

# Socio-Economic Impacts of WTO Accession on Rural Women

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN  
HAI DUONG AND DONG THAP  
VIET NAM



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ILSSA, UNIFEM *and* AusAID

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# Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEM	Committee for Ethnic Minorities
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GED	Gender Equality Department
GSO	General Statistical Office
ILRF	International Labour Rights Fund
ILSSA	Institute for Labour, Science and Social Affairs
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MOC	Ministry of Construction
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
RCFLG	Research Center on Female Labour and Gender
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
VASS	Viet Nam Academy of Social Sciences
VHLSS	Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey
VND	Viet Nam Dong
VWU	Viet Nam Women's Union
VYU	Viet Nam Youth Union
WTO	World Trade Organization

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This report presents the findings drawn from research on the impacts of WTO accession on rural women carried out by the Research Center on Female Labour and Gender (RCFLG) within the Institute for Labour Science and Social Affairs (ILSSA), with technical support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and financial support from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). A result of collaborative work, the present study incorporates vital contributions from a wide range of people.

The research team comprised two team leaders, Dr. Nguyen Thi Lan Huong (Director of ILSSA), and MA Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy (Director of the RCFLG). Other researchers from the RCFLG included Dao Ngoc Nga, Nguyen Khac Tuan, Pham Do Nhat Thang, Tran Van Sinh, Hoang Thi Minh, and Chu Thi Lan. The research team at the Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs was responsible for the implementation of the study. Equally important was the valuable technical support provided by Dr. Annalise Moser and April Pham from UNIFEM, who worked closely with the team to collaborate on the research design, fieldwork and report writing.

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Cover photo: Tran Van Sinh

# Executive Summary

## Background

Viet Nam's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2007 has brought with it an increase in both opportunities and challenges for women and gender equality. The impacts of trade liberalization policies affect men and women differently due to the differential access to and control of economic and social resources, and decision-making, as well as differences in gender roles, especially the gendered division of labour. As such, women may find an increase in employment opportunities, or may suffer increased unemployment with the restructuring of the labour market. Even where new employment opportunities exist, it is critical to address the quality of that employment, and the impacts on other areas such as the provision of childcare and household gender relations. Economic integration has the potential to advance as well as constrain women's empowerment and gender equality in the family, community and workplace.

This research uses qualitative methods to examine the social impacts of WTO accession on rural women. The research was carried out in 2008-2009 in Dong Thap and Hai Duong provinces, using focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and a survey profile. As a qualitative study in two specific sites, the research is not representative for Viet Nam as a whole, and is not able to establish measurable causality with regards to the impacts of WTO accession. Nevertheless, the research does provide key insights, as highlighted below.

## Key Findings

The stories of the 250 women who participated in this small scale qualitative study illustrated the optimism that women had about their situation – their lives, familial situations, job prospects, hopes, aspirations and difficulties. While women were hopeful, in particular in Dong Thap, these stories also paint a poignant picture of daily life for Vietnamese women living in rural areas. Women spoke about the hardships they encountered being poor and struggling to find the means to send their children to school, and to provide basic needs such as food for the family. The sense of hardship expressed by women reinforced the hypothesis that whilst there have been many economic opportunities opened to women in the process of Viet Nam's accession to WTO, there remained many barriers, predominantly a lack of access to credit and assets, that prevent women from seizing these opportunities.

Overall, the research suggests that rural women have enjoyed significant new opportunities in the labour market associated with WTO accession, particularly in labour-intensive unskilled jobs, and in the small-scale trade and service sectors. This addresses women's practical gender needs in terms of increasing their opportunities and incomes, especially as compared to agricultural work.

However, the quality of these jobs is low, with little security and poor working conditions. These opportunities do little to improve women's status or to address their strategic gender needs. Some groups of women are especially vulnerable to the negative impacts of trade liberalization, and are at risk of falling into poverty. Migrant women, in particular young women, often lack social capital and experience high levels of exploitation.

Within the household, there have been some advances in challenging the traditional gendered division of labour, and women's increased role in income generation has enabled them in some cases to play a stronger role in household decision-making, thus improving gender equality. However, the resulting double role of productive and reproductive tasks has left women time-poor, and overworked. The detailed research findings are as follows:



## **1. Increased economic opportunities for women**

1.1 Since WTO accession, economic development and the growth of production have brought increased employment opportunities for both men and women. New job opportunities in the industrial and service sectors see a higher concentration of women, while new jobs in the agricultural sector provide more advantages for men.

1.2 Younger women have more new job opportunities than middle-aged women due to the proliferation of factory work, although middle-aged women are able to take advantage of increasing opportunities in small-scale trade and services.

1.3 Women workers in Hai Duong have benefited more from WTO accession - at least in terms of their practical gender needs - than women in Dong Thap because they have more and better employment opportunities in industrial parks and the service sector. In Dong Thap, economic opportunities for women were limited because most economic changes are associated with the aquaculture industry in which men are more often employed.

## **2. Lack of access to quality and skilled employment for women**

2.1 Most new employment opportunities open to women are of medium and low quality. They are primarily unskilled manual labour jobs, with poor job security, low or medium income, limited benefits and unregulated working conditions.

2.2 Limited access to credit, education and vocational training play a major role in rural women workers' ability to access quality jobs.

## **3. Migrant women exposed to poor living conditions and increased risk of exploitation**

3.1 Migrant women, especially young women, experience poor living conditions sharing hostel accommodation with up to 30 people with one bathroom. High levels of theft and insecure physical environment add to migrant women feeling unsafe.

3.2 Young women experience high levels of sexual harassment at work and on the road to and from work.

3.3 Young migrant women lack social capital. They face a lack of social networks and support due to living away from family and living in a new city. This, together with time poverty, act to compound the difficulties for young women to engage in and maintain friendships and intimate relationships, such that some young women's dreams are to have 'just one friend'.

3.4 Young migrant women are exposed to exploitation including being vulnerable to fraudulent job brokers, and being exposed to risks of being trafficked. Isolation and lack of social and family support increases young women's vulnerability to manipulation by people around them, as well as being at risk of engaging in sex work, drugs and other criminal activities.

3.5 Migrant women face discrimination by the local community, which exacerbates their already weak social capital.

## **4. Disadvantaged groups of women are further marginalized**

4.1 Migrant women, in particular young migrant women experience many negative social impacts of accession to WTO. Other groups of women susceptible to negative impacts of trade integration include middle-aged women, unskilled women, women who have no agricultural land or whose land

was recovered in the urbanization process, single women, women with disabilities or illnesses, and young women.

4.2 Disadvantaged groups of women are less likely to be able to integrate into the restructured labour market and access the opportunities introduced by WTO accession. They are at risk of falling into poverty without adequate support.

## 5. Changes in gender equality within the household

5.1 Many women are playing a stronger role in decision making within the household as a consequence of their increased role in economic production. Women have a greater sense of gender equality due to increased economic independence. They also participate more in community activities.

5.2 There have been changes to the traditional gendered division of labour within the household. As more women are engaged in income generation activities outside the home, more men are engaging in household tasks and childcare responsibilities.

5.3 The increase in women's economic participation has also resulted in exacerbating women's double burden of productive and reproductive work. Women work 1.5 times longer than previously, and experience considerable time poverty, with little time for themselves.

5.4 Women's expenditure needs are prioritized well below those of the children, the husband, and general household needs. This is the case both in positive economic situations where household expenditure is on the increase, as well as during the reduction of expenditure in times of economic crisis.

## Recommendations for Gender Integration into Policies, National Plans and National Targeted Programs

**Recommendation 1:** Review and revise existing policies concerning labour and employment to ensure that gender is integrated as stipulated by the Gender Equality Law, especially in policies concerning the implementation of approved National Targeted Programs. [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MOET, MARD, VYU, and VWU*].

**Recommendation 2:** Integrate gender into the development of new National Targeted Programs until 2020 [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MARD*].

**Recommendation 3:** National Programs for the prevention of social problems should target migrants as a special group to raise their awareness of risks and support them to avoid being disadvantaged by social problems [*Focal Point: MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 4:** The National Plan of Action on Gender Equality should outline provisions to address public safety so that women can have access to safe public spaces [*Focal Point: GED/MOLISA*].

## Recommendations for Awareness Raising

**Recommendation 5:** Raise awareness of all government officers, leaders, policy makers (especially in MOLISA, MOET, MARD and the Committee for Ethnic Minorities), and leaders of mass organizations at all levels in both rural and urban areas about gender equality and the situation of rural women in the process of industrialization and urbanization, so that they can create favourable conditions for rural women to develop their fullest potential and to avoid undesirable risks [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MOET, MARD, CEM*].

**Recommendation 6:** State authorities instigate a communication campaign to raise awareness of female workers around gender equality and women's rights as well as government policies and

programs for employment, so that they can claim their rights and benefits, and enjoy gender equality at work, in the family and in the community [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MOJ, MARD, VWU*].

**Recommendation 7:** The VWU and the VYU organize activities to educate, raise awareness and support women migrant workers to integrate into their local communities, and encourage women migrants to participate in local organizations and access local support services [**Focal Points:** VWU, VYU].

## **Recommendations for Programmatic Interventions**

**Recommendation 8:** Increase investment for job creation, self-employment and vocational training in rural areas in the National Targeted Program for Education and Vocational Training, with special targets for job creation and self-employment for women in rural areas, especially those who lost land and have had to change jobs [*Focal Points: MOF, MOLISA, MOET, MARD*].

**Recommendation 9:** MOLISA develops a national program on “Promoting gender equality to ensure that all men and women have equity of access to opportunities and benefits arising from WTO admission”. Such a program would include improved targeting of specific groups of vulnerable women, a formal employment referral network, and a monitoring and reporting system to guard against individuals and agencies engaged in exploitative job introduction services [*Focal Point: MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 10:** Provincial and state authorities develop a Priority Investors Scheme where priority is given to investors who show capacity and willingness to comply with requirements that address the needs of women according to specific criteria, including but not limited to childcare provision. Priority should also be given to enterprises and investors wishing to invest in sectors which are relevant to the local labour force’s characteristics, creating more and better quality jobs for both men and women [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MPI, MOF*].

**Recommendation 11:** Provincial and state authorities develop a mechanism to monitor compliance with the commitments set out in the Priority Investors Scheme relating to promoting gender equality and women’s rights, as well as compliance with the labour code, especially amongst employers with migrant workers [*Focal Point: MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 12:** Provincial and state authorities review existing credit mechanisms and remove bottle-necks to make credit for jobs and vocational training more accessible especially to poor and middle-aged rural women. A Credit for Recovered Land Policy should be developed and implemented to provide access to credit for female farmers, and for women whose land has been recovered [*Focal Points: MOF, MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 13:** State authorities develop an effective mechanism for mobilizing resources for social assistance for those workers (especially poor women, single women, middle-aged women and migrant women) who are negatively affected by economic development processes, to prevent these workers moving into poverty and to reduce the disparity between rich and poor. Appropriate forms of social assistance include monthly subsidies, allocating a proportion of agricultural land, offering long-term vocational training or priorities for employment for the children of these workers, offering free health insurance to ensure access to health care of the vulnerable groups mentioned above, and speeding up the implementation of the existing “social housing” program [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MOF, MOH, MOC*].

**Recommendation 14:** State authorities increase women’s educational level and the number of women participating in high level, good quality jobs in identified new industries. This will be achieved by raising awareness about gender equality in employment, mapping new and booming industries, developing an education scheme to promote women’s entry into those industries and providing vocational training for women to enable them to compete effectively with men in all occupational categories opened by the accession to WTO [*Focal Points: MPI, MOET, MOLISA, mass media agencies, VWU*].

**Recommendation 15:** Review mechanism for requirements for access to childcare in places with large numbers of female workers, and incentives for enterprises to create good conditions for female

workers with small children as stipulated in the Labor Law to address the women's time poverty [*Focal Point: MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 16:** Provide practical support to migrant women workers, including establishing support centers, counseling centers, or hot-line support for migrants in cities/industrial zones, organizing free orientation training for new migrants to help them to adapt to living in cities, establishing support groups for young migrant women, and having the VWU acting as a representative for women workers in dispute between local enterprises and women workers [*Focal Points: VWU, VYU*].

## Recommendations for Ongoing and Future Research

**Recommendation 17:** Carry out research, especially participatory qualitative research specific amongst potential and returning women migrant workers to address gaps in existing knowledge about issues and problems occurring in the migration process [*Focal Points: research institutes in MOLISA, MARD, MPI, VASS*].

**Recommendation 18:** Collaboration between ILSSA, VASS and Oxfam to update Oxfam's research on the impact of the economic crisis [*Focal Point: ILSSA*].

# Part 1

## Background to the Research

### 1.1 Introduction

Since accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in January 2007, Viet Nam has experienced an increase in both opportunities and challenges. The opportunities include increased competitiveness, technology transfer and increased employment opportunities, among many others. However, these have been accompanied by a range of social and environmental challenges. Research on the social impacts of WTO accession in Viet Nam is therefore both timely and critical, enhancing the capacity of policy makers to capitalize on opportunities and mitigate negative impacts of economic integration.

More specifically, the impacts of globalization and trade liberalization on women and gender equality are a key emerging area of concern in Viet Nam. Gender equality is a key factor in macroeconomic development and global trade processes, whereby trade liberalization policies have not only differential impacts on men and women, but have the potential to advance as well as constrain women's empowerment and gender equality. In Viet Nam, relevant state administration agencies are engaging in several research projects relating to this topic, with the aim of identifying appropriate solutions to mitigate negative impacts on women, and to enhance opportunities for promoting gender equality. This study uses qualitative methods to gather evidence and deepen understandings of the social impacts of WTO accession on rural women in Dong Thap and Hai Duong provinces.

This report begins with an overview of the research methodology used during the study. The second section examines the debates and knowledge around women, gender and trade policies both internationally as well as in Viet Nam. The next section presents the key findings and analysis drawn from the research data, while the final section provides a series of recommendations.

