responsiveness in the draft VET strategy

CHAPTER I

1. Suggestion on improving the flow of analysis on the Achievement and Constraints as below:

- Legal and policy frameworks.
- Implementation of systems and delivery of programmes and services.
- Accessibility of VET services, highlighting the access among women and other vulnerable groups.
- Achievement of outcomes, highlighting how these have been achieved for women and vulnerable groups.

2. Improve analysis on accessibility issues among women and other vulnerable groups. include findings from the SAF study on the specific constraints of women migrant workers and women in the informal sector.

3. Elaborate on what due attention is needed on trainings for women migrant workers, women in the informal economy and other disadvantaged groups.

4. In addition to foreign languages, digital skills and soft skills (including behavioral, teamwork, skills to work in multicultural environments) consider integrating lessons on addressing gender-discrimination, and violence and harassment in the workplace as a strategy to promote high-quality human resources and decent work environments.

5. Consider development of an enabling environment towards increasing the volume of women in occupations and sectors as identified by labour market needs.

6. Consider sex-disaggregation in VET and labour market forecasts as well as the formulation of statistical indicators and database and M&E systems.



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CHAPTER I

7. Consider the costs of assessment and certification of national occupational skills: how do we ensure that costs are not an obstacle to access? What resources are available / needed?

8. Consider the awareness of duty bearers on the need to educate girls and women and promote gender equality and women's empowerment: how can VET institutions integrate this in the training programmes and tackle gendered notions that inhibit women's participation in higher skilled occupations?

CHAPTER II

Integrate how the inclusion of women migrant workers and women in the informal economy into VET institutions can enhance the economic growth model and the competitiveness of the labour force; and look at what regions and sectors would specifically require the targeted expansion of training, skills certifications, and skills recognition programmes to promote greater women's participation (including returnee women migrant workers).

CHAPTER III

Develop a modern, gender-responsive VET system with nuanced training methods that meet learners' needs to meet domestic and international labour market demands that are nuanced. Methods should reflect needs of specific sectors, as well as the needs of workers based on their gender and the different issues they face in local communities in Viet Nam, and in countries of destination.



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CHAPTER IV

- Solution 1
 - Consider integrating lessons on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as addressing gender-discrimination, and violence and harassment in the work place as a strategy to promote high-quality human resources and decent work environments
 - Review, adjust and supplement current regulations in order to remove economic, legal, technical and social barriers (including harmful gender norms and discrimination) in order to create equal opportunities for all to participate and benefit in VET services.
 - Consider a strategy for increasing the volume of women in occupations and sectors as identified by labour market needs (going beyond incentives to VET institutions and enterprises)
 - At present, many policies aiming to connect vulnerable groups with enterprises have limited effectiveness. Suggest adding the conduct of regular social dialogues between enterprises and government policy makers in order to review policies and practices and share best practices in order to develop practical solutions.
- Solution 2
 - Provide training on modern management skills, mainstreaming gender and women's empowerment for managers and administrators in VET institutions.
- Solution 3
 - Build mechanisms, tools and capacity for enterprises in collecting, sharing and providing sex-disaggregated information on labour demand and training in line with business development strategies.
 - Improve the quality of short, medium and long-term forecasting of human resource demand with specific attention to women workers and making distinctions between the needs of domestic and international migrant women workers.
 - Attach importance to linking training with labour migration, for both those who are about to depart and those who have returned.



4. CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS

for improving the gender responsiveness in the draft VET strategy

CHAPTER IV

- Solution 6

- On the calculation of training costs and rendering VET services market-oriented: how do we ensure that costs are not an obstacle to access? What resources are available/needed?

- Solution 8

- Develop a public communication plan to remove gender stereotypes on VET, to encourage women to access VET programmes, as well as to encourage them to explore opportunities in occupations based on labour market demand and expanding beyond traditionally female dominated sectors.

CHAPTER VI

1 Develop criteria to monitor and evaluate the gender-responsive implementation of the Strategy.

2. Guide, inspect and urge ministries, sectors and sub-national authorities to implement the Strategy in a gender-responsive manner.

3. On the programmes/ projects: any interventions focusing on gender-mainstreaming, and vocational training and job creation for returnee women migrant workers, with some focus on those from elementary-level occupations (without discrimination on whether they had been documented or undocumented in the COD)?



5. CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS

for improving the M&E framework for monitoring the implementation of the VET strategy

Provide sex-disaggregated data throughout the strategy in order to bring out a nuanced analysis of how men and women access VET programmes; as well as take stock of how efforts have been able to reach women, which programmes women tend to enroll in, which they do not, and why.

- This can show how the network of VET institutions are able to reach out to women and see which training and operational models are more effective at supporting the advancement of women's education and training and linking women's occupational skills to labour market needs.
- Inasmuch as there are total baselines and targets for expanding VET enrollment and the impact (e.g. in terms of the share of people who have new jobs or have higher productivity/income) include baselines and targets for expanding women's participation and tracking outcomes for women (enrollment already has).
- This will also bring out whether VET programmes are continuing to lead women to traditionally women-dominated sectors and jobs, or whether there is progress in enhancing gender parity in decent work opportunities and women's access to a wider range of occupations.





Spotlight Initiative

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The Safe and Fair Programme is part of the European Union funded multi-year Spotlight Initiative jointly implemented by ILO and UN Women to eliminate violence against women migrant workers throughout their migration cycle in the 10 ASEAN countries . In Viet Nam, the Safe and Fair programme engages multiple partners to strengthen gender sensitive labour migration governance frameworks and institutional capacity for protecting rights of women migrant workers, enhance coordination and access to quality essential services among survivors of violence, and improve public awareness and attitude about the rights and contributions of women migrant workers.