### 1.2 Research methodology

The research was conducted in 2008-2009 through strategic cooperation between the Institute for Labour, Science and Social Affairs (ILSSA), the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). AusAID provided funding, while the research was primarily undertaken by ILSSA researchers, with technical assistance from UNIFEM. As such, there were dual objectives to the study, combining research on the impacts of global integration on rural women in Viet Nam - with a view to generating an evidence base for gender-sensitive policy making, advocacy, and future programming - with building ILSSA's capacity in gender-sensitive research and qualitative methodologies, to better enable them to undertake comprehensive WTO impact assessments.

This capacity building component of the research entailed UNIFEM providing training for ILSSA researchers, and collaboration between UNIFEM and ILSSA in the development of research questions and tools, and in data analysis and report writing.

The research posed three key strategic questions:

- What is the social impact of economic integration on rural women in Viet Nam?



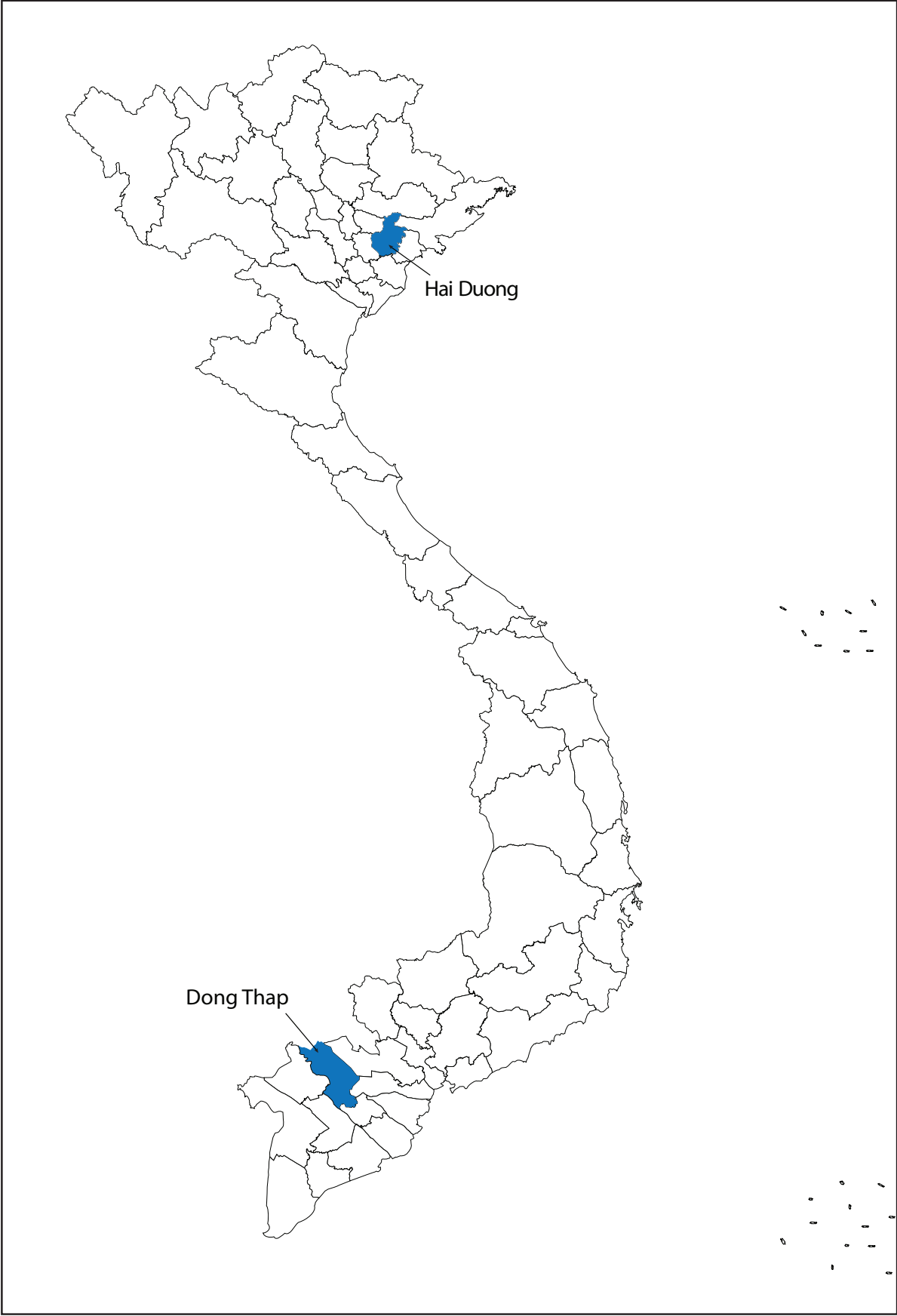
- Are women able to take advantage of the opportunities this process provides, or are they more vulnerable to negative effects?
- Have gender inequalities been perpetuated or exacerbated by reform?

These areas were examined through specific research questions categorized around women in the labour market; vulnerability and social protection; and social roles and relationships, as outlined in Table 1. All were addressed through a lens which analyses shifts in gender relations and gender equality.

**Table 1. Research Questions**

Category	Specific Research Questions
<b>Women in the labor market (type and quality of employment)</b>	<p>To what extent are women able to take advantage of market opportunities? What new types of jobs or sectors are women moving into?</p> <p>To what extent does this reduce gender inequality in the labor market? Do these reinforce or break down the stereotyped gendered division of labor, both horizontally and vertically?</p> <p>Do intra-household dynamics/division of labor impact women's participation in the labor market?</p> <p>What are the impacts of male and female rural-urban labor migration?</p> <p>What do women need to be able to take advantage of new employment and market opportunities?</p> <p>If women are accessing new labor markets, is it high quality labor? Are working conditions good? Do women move into the informal sector?</p> <p>What do women need to access good quality employment opportunities?</p>
<b>Vulnerability and social protection</b>	<p>How do women respond to and mitigate exogenous shocks? What are the impacts of such shocks on women?</p> <p>What has been the impact of user fees on public and social services on women as care-givers?</p> <p>What are the impacts of the lack of accessible and affordable childcare?</p> <p>Given the burden of unpaid work, what social and public services do women need to enable them to take advantages of new employment and market opportunities?</p>
<b>Social roles and relationships</b>	<p>What is the impact of rural-urban labor migration on the household?</p> <p>What is the impact of migration on community activities?</p> <p>Do shifts in women's employment affect power relations between men and women in the home?</p>

**Geographical Map of Vietnam**  
Field sites: Hai Duong province in the North, and  
Dong Thap province in the South



The data collection was carried out in two field sites: in Hai Duong province in the north of Viet Nam, and in Dong Thap province in the south. These sites were selected to represent the situation for rural women in the north and south, but also are comparable reflecting some similarities in population size and across a number of economic indicators. They were also selected on the basis of having experienced socio-economic changes as a result of economic integration, with rapid investment, economic restructuring, significant levels of out-migration, and processes of dynamic urbanization.

Table 2 outlines some of the key characteristics of Hai Duong in the Red River Delta region and Dong Thap in the Mekong Delta region. Both Hai Duong and Dong Thap are largely agricultural provinces, with about two thirds of the working age population engaged in agriculture, forestry, or fishery. The proportion of the population living in urban areas is very low (16% for Hai Duong and 17% for Dong Thap). Both provinces are relatively poor within their respective regions; coincidentally, they both had the same monthly average income per capita in 2006 of VND 609,000<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 2. Profile of Hai Duong and Dong Thap**

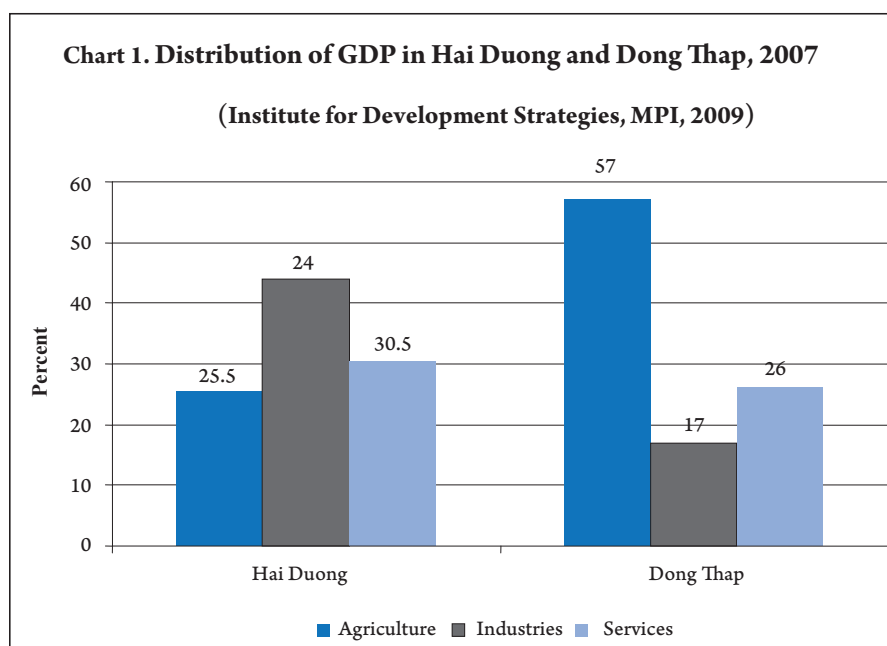
Indicator	Province	
	Hai Duong	Dong Thap
Population 2008 (thousands)	1,745.3	1,682.7
Population density (people/km <sup>2</sup> )	1056	498
Urban population (%)	16%	17%
Agricultural laborers (% labor force)	64.2%	69.5%
GDP per capita 2007 (VND millions)	10	9.4
Monthly average income per capita, 2006 (VND thousands)	609	609

Sources: GSO 2008, 2007; Institute for Development Strategies, MPI, 2009.

As Table 2 illustrates, Hai Duong has around twice the population density as Dong Thap. Given the large proportion of agricultural workers, this indicates greater competition for agricultural land in Hai Duong, compounded by the poor soils and growing conditions when compared to Dong Thap, which benefits from a temperate climate and the more fertile, alluvial soils of the Mekong basin. As a result, Dong Thap relies significantly upon agricultural production, which constitutes around 57% of GDP (see Chart 1), as opposed to Hai Duong, whose share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from agricultural production is approximately 25.5%. Hai Duong has a larger proportion of industrial production, which consists of around 44% of the province's GDP, a proportion much larger than that of Dong Thap (see Chart 1). In addition to environmental factors, the differences of the GDP composition Hai Duong and Dong Thap can also be explained in part by the different development visions of the leaders of the two provinces (see Institute for Development Strategies, MPI, 2009).

1 As of 4 October 2009, VND 1,000,000 (Viet Nam Dong) is equivalent to US\$ 56.07.





An additional characteristic relating to both provinces is migration. The recent growth of industrial zones within and near both provinces has significantly increased the migration from rural areas to both urban areas and new industrial zones. Migration has been especially high in Hai Duong where the land resource is limited (for additional information on these flows, see GSO 2006).

The research was conducted in three communes in each of these sites, and focused on four target groups of rural women:

- Women entrepreneurs, small and micro business owners, and traders;
- Women migrants, or from families with household members who have migrated;
- Women who have shifted their employment type, that is, women who have changed from one form of work to another; and
- Poor women who included unemployed women, women in casual work and women living on limited income.

Two teams carried out the research, each comprising of three female and one male researcher. Three research methods were used in the study: a survey profile of respondents, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews.

The brief survey profile was used to gather basic background information and to facilitate the participants opening up for the focus group discussions. It was administered to all focus group participants, and gathered background data on the characteristics of the respondents, including education levels, livelihood types, and changes in income, training, household decision making and domestic tasks before and after WTO accession (see Annex 1 for the complete survey profile tool). Excel software was used for profile data entry and processing from 250 respondents.

A total of 24 focus group discussions were conducted with the four target groups mentioned above, in three communes in each field site. Respondents numbered 8 - 10 per group (see Table 3). Guiding questions were used with specific tools and methods such as time lines, problem trees, VENN diagrams, relationship diagrams and identification of needs and solutions (see Annex 2 for the full focus group discussion tool).

**Table 3. Number of Focus Group Participants, by Target Group**

Target Groups	Hai Duong	Dong Thap	Total
Migrant women	18	24	42
Women with employment type shift	27	40	67
Women business owners, traders	32	44	76
Poor women	29	36	65
Total	106	144	250

During the focus group discussions, researchers identified women who had interesting stories to tell about how their lives were affected by economic transition. Interviewees were selected (and at times self-selected because they wanted to share their stories) to reflect both common and unique situations.

As a result, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 48 focus group respondents who discussed relevant experiences for each research issue. The interviews therefore yielded additional data to support and triangulate the other research methods. The guiding questions for these semi-structured interviews are provided in Annex 3.

**Table 4. Number of Semi-Structured Interviewees, by Target Group**

Target Groups	Hai Duong	Dong Thap	Total
Migrant women	6	6	12
Women with employment type shift	6	6	12
Women business owners, traders	6	6	12
Poor women	6	6	12
Total	24	24	48

In addition to these methods, meetings were held with representatives of local authorities and mass organizations, both at the commune as well as provincial level. These meetings assisted the research team glean an overview of the situation for women, their issues and needs from the perspective of service providers.

Clearly, this study is not representative for Viet Nam as a whole. Nevertheless, the implications from the findings of this study, which can be observed in other rural areas in Viet Nam with different degrees of variation, do provide important inputs for policy formulation, as well as for the development of further research on this topic. Furthermore, as an explicitly qualitative study replying on respondents' perceptions, the research is not able to establish measurable causality with regards to the impacts of WTO accession; for example, some changes may have begun before WTO accession, and WTO accession may only accelerate them, such as with rural to urban migration. Despite this, WTO accession is a compelling lens through which to study recent social change in Viet Nam, and it is reasonable to assume that WTO accession has had various degrees of direct and indirect impacts on all aspects of social life in the country. Finally, it is important to recognize that the data for this research was gathered before the impacts of the 2008/2009 economic crisis were fully manifest, and as such the findings do not reflect the nature of those impacts nor the ramifications of the crisis.

# Part 2

## International and National Literature

### Addressing the Impacts of WTO on Women

#### 2.1 Global trade and gender issues

Despite the long-held assumption that macroeconomic and trade policies are gender neutral, gender in fact is a critical element in the intersection of trade, poverty reduction and human development. The substantial body of international literature and debate concerning global trade, women and gender equality includes analysis of the differential impacts of trade liberalization policies on women and men, including the potential opportunities as well as challenges to women's economic empowerment and gender equality goals.

A feminist economic perspective uses gender as a unit of economic analysis to analyze men's and women's differential access to and control of economic and social resources, and the impact of socially defined gender roles, especially the gendered division of labour. It argues that macroeconomic policy will have different impacts on men and women due to the gender roles which see women undertaking more unpaid labour and social reproduction tasks, the power dynamics between women and men in society, and women's unequal access to economic resources such as land, credit and technology (Elson et al 1997; Randriamaro 2006).

This approach draws on the gender and development (GAD) concepts and debates around gendered power dynamics and division of labour. Another critical tool from the GAD approach is that of 'practical gender needs' – relating to women's immediate concrete needs, and based on the current division of labour – and 'strategic gender needs', relating to the longer-term transformation of gender inequality, re-distribution of the gendered division of labour, and increase in women's empowerment (see Molyneux 1985; Moser 1989). In the context of a gendered analysis of the impacts of trade, this means examining “not only whether women increase their income relative to men but also whether they gain greater control over it, what effect earnings have on women's own perceptions and on their social relations within the household and in the broader community” (Fontana 2003: 50). Ultimately, research should be asking *whether trade reform perpetuates, accentuates or erodes existing gender inequalities*, through analyzing:

changing patterns and conditions of work, including paid and unpaid work; changes in gender gaps in wages, earnings, patterns of ownership and control over assets; changes in consumption patterns and use of technology by men and women; changes in public provisioning of services and their gendered impacts, as well as the gender-differentiated empowerment implications of trade flows (Çağatay 2001: 19).

This analysis reveals that some groups of women gain in one particular dimension while other groups of women lose, and that individual women will simultaneously gain in some and lose in other dimensions. In the short term, trade liberalization can help address women's practical gender needs by creating new employment opportunities and increasing incomes for women. However, in the longer term, economic integration can serve to exacerbate existing gender inequalities (Coche 2004), and explicit interventions are required to address strategic gender needs in labour and employment, creating more opportunities to access decent work with stable and secure jobs.

Existing research also suggests that trade liberalization in agricultural economies may disadvantage women as compared to men, since “trade reform tends to advantage large and medium producers, since small farmers, especially women, often lack access to credit, new technologies, marketing know-how and the like needed to take advantage of new markets” (Çağatay 2001: 7). On the other hand, trade liberalization has undoubtedly led to increased employment opportunities and labour market

participation for women in many countries. This is especially the case in semi-industrialized economies and in export-oriented manufacturing industries such as electronics, textiles, garments and shoes. In 2000, for example, women accounted for 80% of the export industries' workforce in South East Asia (Sexton et al 2004).

This increased participation in the labour market and associated increase in income can have positive impacts in terms of strategic gender needs, including on women's own self esteem as well as their control over income and decision-making power within the household. This in turn is likely to have broader implications, with women tending to spend a higher proportion of income on family nutrition, health and education as compared to men, and as such "women's increased control over income is likely to increase the well-being of women and children within households" (Çağatay 2001: 26).

Many other features of women's increased employment opportunities, however, do not bode well for improvements in strategic gender needs and the reduction of gender inequalities. The employment opportunities open to women are often poor quality, focused in the informal sector, requiring low skills, and with increasing gender wage gaps and gendered patterns of segregation. Researchers have suggested that in the context of global competition and deregulation, employers have sought a more flexible workforce by substituting lower paid female workers for male workers (Standing 1999), and that gendered patterns of employment segmentation and women's relatively lower wages have become important factors pulling women into labour markets (Çağatay 2001: 23). Many of women's employment gains are in export-processing zones exempt from local labour laws, where work is often characterized by long hours, job insecurity, low wages and sexual harassment. Similarly, the competitive pressures created by economic integration see enterprises using more seasonal, piece-work and home-based workers; again, women are more likely to work in these types of jobs, and they tend to be characterized by unstable and unsafe working conditions (Coche 2004).

Such poor working conditions, with poor health and safety standards, bring associated health risks for women, especially in the female labour intensive garment and textile manufacturing industries (ILO and Commonwealth Secretariat 2003). Health risks in factories include exposure to machine-related accidents, dust, noise, poor ventilation and toxic chemicals (Sexton et al 2004). Women agricultural workers also face health risks associated with pesticide exposure, and suffer increased incidence of miscarriages, still births, delayed pregnancy and birth defects (ibid).

Preliminary data also suggests that many of the new employment opportunities available to women as a result of trade liberalization put women at significant increased risk of sexual harassment and abuse. Reports have found that women in Mexican manufacturing factories were subjected to forced pregnancy tests, and pregnant women were then assigned strenuous tasks (Human Rights Watch, in Athreya 2002). In Kenya, the International Labour Rights Fund (ILRF) documented violence against women in the agricultural industries, including rape and withholding women workers' pay to coerce them to submit to sexual abuse (Athreya 2002). Further data collected by the ILRF indicates that similar cases of sexual harassment and abuse are taking place in other countries in Latin American and Asia, suggesting that for women, "submission to sexual abuse may be among the untallied costs of retaining one's job in the global economy" (ibid.).

In short, "although trade liberalization seems to advantage women in terms of employment, their 'competitive advantage' as workers lies in their lower pay and poorer working conditions" (Çağatay 2001: 23). Feminist economists have linked this to the role of gender in the perception of women as a 'docile' labour force (Elson and Pearson 1981), and to the gendered division of labour, whereby women's reproductive work such as childcare and household management constrains women in the labour market (Beneria and Floro 2005, Jones 2008), leaving them with less time to train, search for or engage in paid employment.

While women's reproductive work – or the 'care economy' – can hinder women's participation in the labour market, at the same time, the increase in women's paid employment is generally not offset by a reduction in their unpaid labour in the household. The result of women's 'double burden' is that either the provision of care in the home is reduced, or women's leisure time is decreased. In Bangladesh, for example, research has found that the increase in women's labour market participation has been accompanied by a reduction in their time for leisure activities (Fontana and Wood 2000), and the



1999 Human Development Report identified the association between the intensification of global trade competition and a reduction in the provision of paid and unpaid care (UNDP 1999, in Çağatay 2001). This in turn has significant implications for human development. A reduction in the time available for care giving, and in the absence of affordable childcare options, can have negative impacts on children, especially girls. This is especially the case in rural areas where children's labour may be used to offset household economic shocks, with negative consequences for children's education and leisure time (Jones 2008).

Women's role as upholders of the care economy is also affected by the government reductions in social spending and privatization of social services commonly associated with trade liberalization. While this means that both men and women benefit less from publicly provided services such as health care, clean water and education, it also impacts doubly on women, who have the primary responsibility for care work (Çağatay 2001, Jones 2008). Increases in household expenditure due to price increases for services such as education and health impact on women in particular (Coche 2004). Women either work longer hours in paid employment in order to pay for privatized services, or they allocate more time in providing the services themselves, thus exacerbating women's double work burden and time poverty even further.

There are also important linkages between international trade liberalization and women's migration (see for example Jolly 2005; Flynn and Kofman 2004). This includes increased rural-urban migration to access export-oriented manufacturing opportunities, as well as international migration. Export-oriented labour-intensive industries in particular are significant employers of women (Jolly 2005), and there is evidence of increasing internal migration by women in East Asia, due to both increased demand for female labour in particular sectors, and due to greater social acceptance of women's economic independence and mobility (Deshingkar 2005). Migration can have many positive outcomes for women, including a source of income and increased self-confidence and social status; at the same time, women migrant workers can face stigma and discrimination including "verbal, physical and sexual abuse, poor housing and encampments, sex-segregated labour markets, low wages, long working hours, insecure contracts and precarious legal status" (Jolly 2005: 1). These mixed impacts of migration on women reflect those discussed previously with regard to the impacts of trade on women more generally.

These issues around gender and international trade are also being played out in the context of the 2008-2009 economic crisis. Pre-existing labour market disadvantages faced by women, including concentration in insecure jobs, in the informal sector and the gendered segregation of industries discussed in the previous section, mean that women are often among the first to lose their jobs. For example, female unemployment is expected to "rise disproportionately as public sector budget cuts are made, since women are disproportionately employed in education, health and social services" (Seguino 2009: 3-4). In countries where women are concentrated in industries which have been severely affected by the financial crisis, such as export manufacturing, garments, electronics and footwear, the effects on women will be greater than on men (ibid). The International Labour Organization (ILO) forecasts that the current economic crisis will push an additional 22 million women into unemployment and will see women's unemployment rates rise to higher than those of men, especially in developing countries (ILO 2009).

Furthermore, research suggests that in an economic downturn, migrant workers, both men and women, tend to be among the first to lose their jobs. Again, female migrant workers are often more vulnerable to economic crisis than male migrant workers, with less access to benefits, less protection of their rights, low skills and low levels of education. Recent job losses for women migrant workers around the world have meant that "flows of remittances have declined and families back home, mostly women and children, are suffering of loss of vital household income and lack of social protection" (UNDP 2009).

As more women and men lose their jobs, remittances decrease, prices increase and public spending is under pressure, women face their roles in looking after the family with less income with which to do so, with possible knock-on effects to health and education. The World Bank has noted that women in 33 countries are highly vulnerable to the effects of the economic crisis, predicting an increase in infant and

child mortality, less girls' schooling and reduced earnings (World Bank 2009). In addition, research by the Institute for Development Studies in five countries has identified an increase in conflicts and domestic violence in poor households as a result of the food, fuel and financial crises (IDS 2009).

## **2.2 Research on gender and trade in Viet Nam**

The importance of the impact of trade liberalization on women in Viet Nam is evidenced by the fact that the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for Viet Nam requested "the State party to assess the impact of economic restructuring processes on women, including women belonging to ethnic minorities and living in rural and remote areas" (United Nations 2007: 5). The Committee also expressed concern about the concentration of women in the informal economy, occupational segregation between women and men in the labour market, the persistent gap in wages between women and men, and the situation of women in rural and remote areas and ethnic minority women.

These issues are illuminated with evidence from gender analyses of the Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS) conducted by the World Bank and others. In Viet Nam, labour force participation rates are high, and are very similar for women and men. However, this obfuscates the significant persisting gender inequalities in income, economic opportunities, and time burdens. The gender gap in earnings from wage employment remains significant, although it has decreased in urban areas since 2004. In urban areas, women's mean hourly wage for all aged 15 and older is 87% of that received by men, a small improvement from 2004. In rural areas, the rate is slightly higher at 88% (Lee 2008).

There is also significant gender-based segregation of the economy by sector and occupation. The 2006 VHLSS data shows that men are more likely than women to be engaged in wage employment, with 42% of men working in the wage sector, as opposed to only 27% of women (Lee 2008). Aside from the agricultural industry, where both men and women have high representation, there is considerable gender-based segregation by industry. The World Bank analysis finds that women are concentrated in retail sales, textile/garment manufacturing, food/beverage manufacturing, hotels/restaurant services, and education/health/cultural services industries, while men are concentrated in construction/utilities, other material production/processing, retail sales, transportation/communication services, and business/financial services industries (ibid). Data from the 2003 Enterprise Survey shows that this segregation constrains women more than men, with men "more dispersed across the occupational structure than women, an indication of their greater options" (Kabeer et al 2005: 6).

VHLSS data also points to gender inequalities in the vertical segregation of labour. The 2004 data found that men predominated in higher status, better paid forms of employment while women were concentrated in poorer paid, less prestigious forms of work (Kabeer et al 2005). This is confirmed in the 2006 data (Lee 2008). Men predominate in leadership positions and higher professional and technically qualified jobs, and women predominate in lower level services and unskilled jobs. Even within female dominated sectors, such as education, men predominate in the higher ranks of the occupational hierarchy.

There is also compelling evidence of gender inequalities in terms of unequal work loads, "a reflection of the fact that women's active participation in the productive economy has not led to a reduction in their domestic work and contributions to the care economy" (Kabeer et al.: 7). Data from the 2002 VHLSS found that women are overrepresented among those reporting between 51 to 60 hours per week of work, and even more so among those reporting over 61 hours per week (ibid.). The 2006 VHLSS data demonstrates that close to half of all males report not doing any housework at home, compared with only about one out of five females, suggesting that housework remains primarily the responsibility of women (Lee 2008).

The 2006 VHLSS data also shows a close association between the level of schooling and the likelihood of wage employment, and education appears to play a more important role for women's access to wage employment than for men's (Lee 2008). This is particularly important given the gender

gap in education, knowledge and skills. While there is little gap in terms of schooling, women are disadvantaged relative to men in terms of vocational, technical and higher education levels (Kabeer et al 2005: 16). As Viet Nam moves towards more technologically sophisticated industries, there will be a vital need to therefore invest in education and training so that women have equal access to these opportunities.

A number of studies in Viet Nam have specifically addressed global integration, women and the garment industry (Kinley and Nguyen 2008; Kabeer and Van Anh 2006). In 2004, Viet Nam's textile and garment industry accounted for 16% of all exports (Kabeer and Van Anh 2006), with the garment industry expected to expand further. This study found that women comprise approximately 78% of garment workers, who are generally young, single, without children and who have migrated to the city from rural areas. For some women, entry into garment work is a diversification strategy for rural households, and for others it is an attempt to become more self-reliant. However, labour conditions in the garment industry are generally poor, with long hours, repetitive tasks and under exploitative working conditions. As Kinley and Nguyen (2008) note, garment workers receive lower wages than other wage earners in the urban economy, and they face the risk of unemployment due to their low level of qualifications. Increased competition in the garment and footwear industries could increase this risk, demonstrating "that these export-oriented industries, and the people they employ, are vulnerable to fluctuations in the international market" (ibid.: 24).

Another study has provided a qualitative assessment of gender relations and gender equality in rural Viet Nam. A participatory poverty study of rural communities by Oxfam and Action Aid found that for the most part, the gendered division of labour has remained the same, and that while developments in infrastructure, technology and a reduction in manual labour have improved overall living conditions, "women continue to shoulder both household and production responsibilities" (Oxfam and Action Aid 2008: 78). Women continue to be subject to lower social status than men, which "prevents them from making greater economic gains" (ibid.), as found in inheritance patterns, household economic decision-making and in public life.

At the same time, the research found that in some cases, changes in women's economic roles as a result of greater integration in the market economy have also improved their social position. These positive changes as a result of economic development include "greater say in choice of spouse, more control over household economy, greater mobility, and a lower level of domestic violence" (ibid.). A key factor in changing traditional roles in terms of the gendered division of labour was found to be labour migration, where the spouse left behind takes on the responsibilities of the spouse who has migrated (ibid.).

Further critical research was carried out in 2007 by ILSSA's Research Center for Female Labour and Gender, using quantitative methods to assess and forecast the positive and negative impacts of Viet Nam's admission to WTO on the employment, income and lives of women workers (ILSSA 2008). The study uses data from the VHLSS from 1998 to 2006 (GSO 1998; GSO 2002; GSO 2006), the Enterprise Survey 2000-2006 (GSO 2006), and the survey on labour and employment 2000-2006 (MOLISA 2006).

Based on data from 1998 to 2006, the findings from the study indicate a number of key impacts of economic integration (ILSSA 2008). There has been an increase in the mean wage gap between urban and rural female workers, as well as between skilled and unskilled female workers. At the same time, the overall wage gap between women and men decreased. Gendered wage gaps were higher in export-oriented and import-oriented sectors than in non export-oriented and import-oriented sectors, suggesting that economic integration has increased the gender wage gap.

In addition, non-export-oriented sectors experienced the highest increases in mean wage, while export-oriented sectors saw low rates of mean wage increases, indicating that export-oriented sectors do not improve the living standard of women workers. Sectors with high import levels such as processing and garment industries employ a large proportion of female workers. For these sectors, the increase in the rate of the mean wage of women workers is half that for women workers in general.

Based on the data and analysis, a set of forecasts was made with regard to the 2008 - 2012 period (ibid.). Economic integration is likely to bring increased opportunities for good jobs with high wages

for female workers, and will therefore reduce gender gaps between men and women in employment and wages. However, due to the constraints on women's participation in the labour market (lower qualifications than men, reproductive roles, etc), women are likely to benefit less than men in accessing well-paid jobs resulting from WTO admission. Women workers with low skills and low qualifications (especially in export-oriented sectors) shall be at risk of unemployment, and are expected to experience a greater wage reduction than men.

The forecasts also suggest that the impacts of economic integration shall continue to increase the gap in the mean wage of women workers between rural and urban areas, and between skilled women workers and unskilled workers. Women employed in the formal economic sector will generally have better opportunities and better access to social benefits and social security networks. It is expected that a large proportion of women working in the informal sector will continue to be vulnerable to increased health risks, will not be covered by social security, and will generally be negatively affected by economic integration.

The stories of the 250 women who participated in this small scale qualitative research study illustrate the optimism that women have about their situation – their lives, familial situations, job prospects, hopes, aspirations and difficulties. While women are hopeful, in particular in Dong Thap, these stories also paint a poignant picture of daily life for Vietnamese women living in rural areas. Women have spoken about the hardships they encountered being poor and struggling to find the means to send their children to school, and to provide basic needs such as food for the family. The sense of hardship expressed by women reinforces the hypothesis that whilst there have been many economic opportunities opened to women in the process of Viet Nam's accession to WTO, there remain many barriers, including a lack of access to credit, assets and education or vocational training, that prevent women from seizing these opportunities.

Overall, the research suggests that rural women have enjoyed significant new opportunities in the labour market associated with WTO accession, particularly in labour-intensive unskilled jobs, and in the small-scale trade and service sectors. This addresses women's practical gender needs in terms of increasing their opportunities and incomes, especially as compared to agricultural work. However, the quality of these jobs has generally been low, with little security and benefits and with poor working conditions; as such, these opportunities have done little to improve the status of women or to address their strategic gender needs. Some groups of women are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of trade liberalization, and are at risk of falling into poverty. Migrant women in particular suffer from weak social capital and vulnerability to exploitation.

Within the household, there have been some advances in challenging the traditional gendered division of labour, and women's increased role in income generation has enabled them in some cases to play a stronger role in household decision making, thus enhancing their strategic gender needs and improving gender equality. However, the resulting double role of productive and reproductive tasks has left women time-poor and overworked.



## Part 3

# Key Research Findings

### 3.1. Impacts of WTO accession in the two field sites

- *There have been positive changes in socio-economic development during 2007-2008 in both study sites. Economic structures have shifted, with a reduction in agricultural production and an increase in industrial production and services. Hai Duong has been particularly strong in terms of the development of industry and services, while Dong Thap has benefitted from export-led agriculture and aquaculture production.*
- *Challenges include lack of sustainability, poor essential infrastructure and services, as well as an increase in social problems.*

Hai Duong province has experienced strong and rapid engagement in the economic integration process. With active policies to encourage investment, including lower taxation than nearby provinces and simplified administrative procedures, the number of foreign investment enterprises has significantly increased. This has contributed to the creation of jobs and the reduction of poverty within the province. The key production industries in Hai Duong include garments, leather, electronics assembly, and food processing.

In Dong Thap, industrial development has not been as rapid or as significant as in Hai Duong. From 1988-2008, 220 foreign direct investment projects were licensed in Hai Duong, with a total registered capital of approximately US\$ 2325 million, while in Dong Thap only 18 projects were licensed with the total registered capital of around US\$ 44 million (GSO Yearbook 2008). However, the number of industrial parks and factories opening in Dong Thap did increase leading up to WTO accession. According to a commune official in Cao Lanh city, Dong Thap province:

Before 2006, there were only two production facilities in the ward area, but just in 2007 an additional three companies were established which employ many workers, both local and migrants.

The key industries in Dong Thap include seafood processing (fish and shrimp), livestock feed production, and garment and footwear manufacturing.

In the agricultural sector, farmers in Hai Duong have shifted from paddy cultivation and small scale livestock to production of out-of-season fruits, flower cultivation and large scale livestock (fish, pigs, hens). These shifts have been associated with improved production, yields, prices and distribution, such that the standard of living of many farmers has improved significantly. As a commune official in Hai Duong province notes,

In the past, paddy cultivation could create an income of 3 to 4 million dong for a productive land area of 360 m<sup>2</sup>, but in the last few years, farmers have shifted to planting out-of-season tomatoes, which brings an income of 9 to 12 million dong per 360 m<sup>2</sup> of cropping land, depending on the level of input investment and techniques.

Furthermore, the communes which are located close to urban areas have an increased advantage with regards to crops and livestock restructuring, due to good access to transportation and markets.

In Dong Thap, the two key agricultural production areas have been paddy cultivation and aquaculture production. During the last two years, a number of households have moved into or expanded shrimp production, leading to a significant increase in the total area used for this type of agricultural production. According to a report by the People's Committee of Phu Tho commune in Dong Thap, "shrimp production areas have increased by 30.4 hectares since 2007 in our commune". Paddy cultivation has

also moved to the production of high quality rice for export, resulting in higher incomes; according to the same report, “of the total 6,289 hectares of rice production areas, about 3,300 hectares have been used for high quality rice” (People’s Committee of Phu Tho commune 2008).

Services such as guesthouses, restaurants, hairdressers, internet cafes and traders stocking essential household commodities have developed strongly in both study sites during the last two years. The reasons for this include the increased demands for services by workers in industrial parks and in other newly established enterprises, and the increased incomes and living standards of local people are enabling them to use more services.

Overall, strong economic development has led to increases in the incomes and improvements in the living standards of local people, with the poverty rate rapidly decreasing (see Table 5).

**Table 5. Poverty reduction in Hai Duong and Dong Thap 2005-2007**

Province	Unit	2005	2006	2007
Hai Duong	Number of poor households	76,421	67,707	57,691
	Poverty Rate	17.93%	15.90%	13.41%
Dong Thap	Number of poor households	12,863	38,128	32,153
	Poverty Rate	13.59%	10.72%	8.82%

Source: Annual Reports on Poverty Reduction (DOLISA Hai Duong 2005, 2006, 2007; DOLISA Dong Thap 2005, 2006, 2007).

Nonetheless, despite these positive advances, there are also numerous challenges for stable socio-economic development in the two research sites. These challenges include the following:

- While production has increased, this has not been sustainable due to market and price fluctuations. For example, a Korean garment company and two local shipyard enterprises in Ai Quoc commune (Hai Duong) went bankrupt due to market price fluctuations. Price fluctuations of agricultural and aquaculture inputs and products have also increased the vulnerability of many rice farmers in Dong Thap in times of market shocks.
- Essential infrastructure services at the local level are weak, especially with regards to electricity, clean water, and drainage. These services have not been developed, are over-used and of poor quality.
- There have been increases in social problems compromising the safety of local people, and causing social instability, such as through increases in gambling, internet pornography, theft, prostitution, drug taking and children convicted with legal offences. This is especially the case in migrant-recipient communes in Hai Duong.

### 3.2 Increased economic opportunities for women

- *In the first two years since admission to the WTO, economic development and the growth of production have brought increased employment opportunities for both men and women. New job opportunities in the industrial and service sectors have had a higher concentration of women, especially young women, while new jobs in the agricultural sector have provided more opportunities for men.*
- *Younger women have more new job opportunities than middle aged women due to the proliferation of factory work, although middle-aged women are able to take advantage of increasing opportunities in small-scale trade and services.*

- *Women workers in Hai Duong have benefited more from WTO accession - at least in terms of their practical gender needs - than women in Dong Thap because they have more and better employment opportunities in industrial parks and the service sector. In Dong Thap, economic opportunities for women were limited because most economic changes are associated with the aquaculture industry in which men are more often employed.*

The expansion of industrial parks and factories in both field sites over the last two years has created more job opportunities for female workers than for male workers. This is due to the fact that the majority of the enterprises and factories belong to the textile, garment, electronics assembly, food processing and seafood processing sectors - all of which are typically “women intensive” labour sectors (80% to 90% of factory workers in these sectors are women, according to meetings with provincial authorities in Hai Duong and Dong Thap).

In terms of categories of employment by age, the survey profile found that young women below 20 years of age are most commonly employed in electronics enterprises. Women in the 20 to 29 year old age group are more likely to work in the garment, textile, and footwear manufacturing industries, whereas those who are in the 30 to 34 year old age group are more likely to work in the food processing and seafood processing sectors. According to meetings with provincial authorities in Hai Duong and Dong Thap, women 35 years old and over are found more often in less attractive jobs such as industrial cleaning and cooking in factories, suggesting that this older age group is less able to take advantage of improved employment opportunities associated with economic integration.

For the last few years, new job opportunities in the industrial sector have been reasonably abundant, not only providing enough jobs for local women but also providing jobs for a large number of migrant workers from other provinces. Women appear to be over-represented in this migration flow, especially young women: according to meetings with provincial authorities in both provinces, women aged 17-25 account for more than 80% of total migrant women workers. The scale of migrant workers is higher in Hai Duong than in Dong Thap; according to meetings with commune authorities, in Cam Thuong and Aiquoc communes in Hai Duong city, there are between 5,000 and 7,000 migrant workers, versus around 1,000 in Dong Thap.

In the commercial and services sectors, more new employment opportunities are available for women than for men. Job opportunities in these sectors relate mainly to the daily consumption of local people and of resident migrant workers; such services include rental accommodation, restaurants, tailors, and entertainment (karaoke, internet), while trade services include goods for domestic consumption, agents for food processing companies to collect raw inputs, and food retail.

### **Box 1. Small-scale trading and services as opportunities for middle-aged women**

*... In Cam Thuong ward (Hai Duong city), at the moment there are about 306 guesthouses with about 1,200 rooms for rent. There have been guesthouses here for a long time, but the number of guesthouses rapidly increased in 2007-2008.*

*... Middle-aged women often used to work in agricultural fields, but now their land has been recovered and converted into industrial parks, and such women are now selling breakfast to the workers, or opening restaurants. Their income is better, enough to support the family.*

*... Enterprises have no canteens inside, so workers have to eat outside the factory. We cook the meals and sell them to the workers.*

*... We opened a small business to sell processed food to workers who live in the guesthouses. They work all day, and come back home late in the evening when the market is shut, so they often buy our food for their meals.*

Focus group discussions with women who had shifted their employment type in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

Such jobs are not attractive to younger women workers, as they tend to prefer jobs in factories and industrial parks. However, the commercial and service sectors provide good opportunities for middle-aged women who have lost their cultivation land (see section 3.4 for more on this issue), enabling them to shift their livelihood type, often using the compensation money received for their land to build additional rooms for rental or trading purposes (see Box 1).

Male workers have more advantages than women in terms of accessing new employment opportunities in the agricultural sector. In contrast to conventional patterns of agricultural production in the past, farmers have shifted to cultivation and cropping on a larger scale and applying advanced techniques. Such new jobs are mostly handled by men. Within the household, men often take responsibility for the application of farming techniques, while middle-aged women provide support through selling agricultural products, and through other tasks that do not require technical skills.

A comparison of the two field sites reveals that economic integration has led to a more rapid and intense industrialization and urbanization process in Hai Duong than in Dong Thap. The associated changes in the labour market are also more tangible in Hai Duong than in Dong Thap. Women workers in Hai Duong benefit more from WTO accession - at least in terms of their practical gender needs - than men because they have more and better employment opportunities in industrial parks and the service sector. In Dong Thap, women benefit less than men because most economic changes are associated with the aquaculture industry in which men are more often employed.

### 3.3 Lack of access to good quality and skilled employment for women

- *Most new employment opportunities open to women have been of medium and low quality. They are primarily unskilled manual labour jobs providing poor job security, low or medium incomes, limited benefits and unregulated working conditions.*
- *Limited access to credit, education and vocational training play a major role in rural women workers' ability to access good quality jobs.*

Enterprises in Hai Duong and Dong Thap often choose to invest in labour-intensive industries which employ primarily manual workers, for example in the electronics assembly, garment manufacturing and seafood processing industries. One reason that these industries are selected is that manual labour needs are inline with the skills levels of the local rural labour force, in which men and women have recently shifted from agricultural production to industry.

The educational attainment of women workers is slightly lower than that of men. According to data from the Survey on Labour and Employment (MOLISA 2007), 4.5% of the female labour force is illiterate, compared to 3.58% of the total labour force, while 13.04% of the female labour force has not completed primary school, compared to 11.90% of the total labour force. The educational attainment of rural women workers is also lower in Dong Thap than in Hai Duong, according to the profiles of focus group respondents. In Dong Thap, as many as 70% of women attending all focus group discussions had only completed primary school, and 80% of participants in the focus groups for poor women had not completed primary school - of which half were illiterate or semi-illiterate. This is consistent with data from GSO, which suggests that the quality of education in Dong Thap is lower than in Hai Duong (GSO 2008).

However, even with low levels of schooling, women are able to access employment in labour-intensive industries, especially those in the 17 to 20 age range, who have recently finished secondary school. As one woman worker in a focus group discussion in Hai Duong noted,

It is preferable to work in an electronics company, but that requires a diploma and certificate, even if we pay money to get the job... In the past, they required higher secondary school qualifications, but they couldn't employ enough workers, so now they only ask for lower secondary level.

While these largely unskilled women in Hai Duong and Dong Thap do have access to the new employment opportunities in these labour-intensive industries, this also means that they are not able to access better employment opportunities requiring higher qualifications and technical skills.



Enterprises operating in the two study sites also require professional and managerial staff, and technical workers with high skills such as engineers, but very few local women have sufficient education to access these high quality jobs. In Hai Duong, women had higher educational levels than those in Dong Thap, however the supply of women workers with secondary school education is insufficient to meet the demand of local enterprises (see Box 2).

### **Box 2. Good quality jobs are available, but are not accessible to local women**

*...You must at least have completed high-school level education if you want to apply for a job in management. In our village, there are very few girls who have completed secondary school.... There are some people who graduated from university, but they do not return to the village, they stay and work in Hanoi.*

*...There are some good job opportunities such as office staff, accountants, operating workers in seafood processing companies, but women often cannot apply for these positions, as they do not have the qualifications.*

Focus group discussion with women who have shifted their employment type in Hai Duong and with poor women in Dong Thap.

As the jobs accessible to women are primarily manual labour requiring an unskilled labour force, the income levels are at the low-to-medium range. The electronics assembly sector pays the highest wages, on average around 2 million dong per month. While this income is twice as high or more than that received from agricultural production as most workers engaged in formerly, workers nonetheless have high expenditures for accommodation rental and living expenses. On average, women workers in these types of jobs save between 200,000 and 400,000 dong per month.

Working conditions in these factories are generally poor. The work is monotonous, with around 10 working hours per day, and up to 12 or 14 hours per day in peak production seasons or for urgent product delivery deadlines. Companies in general pay little attention to ameliorating working conditions, and consequently workers are often tired, bored and at risk of occupational hazards and injuries (see Box 3).

### **Box 3. Poor conditions for women factory workers**

*... Working in the garment workshop is very hard, we sit all the day in the same position, and don't dare to take breaks so that we are productive enough, so it is very hard on our eyes. In order to gain more income, we often work overtime, for 10-12 hours per day. After five years of working, our eyes are very bad, we cannot see clearly. Others have problems with backache, and cannot do any hard work.*

*... If women work as garment workers for many years, they all end up hunchbacked.*

*... Seafood processing requires soaking our hands in iced water all day, and working in frozen workshops for more than 10 hours per day. It is easy to suffer from sinusitis or rheumatism.*

Group discussion with women workers in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

Very few workers reported having access to social insurance or health care insurance. Respondents noted that enterprises only pay for social insurance for staff who are engaged in indirect production

- those who work in management or technical divisions, and those who have been working in the company for a long time. Virtually none of the manual laborers and seasonal workers are entitled to social insurance. This puts women at an additional disadvantage, as they are less likely than men to work in the middle and higher levels of a company, and are more likely to be employed as manual workers - hence women receive less social insurance benefits than men.

Employers utilize many methods to evade paying social insurance for their workers. At the same time, workers have poor access to information regarding their rights, and do not know how to claim their benefits. There are other factors which inhibit women from claiming their benefits; one woman worker from Hai Duong states that: "If we participate in a social insurance program, it may be difficult for us to move to work in another company, as the current employer may not want to give us our social insurance book".

Aside from labour-intensive industries, the other sector where women have increasing opportunities for employment is that of services and trade, where women are primarily self-employed in small-scale activities or are hired in the informal sector. Again, this sector tends to provide women with little stability, with a low or medium income, without access to social insurance and health insurance, and with no additional benefits.

Women workers explained why they engage in this type of employment, including: low levels of education; difficulties in accessing other jobs due to their age (for women over 30 years of age); loss of agricultural land to the state; lack of adequate knowledge and business experience to build a larger or more successful business; and difficulties in accessing support such as access to credit, as well as vocational and other types of training (see Box 4).

#### **Box 4. Constraints to women's livelihood options**

*...We have lost our agricultural land, and we are too old to apply for a job in a factory. I saw some people opening stalls selling breakfast, and I copied them. Every day, I made 20 rice cakes to sell at the industrial park gates, but often I couldn't sell them all. Then I switched to selling vegetables, I stayed in the market all morning, but there were more sellers than buyers.*

*...I wanted to learn a new job, but I am too old, even if they trained me for free, I couldn't learn.*

*... I could obtain a loan from the bank, but the loan would be too small, several million dong, or maximum 20 million dong. With this amount, we can't do anything big. To build a room to rent out, you need to invest at least 20 million dong, and we can lease it for 300,000 dong per month. In order to get a stable income, you need a big investment to build many rooms.*

Focus group discussion with women who have changed their employment type in Hai Duong.

For the last two years, rural women have had increased opportunities in terms of accessing training in general and vocational training in particular, with provincial authorities directing resources for vocational training towards women, especially those with low levels of education and skills (see Box 5). The national policy to promote vocational training for rural workers, including women workers, workers who have lost their land, and the poor, has been implemented in both study sites. On average, every year around 10,000 women workers in each province have participated in short-term (from 10 to 15 days) and long term (3 to 5 months) training courses (Viet Nam Women's Union 2008). Skills training often involves making industrial garments, embroidery, making mats from locally-sourced sedge tree leaves and knitting. After completing the courses, workers are provided with business support services such as access to credit, job introduction services, sharing experiences in doing business, and assistance with marketing and selling their products.

### Box 5. Vocational training opportunities enable women to access jobs

*... Households whose land has been totally recovered receive free vocational training services and are given priority for job placement. Many girls who have completed secondary school have been trained in garment making and tailoring for a short period, and then they have found jobs in the industrial parks.*

*... After losing my land, I was invited to attend a vocational training course on embroidery, I was paid 3,000 dong per day, and 40 women participated in the classes without paying any training fees.*

*... Enterprises have contracted vocational training centers to enrol trainees, and after the completion of training the enterprise will employ the trainees. The financial costs of vocational training are partly covered by the enterprises.*

Group discussion with women who have changed their employment type and with poor women, in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

The vocational training courses have been implemented based, to some extent, on market conditions, and have provided training on specific trades and organized mobile courses in remote areas. There is evidence that such training has enabled workers to gain better jobs; for example, 50% to 70% of women trained in making industrial garments have subsequently found jobs, as have 50% of poor women trained in weaving plastic baskets (Viet Nam Women's Union 2008).

However, the research found that effectiveness of this training is limited, due in part to the limited capacity and awareness of rural women, and in part to the limitations of the vocational training system. There are several constraints associated with the extent to which women have access to such vocational training opportunities, as the organization of the courses is often inflexible, and inappropriate to the needs of different groups of women. Additionally, the training methodologies are rarely adapted to the needs of those women who are illiterate, making this option unavailable to those who are already in a very vulnerable position in the job market.

Young women who have completed lower secondary school or higher secondary school have better access to learning more desirable occupations with stable incomes and better employment opportunities such as in industrial garment making, tailoring and hairdressing. Women older than 35 years old, with poor education levels, are unable to attend long-term training; they can learn simple skills such as handicrafts, however the income from this work is very low, ranging from 5,000 dong to 20,000 dong per day, and the outlets for selling the products are unstable. Poor women and those with many children are not able to attend long-term vocational training. They do not have sufficient savings to cover the food costs for the family without working every day, and they are constrained by their roles in the household of caring for children and the elderly. Married women find it difficult to attend training courses which are organized a long way from their homes, and older women find it difficult to learn theoretical subjects with too little time for practical application (see Box 6).

## Box 6. Constraints with vocational training courses

*... I was trained in hairdressing for three months, I tried hard and wanted to learn more because after three months my skills were not good enough. I need to train for longer than three months in order to be able to do a good job. Of all the women in our class, only one woman could do the job, but she had to invest in further training.*

*... We are short of labour in my household, my children are small, and my husband has been sick for long time. I have to work as hired labour on a day by day basis. On days when I am not hired, I have to borrow rice. The commune authorities have offered to support me by sending me to attend a training course on tailoring for three months – after the training, I may have a job. But going to learn far from home, who will work to feed my children? Three months is too long for me.*

*...The year before last, my paddy field was recovered, and I was invited to attend a training course on making rattan products held by the Women's Union. We had to use our own money to buy the materials, but we could not find a market for our product, so we stopped.*

Focus group discussion with women who have changed their employment type and with poor women in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

### 3.4 Migrant women exposed to poor living conditions and increased risk of exploitation

- *Migrant women, especially young women, experience poor living conditions, such as sharing hostel accommodation with up to 30 people and only one bathroom. High levels of theft and insecure physical environment add to migrant women feeling unsafe.*
- *Young women experience high levels of sexual harassment at work and on the road to and from work.*
- *Young migrant women lack social capital. They lack social networks and support due to living away from their family and living in a new city. This, together with time poverty, compound the difficulties for young women to engage in friendships and intimate relationships, such that some young women's dreams are to have 'just one friend'.*
- *Young women are exposed to exploitation including being vulnerable to fraudulent job brokers, and being exposed to risks of being trafficked. Isolation and lack of social and family support increases young women's vulnerability to manipulation, as well as being at risk of engaging in sex work, drugs and other criminal activities.*
- *Migrant women face discrimination by the local community, which exacerbates their already weak social capital.*

Migrating from rural areas to the city in search of a job with a higher income is an important opportunity for many rural women to escape poverty. In both Hai Duong and Dong Thap, rural-urban migration flows have increased since accession to the WTO, especially in Hai Duong. Focus group discussions with women migrants in both provinces revealed that more than 90% of participants felt that their incomes had improved since they had migrated; the other 10% were recent migrants, still seeking jobs. This data is mirrored by the results of the Viet Nam survey on migration conducted by GSO in 2004,



in which 80% of migrants stated that their current income was higher than their previous income prior to migrating. The search for a higher income is one of the main motivational factors for migration in Viet Nam (GSO 2005).

### Box 7. Risks of broker fraud and trafficking for migrant women

*... We had heard from friends that if you want to work in a company, just come and see Mr. X, give him 3 million dong, and then you will be employed. I followed the advice, and I got the job. But in fact, the company has job advertisements and notices placed outside on the company gate, and any applicant can be employed, there was no need to lose money...*

*... I was informed that the salary was 2 million dong, with social insurance, and other benefits. But in fact, the salary is 1.2 million dong including overtime work, with no benefits at all ... I also lost money on the job introduction service.*

*... I know of a case where a certain woman went to the city for work, but there has been no information since she left, and many people said that she has been sold to China...*

Interviews with migrant woman in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

Women migrants face multiple risks and vulnerabilities, especially in Hai Duong where migration is particularly common. One common risk faced by women migrants is exposure to fraudulent employment brokers (see Box 7). The majority of women migrants approach enterprises directly for information or job applications, or use employment brokers - usually informal brokers including relatives. Very few women use formal job introduction services. For young women who have less experience in job-hunting, there is a high risk that brokers will take advantage of them. Women in the two research sites report various forms of broker fraud, including:

- Being charged an overly high brokerage fee; in many cases, workers have paid job introduction fees which are 10 times higher than the regulation cost.
- Being told misinformation: job brokers often provide misleadingly positive information with regards to wages, benefits and working conditions. When the workers start their new jobs and discover that they have been told incorrect information, they cannot retrieve the fees paid.
- Trafficking and forced prostitution: in some cases, women migrants are promised to jobs in industrial parks, but instead are trafficked overseas or forced into prostitution. While few of these cases have been reported, the consequences for young women are very serious.

### Box 8. Harassment on the road to work

*... One time when I came home late after work, a young man jumped onto the back seat of my bicycle and asked for a lift. He harassed me, saying "I like you, will you go out with me?", and "will you be my friend?" I was very afraid, and since then, I always ask my colleagues to come home with me in a group.*

*... My friend was sexually harassed, they touched her body, but she couldn't do anything.*

*... They (local men) often tease women from other areas... We may look different from urban people, as we are from rural areas.*

Focus group discussions and meetings with local officials and with migrant women in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

Migrant women are also vulnerable to harassment, including sexual harassment in the work place, on the road to work and at their guesthouses (see Box 8). Harassment by local men on the road to work is of particular concern because migrant workers often have to work night shifts, and consequently return home late in the evening after dark. Young women who live in isolated guesthouses are at risk of verbal and physical harassment. Many young women stated that they had been verbally harassed or even abused by local young men. This risk affects women's stability and their personal and emotional life - especially for young and single women.

Further insecurity is also found within the guesthouses. In nearly all discussions with migrant women, theft was raised as a key concern. Half of all women migrants who participated in the focus group discussions in Hai Duong said that items had been stolen from them at their guesthouse, including mobile phones, cash, watches and jewelry. One woman stated that "anything, even things of little value can also be stolen, even the soap - if you leave it outside the door, it will disappear." In addition to the economic loss, this also creates a situation of constant concern about safety in the guesthouses.

Another disadvantage associated with migration is that women migrants must live far from their relatives, and are isolated from family support (see Box 9). For young rural women living away from home for the first time, this can be particularly challenging. They must deal with differences between rural and urban ways of life, with the shift from agricultural work in the field to work in an industrial environment, with the shift from living with family to living in a guesthouse, and with the need to earn a living and take care of themselves.

### **Box 9. Isolation faced by young migrant women**

*I don't have any friends. I want just one friend. It is so difficult for me and people like us to make friends because we are seen to be from the countryside and provincial. They look down on us.*

*Being in my situation is very difficult because I don't have anyone here. I can only rely on myself because I don't have family or friends. I feel so sad when I am sick because I don't have anyone to look after me, and that is when I feel most alone. It is difficult to find genuine friends who understand you and help you out. It is also hard to make friends because we work such long hours so don't really have time to go out to meet people. And also, I feel shy and embarrassed because they can tell by the way we dress and act that we are not from the city.*

*When I had just come to the city for work, I didn't know how to look for a house to rent, every thing is different from my village, I was very alone and disappointed and intended to go back home, but I spent so much money to travel here to work, so I stayed up until now. I stay so that I can save enough money to have a better future.*

Discussions with migrant women in Hai Duong.

Due to living far from home, and with little social support, some migrant women have entered into sex work, drug use or trade, and theft. There are also reports of young women being manipulated by men (see Box 10), as well as cases where migrant women have decided to live with their boyfriend as a "test of pre-married life". Women are more disadvantaged and vulnerable than men in these relationships: they are treated badly and feel as if they have lost their dignity and that of their family. Women in this situation may find it difficult to find a new boyfriend and marriage partner, and also suffer economic consequences. One story told by a woman in Hai Duong illustrates this issue:

I know a couple, at the beginning they fell in love and lived together as a married couple. Then the man would often go out drinking with his friends, and then would come home and ask the woman for money. She even was beaten by him. She became very weak after several abortions. The man left to live with another girl who is younger and more beautiful. The woman suffered from great misery. Her parents know about this now, and she is very ashamed and does not dare to return home.

### Box 10. Case study: the story of Ms Thi\*

*Right after I completed secondary school, I worked for an establishment that produces green bean cakes. I was introduced to the job by a girlfriend. She is very beautiful, she used to work in the green bean cake production unit like me, but she left and worked in a café because the wage was higher. Every day, she worked from 5 p.m. until 11 p.m., and her salary was 1 million dong per month. The café was owned by a couple, and the man was over 40 years old. My friend told me that she was often verbally harassed by the man, but she did not dare tell anyone. She did not leave the job as the salary was good and stable.*

*One day, a guest saw that the man was teasing my girlfriend and told his wife. Then his wife came to my friend's home to make a fuss. It was very serious for my girlfriend as all of the villagers thought that she was not good. The owner of café claimed that my girlfriend seduced him. Now, my girlfriend has gone back home to the village and works for a garment company near her house. The villagers discriminate against her. I think she will find it very hard to find a boyfriend and get married.*

In-depth interview with a 24 year old single migrant woman in Hai Duong.

\*Names have been changed to protect privacy.

A number of migrant women also complained that they are discriminated against by the local community and experience social isolation. They find it very difficult to build equal relationships, lack relationships with their neighbors, and have few opportunities to participate in social events. One reason for this social isolation is differences in place of origin, economic status, and cultural practices between migrant women and local people. Says one migrant woman from Hai Duong, "They call us as 'strange' people, reprimand us when we throw rubbish in the road, or when we come home late from work, making noise". Mass organizations such as the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) and the Viet Nam Youth Union (VYU) have tried to involve migrant women in their activities, but the results have been limited; as one migrant woman from Hai Duong said,

A woman from the Youth Union invited us to attend a meeting, but we work until 9 p.m. so we couldn't attend. However, we would be very shy to attend, we do not know anybody here, and we dress very simply, differently from the people here.

Discussions with young women indicate that there are family and social pressures for women to get married, and another consequence of the social isolation experienced by many young migrant women is that many find it difficult to look for boyfriends and husbands (see Box 11). There are many factors behind this, both objective and subjective. The objective reasons include the fact that the working environment in the garment, textile and electronics industries is dominated by women, and the long working hours each day leave women with little time for social communication and interaction with friends. The subjective reasons include a lack of confidence in contacting and making friends with young men in an unknown environment, as well as changes in their expectations of a boyfriend or husband, as many young women no longer want to marry a man from the village.

### Box 11. Difficulties in finding a prospective partner

*... Many young women in garment enterprises often work very hard and come home very late in the evening. At work, they are all women. If they do not work until late, their salary is not enough to live on, but if they work all day, how can they find a boyfriend and get married?*

*... It is easier to get married in your home town, everything more simple there, we know each other well because it is easier to get to know each other and each other's family and their living conditions.*

*... Since I moved here, I don't want to marry a village man, because I have a better economic situation now, I have learned many things, so a farmer seems boring.*

Focus group discussion with migrant women in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

There are additional impacts of social isolation for women with children. Without the support of family and social networks to assist in childcare and other domestic tasks, many migrant women cannot afford to send their young children to kindergarten; as a consequence, many married migrant women have to leave their jobs and return home to look after their children.

### Box 12. Migration and family stability

*My mother is looking after my children back home. Both my husband and I migrated for work. My husband is working in the south, and I am here in Hai Duong. Actually my husband is away for long periods at a time, he hardly sees the children. And I haven't seen him for 6 months. I feel terrible being away from my children, but I return home every few months to see them. I send money home every month so they can go to school. I am planning to bring them here with me when I save enough money because it would better for them and also for me.*

Focus group discussion with migrant women in Hai Duong.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that migration impacts negatively on the happiness and stability of families (see Box 12). A number of cases were cited where migrants have engaged in extramarital relations, leading to separation or divorce from their spouse; participants suggested that this was more common among male migrants. Migrant women are often worried about the fidelity of their husbands at home. Additional reasons cited by migrant women for marriage breakdown include being unable to withstand the pressure of work and living far from home without the support of a man, being seduced, being abused, and changes in perceptions about husbands, such as preferring a man from the city to a man from the village, as noted above in Box 11.

Women migrants also suffer from poor living conditions, as well as poor health due to limited diet and healthcare (see Box 13). As women migrants have low incomes but also try to save money for the future, they minimize their expenses to essential needs such as rent, water and electricity. They spend little on food and healthcare, and consequently their poor diet have led some women to have dizzy spells, a lack of concentration and even lose consciousness at work.

### Box 13. Poor living conditions and poor health

*... We eat only to get full. We bring rice from home, buy some vegetables and sauces. If we ate meat or fish every day, we would not save any money.*

*... There are very poor facilities in the guesthouse, for 11 rooms there are only two bathrooms and one toilet. Three or four people live in each room, and they all come home from work at the same time, and have to wait to use the bathroom and toilet.*

Focus group discussion with migrant women in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

## 3.5 Disadvantaged groups of women are further marginalised

- Migrant women, in particular young migrant women, experience many negative social impacts of accession to WTO. Other groups of women susceptible to negative impacts of trade integration include middle-aged women, unskilled women, women who have no agricultural land or whose land was recovered in the urbanization process, single women, women with disabilities or illnesses, and young women.



- *Disadvantaged groups of women are less likely to be able to integrate into the restructured labour market and access the opportunities introduced by WTO accession. They are at risk of falling into poverty without adequate support.*

While there have been positive impacts from WTO accession for many women in terms of increased employment opportunities, the absence of effective mechanisms to mitigate negative impacts has seen some groups of women being further marginalised. This is more evident in Hai Duong than Dong Thap, as both positive and negative effects are more prominent there with the more rapid pace of economic integration.

For middle-aged women, especially those unskilled women without any land, there are very few opportunities for accessing new employment options, due to multiple factors (see Box 14). These include the limited opportunities for older women to learn and apply new vocational skills; the limited physical capacity of older women to undertake manual labour jobs; and the lack of capital, business experience, or knowledge about management issues constraining women's opportunities to work as self-employed traders or service providers. Currently, most women in these groups are hired workers, but these jobs are seasonal, insecure and their income is very low. While their income has decreased in recent times, the prices of many commodities has also risen, meaning that their daily lives are now more difficult than in the past.

#### **Box 14. Challenges for older women in finding new jobs**

*... It's very hard to find a job as an older woman. I found a job as a dishwasher in a company and worked there for five months, but then a young girl came and they sacked me. I made complaints but with no result. My wage was 24,000 dong per day, I received no benefits or compensation for losing my job.*

*... Old women can only find jobs as cleaners, but there is very little of this work.*

*... I worked in the fields all my life, but I don't have any fields any more, I have no education, no skills, I don't know what to do to earn a living.*

Focus group discussion with women who have changed their employment type and with poor women, in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

Other excluded and discriminated groups of women include single women with and without children, widows and women with disabilities or long-term illnesses without access to assistance; these groups of women have almost no access to the opportunities opened up by WTO accession. Many of these most vulnerable women lost their only livelihood source when their land for paddies or cash crops was recovered. This is the poorest group of women at present. Since their land was recovered, they have had no alternative livelihood opportunities - not even as labourers, as their health is often too poor for them to engage in manual work. In many cases, these women are unable to take advantage of the employment or free training opportunities which are available for poor households or for households with special disadvantages (see Box 15).

**Box 15. Case study: the story of Ms. Ly\***

*... I am 40 years old, and I have one son. I get sick all of the time, I suffer from chronic stomach aches, and I cannot do anything when I get sick. My son has finished grade 9, but his school performance was poor so he couldn't get into higher secondary school. I advised him to learn a skill so that he could have an occupation, but he doesn't want to. He said that next year he will be old enough to work in an enterprise and earn a living. He can only find a job in a footwear factory because he has not completed secondary school. He is also not in good health.*

*... Very soon I will have to hand over my land to the commune authorities so that they can build the industrial park. We have only 1.5 sao (one sao = 360 m<sup>2</sup> of land). In the past I had 3 sao, and borrowed 2 sao for paddy crops. I often hired people to do the plugging, re-planting, and harvesting. I had enough rice all year round, and didn't have to worry about being hungry. I raised a flock of hens, but they often got sick.*

*... I get sick and often have to go to the doctor, I have used the health insurance card for the poor. The doctor said that the medicine that I need is not affordable through the health insurance scheme and I have to pay with my own money. I have been in hospital this year, and must pay 300,000 to 400,000 dong each time I go to hospital. I get sick and cannot rely to any one to pay the debt, so I sell all of the things that I have, and I have sold 500 kg of rice since early this year. I have borrowed from all of my relatives and neighbors, I borrowed from someone to pay back my debts to the others.*

*... I am very worried that how can I survive without my paddy fields. In the past, we were not rich but at least we had enough rice to survive, we weren't worried about being hungry. But now, I do not dare to hope that life will get easier in the future...*

In-depth interview with a 40 year-old woman in Hải Dương, single with children.

\*Names have been changed to protect privacy.

These women are concerned with the lack of provision of targeted social policies to safeguard them from falling into poverty, including monthly subsidies, access to agricultural land, and a lack of support for their children such as vocational training or priority for employment opportunities. They are at risk across a number of areas, including the risk of abuse due to their impoverishment and the risk of getting in to debt and turning to theft, gambling or selling drugs. In addition, the children of such vulnerable women risk being taken out of school to assist in earning household income, and women's health may be compromised as they have no funds to pay for the treatment of illnesses.

A final vulnerable group is that of young boys and girls who have been negatively influenced by their social environment. Respondents have reported an increase in cases of young people, both girls and boys, engaging in social problems such as internet pornography, gambling, drinking, and theft. The factors behind these problems include a lack of education, and lack of guidance and care from parents who are heavily engaged in meeting the basic income needs of the family (see Box 16).

## Box 16. Social risks for adolescents

*... There are many dangers, but more so for boys than girls. In the past, when there were no industrial parks, we only worked in agricultural crops, and the social environment was simple: all members of the family - parents and children - were together all the time. But now, the economic situation is better, but we have more worries, mostly about the children.*

*... My son used to be a good boy who did well at school. The social environment spoiled him. His father is a construction worker and often works far from home, while I work in an industrial factory, and I often leave the house at 6am and arrive back late in the evening. My children stay at home and take care of themselves. My son was induced by his friend in to playing internet games, and he became so obsessed in the games that he skipped classes to play. He asked me for money for class, but used it for internet games, and he even sold my assets. By the time I realized this, it was too late as he had dropped out of school for several months. I have had to stop work to stay at home and look after him, but he still goes out to play.*

*... Girls get in to internet chatting, they make on-line friends, and then they leave home to be with their boyfriend for several months... that ruins their life.*

Focus group discussions with women who have changed their employment type, with poor women and with business women in Hai Duong and DongThap.

Both migrants and parents who spend long hours at work to try to take advantage of the economic opportunities available to them are experiencing an increasing level of social problems amongst their adolescent children. For the last two to three years, parents have been spending more time engaged in livelihood-related activities. In many households, therefore, the time available to parents to dedicate to their children's care and education has reduced. This has meant that children are left without adequate supervision and care from their parents leaves children more exposed to engage in activities that may lead them to delinquent behaviour. For example, some participants highlighted that due to boredom and lack of supervision, children spent a lot of time playing computer and online games and surfing inappropriate internet sites with sexually explicit and violent content. This is of concern as it shapes adolescents attitudes and behaviours towards sex and interactions with the opposite sex.

### 3.6 Changes in gender equality in the household

- *Many women are playing a stronger role in decision making within the household as a consequence of their increased role in economic production. Women have a greater sense of gender equality due to increased economic independence. They also participate more in community activities.*
- *There have been changes to the traditional gendered division of labour within the household. As more women are engaged in income generation activities outside the home, more men are engaging in household tasks and childcare responsibilities.*
- *The increases in women's economic participation have also resulted in exacerbating women's double burden of productive and reproductive work. Women work 1.5 times longer than previously, and experience considerable time poverty, with little time for themselves.*
- *Women's expenditure needs have been prioritized well below those of the children, the husband, and general household needs. This is the case both in positive economic situations where household expenditure is on the increase, as well as during the reduction of expenditure in times of economic crisis.*

Traditional gender roles within the household are changing. Participants in all focus groups confirmed that since WTO accession, women have increased their participation in the labour market in terms of both the quality and quantity of new employment opportunities. The percentage of economically active women is increasing, as is the number of women who have shifted to new jobs with higher

incomes and increased benefits. This is especially the case in Hai Duong, but also in Dong Thap women have increased their income generation activities outside the home.

There is also evidence that men have increased their contributions to household domestic tasks. In the past, especially in rural areas, men virtually never engaged in tasks such as cooking, washing, or caring for children. In the last two or three years, however, women report that it has been not uncommon for men to engage in domestic tasks when women are otherwise occupied with work in factories or small businesses, especially in Hai Duong (see Box 17).

### **Box 17. Men are engaging in more housework and childcare responsibilities**

*... The wife goes to work all day, leaving home early in the morning and coming home late, so the husband must do the cooking and take care of the children.*

*... In the past, I worked in the fields, I had more free time so I usually did all of the housework. My husband worked in the fields like me, but after work he would often go out with his friends to drink, he didn't do any housework at all. But for the last two years, I have worked in a company, so I have no more time to do the housework, and my husband has to do it. He is used to it now, and it is the same with many men in the village.*

*... Now, many men help bath their children, whereas before they would only go and drink.*

Focus group discussions with migrant women in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

In Dong Thap, however, the gender stereotypes in the household division of labour have not changed as rapidly as in Hai Duong (see Box 18). A number of both men and women have retained their conventional views that men should engage in business and economic production, while women should do the housework and childcare.

### **Box 18. Stereotyped gendered division of labour is still common in Dong Thap**

*... In Dong Thap, well-off households are often led by men with good businesses, and the wife will often stay at home. The main task of the wife is to do the housework and take care of her husband and children. Some of them work together with their husbands or support their husbands in their business. In households where the husband doesn't earn a good living, the wife takes on the role of breadwinner. These households often have low standards of living.*

*... Many women in Dong Thap think that the role of earning a living is men's task, while women do the housework and take care of the children. Many women rely on their husbands. Because of this way of thinking, many women have not taken up opportunities for economic development. Women in households with stable incomes (those who have large paddy fields or raise shrimp) often stay at home, or support their husbands only during the peak season.*

Focus group discussion with women who have changed their employment type, and with poor women in Dong Thap.

This change in women's economic roles, with more women involved in earning income outside the home for the family, has increased women's status within the household to the extent that their decision-making power and their participation in community affairs has increased (see Box 19). The majority of focus group participants in both Hai Duong and Dong Thap indicated that the positive changes in women's employment and income have resulted in an enhanced status of women within the household. This is especially the case with couples of 40 years of age or less.



### Box 19. Women's increased role in decision-making

*... In younger households, the wife plays a greater role and has more power in household decision making. We are old, so we follow the old practices, where the husband is the decision maker and the wife is just consulted. But the younger generation has changed, so we change too, but slowly.*

*... Wives have gained a stronger voice in making decisions around important issues, that is a good thing.*

*... In Dong Thap, the wealthier households are mainly associated with the high income or good business of the husband, so the husband often makes the decisions. But now it is changing, women now are aware about their roles and the need to discuss with their husbands when it comes to making decisions.*

Focus group discussion with women who have changed their employment type and with poor women in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

In Hai Duong, recently married migrant women confirmed that they and their husbands contribute equal amounts of income to the household, and that they are experiencing increased power in decision-making within the household. However, women's participation in decision-making has been limited to particular areas such as education, childcare, the purchase of small assets and daily food expenses. Decisions relating to larger investments and assets, and family businesses, are more often controlled by men.

In Dong Thap, participants also reported an increased role in decision-making within the household, and increased participation in community activities outside the home. In recent years, there have been more activities for women's groups, including training and education on gender issues and equal rights between men and women. As a result, women have gained greater awareness concerning their position and rights within households.

The increases in women's economic participation have also resulted in exacerbating women's double burden of productive and reproductive work (see Box 20). Women in both study sites state that they work one and a half times more than they used to, especially for women factory workers. Business women, traders and those working in industrial parks said that they worked 10-12 hours per day. In addition to this productive working time, women are still the ones who carry out most of the housework: on average, they spend three to four hours per day on domestic tasks. Women therefore suffer from extreme time poverty, and have almost no time for personal needs, resting, leisure, training or learning.

### Box 20. Women's double burden of work

*... Before, I had more free time. I worked as a farmer, and was busy during the peak seasonal period. Everyday I would do the housework and have some time for myself. But now I am so busy, I have to get up earlier to prepare the food for the family, then I go to work and come home very late in the afternoon, I do the cooking, washing and supervise the children's homework. I am so tired, I have no time to do anything.*

*... Although life is getting better and we have more income to help bring up the children, women have it harder than men. We work from early in the morning until the evening. Men also work hard, and they share a little housework with women, but women do more and work longer hours than men.*

Focus group discussion with women who have shifted their employment type and with poor women in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

A further measure of gender equality is the prioritization of the needs of each family member. In general, women's expenditure needs continue to be prioritized below those of the children, the

husband, and general household needs - this is the case both in positive economic situations where household expenditure is on the increase, as well as during the reduction of expenditure in times of economic crisis (see Box 21).

### **Box 21. Women's expenditure needs are prioritized below the rest of the family**

*... As we have a little more money, I spend more on the children's education. They no longer have to skip school in order to work, we bought more books and clothes for them, and we let them go and learn English.*

*... As we have more savings now, we bought a motorbike for my husband.*

*... In the past, when someone in family got sick, we did not have enough money for treatments, but now we send our children to hospital for treatment.*

*... We are reducing everything, but the important thing is to not cut our children's education.*

*... Our nutrition is getting worse, but sometimes we still buy some good food for the children or wine for the husband. I often only eat rice and vegetables.*

Focus group discussion with women who have changed their employment type and with poor women in Hai Duong and Dong Thap.

When household income is high and household consumption increases, a typical order of expenditure priority is as follows: investment in children's education; improving family nutrition, especially for children; buying a television; buying a motorbike for the husband; using better healthcare services; and carrying out household repairs. This prioritization of expenditure sees children at the top, with men close behind and women expected to sacrifice any needs for the good of the family.

Similarly, during times of economic decline when household expenditure is cut, women tend to be the first to suffer the consequences. In Dong Thap the 2008 economic crisis has seen many households falling into debt. These households have reduced their expenditure according to the following list of priorities: delaying house repairs and the purchase of assets; reducing expenditure on entertainment; reducing expenditure on women's needs; reducing the costs of healthcare; and reducing family nutrition.

The findings of this study highlight the need for policies and programs that enhance the capacity of women to take advantage of the opportunities which WTO accession brings, and which prevent or mitigate some of the negative consequences to women. The motivation to engage in policy reforms and programs which reduce gender inequality reflects Viet Nam's national and international commitments to gender equality, as well as recognizes that gender inequality has a negative impact on trade outcomes:

Gender-based inequalities in control over resources such as land, credit and knowledge not only hinder the ability of women to take advantage of new opportunities presented by trade liberalization, but also constrain the output response and thus the export capacity of the whole economy (Çağatay 2001: 26).

Based on the analysis of research findings, this section proposes a number of recommendations for provincial and state authorities, and mass organizations to improve gender equality by addressing the impacts of WTO accession on women.

## Part 4

# Recommendations

### 4.1 Gender Integration into Policies, National Plans and National Targeted Programs

**Recommendation 1:** Review and revise existing policies concerning labor and employment to ensure that gender is integrated as stipulated by the Gender Equality Law, especially in policies concerning the implementation of approved National Targeted Programs. Special attention should be paid to the groups of women that are particularly vulnerable after accession to WTO (including rural and poor women, middle-aged women who have to change jobs due to land acquisition, single women with small children, migrant women and women with disabilities). Relevant policies and programs include: the National Targeted Program for Employment, the National Targeted Program for Education and Vocational Training, the National Targeted Program for Poverty Reduction, the National Project for Supporting Youth in Vocational Training and Employment, the MOLISA Working Program for Labor and Beneficiaries of Social Policies 2009, and in similar documents in related ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MOET, MARD, VYU, and VWU*].

**Recommendation 2:** Integrate gender into the development of new National Targeted Programs until 2020 according to Resolution 24/2008/NQ-CP and accompanying Program of Action of the Government on Agriculture, Farmers, and Rural Development, especially in the development of the National Targeted Program for New Rural Development and the National Targeted Program for Human Resource Development in Rural Areas. Also integrate gender in the development of the National Indicators of New Rural Development [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MARD*].

**Recommendation 3:** National Programs for the prevention of social problems should target migrants as a special group to raise their awareness of risks and support them to avoid being disadvantaged by social problems [*Focal Points: MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 4:** The National Plan of Action on Gender Equality should outline provisions to address public safety so that women can have access to safe public spaces. The plan should include resourcing for fixtures such as lights and lamps on roads and alleys in residential areas, especially in areas with many guesthouses for women migrant workers. Additional security provisions should include encouragement of the local community to use public spaces, and educations of local people and enterprises around security issues and the unacceptability of sexual harassment [*Focal Point: Gender Equality Department (GED)/MOLISA*].

### 4.2 Awareness Raising

**Recommendation 5:** Raise awareness of all government officers, policy makers (especially in MOLISA, MOET, MARD and the Committee for Ethnic Minorities [CEM]), and leaders of mass organizations in both rural and urban areas about gender equality and the situation of rural women in the process of industrialization and urbanization. This will include providing training to relevant government agencies and mass organizations on using the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Migrant Workers Convention, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers and other human rights instruments to address women migrant workers' concerns. The objective of this recommendation is to make these actors more aware of the opportunities and

challenges that different groups of rural women are confronting, so that they can create favorable conditions for rural women to develop their fullest potential and to avoid undesirable risks [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MOET, MARD, CEM*].

**Recommendation 6:** State authorities instigate a communication campaign to raise awareness of gender equality and women's rights for female workers, so that they can claim their rights, and enjoy gender equality at work, in the family and in the community. Also promote communication to increase awareness of labourers, especially women, about government policies and programs for employment to encourage them to participate actively in these programs and to better understand their rights and responsibilities [*Focal Points: MOLISA, Ministry of Justice (MOJ), MARD, VWU*].

**Recommendation 7:** The VWU and VYU organize activities to educate, raise awareness and support women migrant workers to integrate into their local communities, and encourage women migrants to participate in local organizations. This includes developing communication materials about legal rights, policies, and skills to survive in big cities/industrial zones for migrants and widely disseminate them to rural areas via mass organizations [*Focal Points: VWU, VYU*].

### 4.3 Programmatic Interventions

**Recommendation 8:** Increase investment for job creation, self-employment and vocational training in rural areas in the National Targeted Program for Education and Vocational Training, with special targets for job creation and self-employment for women in rural areas, especially those who lost land and have had to change jobs. Review the implementation of the National Targeted Program for Education and Vocational Training to make them more transparent and accountable so that the investments will be more effective [*Focal Points: MOF, MOLISA, MOET, MARD*].

**Recommendation 9:** MOLISA should develop a national level program on "Promoting gender equality to ensure that all men and women have equity of access to opportunities and benefits arising from WTO admission". Such a program would include:

- Improved targeting of specific groups of women (including rural and poor women, middle-aged women who have to change jobs due to land acquisition, single women with small children, migrant women and women with disabilities),
- A formal employment referral network providing good quality formal job services for workers and expanding the network to cover all remote areas so that all workers (including rural and poor women, middle-aged women, single women with small children, migrant women and women with disabilities) can access the service. The network referral system should be trialed in several provinces before full roll out, and guidelines should be developed to ensure that network operators comply with good practice and do not exploit workers.
- Develop and enforce a monitoring and reporting system, and sanctions against individuals and agencies engaged in job introduction services that breach good practice [*Focal Point: MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 10:** Provincial authorities and state authorities develop a Priority Investors Scheme where priority is given to investors who show capacity and willingness to comply with requirements that address the needs of women. Criteria for priority assessment will include enterprises and investors that have demonstrated commitments to:

- Employ poor women, middle-aged women and women with disabilities.
- Provide access to safe and affordable housing for women migrant workers.
- Develop and implement sexual harassment policies and procedures.
- Promote access to vocational training for women workers.



Priority should also be given to enterprises and investors wishing to invest in sectors which are relevant to the local labour force's characteristics, creating more and better quality jobs for both men and women. As such, the following sectors should be prioritized in the period of 2010 – 2015:

- The garment and footwear industries, which shall likely create employment for women in rural areas, especially for unskilled workers and those whose land has been recovered.
- The food and agricultural products processing industries, which tend to employ many unskilled and poor rural women.
- Handicraft industries, which are also appropriate to women who are unskilled, or who require flexible work [*Focal Points: MOLISA, Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), Ministry of Finance (MOF)*].

**Recommendation 11:** Provincial and state authorities develop a mechanism to monitor compliance with the commitments set out in the Priority Investors Scheme relating to promoting gender equality, as well as compliance with the labour code, especially amongst employers with migrant and transient workers. This includes enforcement of regulated working hours and of the minimum wage across all sectors [*Focal Point: MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 12:** Provincial and state authorities (MOF, MOLISA) review existing credit mechanisms and remove bottle-necks to make credit for jobs and vocational training more accessible to poor people, especially poor and middle-aged rural women. Access to credit should be accompanied by technical assistance in managing and using the borrowed money in order to make it more effective. A Credit for Recovered Land Policy should be developed and implemented to provide access to credit for farmers, and for women whose land has been recovered. The terms and amounts of these loans should be flexible. More specifically, there should be flexibility in guarantors for the loan, and an increase in the size of the loan (with a minimum of VND 100 million and a repayment term between 1-2 years) [*Focal Points: MOF, MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 13:** State authorities (MOLISA, MOF, Ministry of Health [MOH], Ministry of Construction [MOC]) develop an effective mechanism for mobilizing resources for social assistance for those workers (especially poor women, single women, middle-aged women and migrant women) who are negatively affected by economic development processes, to prevent these workers moving into poverty and to reduce the disparity between rich and poor. The resources should be mobilized from the state budget, local budget, the social security program, and from local enterprises, organizations and individuals. Appropriate forms of social assistance include:

- Monthly subsidies to allow recipients to maintain a minimum standard of living.
- For those who lost land due to land acquisition for other purposes, allocating a proportion of agricultural land so that they can maintain agricultural production.
- Offering long-term vocational training or priorities for employment for the children of these workers.
- Offering free health insurance to ensure access to health care for the vulnerable groups mentioned above, including rural women working in urban areas with incomes above the rural poverty line but below the urban poverty line, are who would therefore not be eligible for health insurance for poor people in their place of origin.
- Authorities in cities or industrial zones with large in-migration flows should speed up the implementation of the existing “social housing” program, building low-cost apartment buildings for poor people and migrant workers, especially migrant women, to pay by installments or for low-cost rent, or building factory dormitories for employees [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MOF, MOH, MOC*].

**Recommendation 14:** State authorities increase women's educational level and the number of women participating in high level good quality jobs in identified new industries by:



- Raising awareness about gender equality in employment to gradually remove stereotypes contributing to gendered employment segregation [*Focal Points: MOET, MOLISA, mass media agencies, VWU*].
- Conducting a mapping exercise to identify new and booming industries for the next 5 years [*Focal Points: MPI, MOLISA*].
- Developing an education scheme to promote women's entry into those industries, including minimum 30% quota requirements for women in all identified industries at university level, and scholarship grants for excluded and discriminated groups of women [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MOET*].
- Provide vocational training for women in all occupational categories to enable them to compete effectively with men in all occupational categories opened by the accession to WTO [*Focal Points: MOLISA, MOET*].

**Recommendation 15:** Review mechanism for requirements of ensuring access to childcare in places with large numbers of female workers, and incentives for enterprises to create good conditions for female workers with small children as stipulated in the Labor Law. In the process of revising the Labor Code, there should be a careful analysis of the challenges with the existing incentive mechanism, in order to formulate a better mechanism [*Focal Point: MOLISA*].

**Recommendation 16:** Provide practical support to migrant women workers. This includes establishing support centers, counseling centers, or hot-line support for migrants in cities/industrial zones where there are large in-migration flows; existing counseling centers, both private and government ones, can be extended to include counseling for migrants on issues of employment and safety life. Regularly organize free orientation training for new migrants to help them to adapt to living conditions in cities/industrial zones. Resources for these activities should be mobilized from state budget, private sectors and organizations, individuals, and international donors, with technical support from UNIFEM and the International Organization for Migration. The Viet Nam Women's Union and the Youth Union establish support groups for young migrant women, with the VWU also acting as a representative for women workers in dispute between local enterprises and women workers [*Focal Points: VWU, VYU*].

## 4.4 Ongoing and Future Research

**Recommendation 17:** Carry out research, especially participatory qualitative research specific amongst potential and returning women migrant workers to address gaps in existing knowledge about issues and problems occurring in the migration process [*Focal Points: research institutes in MOLISA, MARD, MPI, Viet Nam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS)*].

**Recommendation 18:** Collaboration between ILSSA, VASS and Oxfam to update Oxfam's research on the impact of the economic crisis [*Focal Point: ILSSA*].

Annex 1. Survey Profile Tool

Province: ..... District: ..... Commune: .....  
Focus Group: .....

TT	Age	Ethnicity	Marital status	No. of children	Highest education level (grade)	Highest qualification level	Major economic activity			
							Occupation	Work sector	Position at work	Average income
A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										

Code for column 2: - Kinh/Hoa: 1 - Other: 2	Code for column 3: - Married: 1 - Other: 2 (widow, divorced, single, separated)	Code for column 6: - College and higher: 1 - Vocational training: 2 - Elementary, short term training: 3 - High school: 4 - Secondary school: 5 - Primary school: 6 - Primary not completed: 7	Code for column 7: - Working: 1 - Not working, can't find a job: 2 - Not able to work (elderly, sick, disability, retirement): 3 - Housework: 4 - Schooling: 5	Code for column 8 & 12: sector of those who are working - Agriculture, forestry, fishery: 1 - Construction, industry: 2 - Services: 3 - Public employee: 4	Code for column 9 & 14: - Business owners: 1 - Waged employee: 2 - Self employed: 3

Province: ..... District: ..... Commune : .....

Focus group: .....

TT	Key changes in employment	Major job in 2007				Have you been trained in the last 12 months?	Number of training courses	Topics of training	Form of training	Decision maker in the family	Total time spent for household (family care) in 2008 compared to 2006
		Occupation	Work sector	Position at work	Average income						
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											

Code for column 11: - No change compared to 2007: 1 ---> - Change compared to 2007: 2 -->	Code for column 16: - Yes: 1 - No: 2	Code for column 18: - Education: 1 - Professional: 2 - Agriculture extension: 3 - Gender equality: 4 - Other: 5	Code for column 19: - Intensive training outside living areas: 1 - Concentrated training on-site: 2 - On the job: 3 - Other: 4	Code for column 20: - Husband: 1 - Wife: 2 - Both: 3 - Other: 4	Code for column 21: - Increased: 1 - Reduced: 2 - No change: 3
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Annex 2. Focus Group Discussion Guiding Questions

Key questions for women who have experienced changes in economic activities

Participants: Economically active women who have experienced changes in their economic activities or employment type

Topic	Key suggested questions	Tools	Outcome for analysis
Overview of locality	1. Brief overview of common livelihood activities of most households in villages/communes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Time line</li></ul>	Overview of livelihood/ poverty status.
Status of employment shift / livelihood activity changes	2. Selection of employment shift/economic activity changes that most women are involved in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Change process, what was the context for new employment activities?</li><li>Why did women change their traditional employment to new forms of work (did they have a choice? Were the new economic activities more relevant?).</li><li>Changes in incomes, working conditions, time, job security.</li><li>What were the requirements for women to participate in the changes (education, skills, age, family status, etc)?</li><li>Who decided to make the change?</li></ul> 3. What are the disadvantages and possible risks of the employment shift?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Causal tree</li></ul>	Identify the shift of employment/ livelihood activities, motivating factors, forms, opportunities, barriers for poor women.
Gender relations	4. What are advantages and disadvantages of the change for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Venn diagram</li><li>Factor analysis</li><li>Group discussion, comparison with control group</li><li>Case study</li></ul>	Influence of employment/ livelihood on gender relations.
	5. Identify the impacts (both positive and negative) of economic activity changes for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Women themselves (health, happiness, status).</li><li>Time for family, looking after children.</li><li>Relationship between husband and wife, with elderly people in the household, with parents in-law.</li></ul> 6. Impacts on participation in decision making around household assets, education of children, investment for production / businesses.		
	7. Impacts on participation in community events, meetings, training, projects.		

Topic	Key suggested questions	Tools	Outcome for analysis
Assessment of vulnerability / challenges and opportunities	<p>8. What are the main challenges, and how do women cope with them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The availability and cost of social services (health, education).</li><li>• Job security.</li><li>• Risks of social problems and their influence on family, spousal relations, relations between parents and children.</li></ul> <p>10. Women's assessment of the opportunities that they anticipate in future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employment, production, business.</li><li>• Education for children.</li><li>• Position in family, community, work place.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ranking</li><li>• Causal tree</li><li>• Case study</li></ul>	Understanding of the opportunities and challenges for women, and their capacity to cope with challenges and access opportunities.
Expectations and policy implications	<p>11. Expectations / recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Services, vocational training, credit, market services, etc.</li><li>• Recommendations for policy-making and policy implementation.</li></ul>		



Key questions for women migrant workers

Participants: Women migrant workers who have moved from one district to another, absent from home for more than six months

Topic	Key suggested questions	Tools	Outcome for analysis
Overview of locality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Introduction of participants and their type of work.</li><li>2. What are the 3 most popular jobs for women and men in your hometown? Why do most women and men work in these occupations?</li><li>3. Reasons for migration (economic, family, social, changes in hometown which reduced job opportunities, etc).</li><li>4. Who in the family made the decision to migrate?</li><li>5. How did you arrange for a new job in the destination town? How long did it take, where did you get information, did you travel along or in a group?</li><li>6. How is your new employment status? (Hours, wages, working conditions, job security, living conditions, etc).</li><li>7. Is it easy or difficult to find a job?</li><li>8. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working far from home?</li><li>9. Comparison with local women workers: income, working conditions and job security?</li></ol>		Overview of women migrant workers.
Status and dynamics of labour migration		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Causal tree</li><li>• Categorize positive and negative factors</li></ul>	Understanding of dynamics of migration, status of employment.
Gender relations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>10. Identify the impacts (both positive and negative) of labour migration for:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Women themselves (health, happiness, status).</li><li>• Time for family, looking after children.</li><li>• Relationship between husband and wife, with elderly people in the household, with parents in-law.</li><li>• How are remittances from migrant workers spent at home?</li></ul></li><li>11. Impacts on participating in making decision on household assets, education of children, investment for production/ business.</li><li>12. Participation in social network.</li></ol>	<p>Comparison to find the differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Problem tree / causal tree indicating the reasons of difference</li><li>• Case study</li></ul>	Influence of employment and livelihood type on gender roles.

Topic	Key suggested questions	Tools	Outcome for analysis
Assessment of vulnerability/ challenges and opportunities	<p>13. What are the main challenges that migrant women face, and how do they cope?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Job security.</li><li>• Risks of social problems and their influence on family, spousal relations, relations between parents and children.</li><li>• Attitude, behavior/ perception of community.</li><li>• Access to basic social services such as health, education.</li></ul> <p>Are there risks of exploitation, sexual abuse, marginalization?</p> <p>15. Women's assessment of the opportunities that they anticipate in future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employment, business, education and training, saving for the family</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ranking</li><li>• Causal tree</li><li>• Case study</li></ul>	Understanding of the opportunities and challenges for women, and their capacity to cope with challenges and access opportunities.
Expectations and policy implications	<p>16. Expectations / recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Services, vocational training, credit, market services, etc.</li><li>• Recommendations for policy-making and policy implementation.</li></ul>		

**Key questions for discussion with group of SME owners**  
**Participants:** Owner/directors of small enterprises, business, household business

Topic	Key suggested questions	Tools	Outcome for analysis
Overview of locality	1. Brief overview of enterprises, business, household business in villages / communes.		Overview of livelihood / SME owners.
Status of business	2. Identify the typical sector (formal or informal) that women SME owners are most likely to involved in, and why. 3. Identify the typical economic industries that women owners/directors are most likely to involved in, and why. 4. Identify the typical scale of business that women owners/directors are most likely to involved in, and why. 5. What are the opportunities/barriers for women business owners/directors? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Income, working time, working conditions, job security.</li><li>• Access to supportive services: credit, training, tax deduction, market accession, and others preferential regulations.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Causal tree</li><li>• Venn diagram</li><li>• Factor analysis</li></ul>	Identify the typical sector, economic industries, motivations, opportunities and barriers for women SME owners.
Gender relations	6. Identify the impacts (both positive and negative) of owning the business for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Women themselves (health, happiness, status).</li><li>• Time for family, looking after children.</li><li>• Relationship between husband and wife, with elderly people in the household, with parents in-law.</li></ul> 7. Impacts on participating in the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Making decisions on household assets, education of children, investment for production / business, participating in community events and social networks.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group discussion</li><li>• Case study</li></ul>	Influence of employment on gender roles.

Topic	Key suggested questions	Tools	Outcome for analysis
Assessment of vulnerability / challenges and opportunities	<p>8. What are the main challenges that women SME owners face?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Job security.</li><li>• Risks of social problems and their influence on family, spousal relations, relations between parents and children.</li><li>• Attitude, behavior/ perception of community.</li></ul> <p>9. How do women SME owners cope with these pressures?</p> <p>10. Women's assessment of the opportunities that they anticipate in future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business, education for children, position in family, community, workplace.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ranking</li><li>• Causal tree</li><li>• Case study</li></ul>	Understanding of the opportunities and challenges for women, and their capacity to cope with challenges and access opportunities.
Expectations and policy implications	<p>11. Expectations / recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Services, vocational training, credit, market services, etc.</li><li>• Recommendations for policy-making and policy implementation.</li></ul>		

Key questions for discussion with group of poor women

Participants: Poor, economically active women who face risks, changes in employment, and use dynamic means of reducing their poverty.

Topic	Key suggested questions	Tools	Outcome for analysis
Overview of locality and poverty dynamics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Trends and dynamics of poverty for the last 2 years, and specific characteristics of poor women (assets, incomes, livelihood activities).</li><li>2. Identify major causes of poverty.</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Time line</li><li>• Listing / ranking</li><li>• Causal tree</li></ul>	Understandings of poverty dynamics for women, and incidence of poverty.
Employment and livelihood of the poor women	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. What are the major changes in livelihood activities / employment of poor women?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shift in livelihood activities (e.g. from farm to non-farm).</li><li>• New livelihood activities emerging or old ones disappearing</li><li>• Income, working conditions, time.</li><li>• Shocks / negative impacts (what are the risk factors?)</li></ul></li><li>4. Who is most affected by these changes?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Men / women; poor / non-poor; husband / wife; son / daughter.</li></ul></li><li>5. Identify the most typical livelihood activities that poor women are involved in:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Income, working time, working conditions, job security?</li><li>• Access to support services to develop or find secure employment: vocational training, skills, extension, technology, credit, etc.</li></ul></li><li>6. Identify the impacts (both positive and negative) of owning the business for:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Women themselves (health, happiness, status).</li><li>• Time for family, looking after children.</li><li>• Relationship between spouses, with elderly people, with parents in-law.</li></ul></li><li>7. Impacts on participating in the following activities:</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Problem tree/ causal tree</li><li>• Group discussion</li><li>• Case study</li></ul>	Identify the shift of employment/ livelihood activities, motivates, formality, factors, opportunities, barriers for poor women  In- depth analysis on livelihood activities/ employment of poor women Influence of employment and livelihoods on gender roles.



Topic	Key suggested questions	Tools	Outcome for analysis
<b>Gender relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making decisions on household assets, education of children, investment for production / business, participating in community events and social networks.</li> </ul> <p>8. Domestic abuse and divorce: nature and rate compared to 2 years ago.</p>		
<b>Vulnerability</b>	<p>9. To what extent are poor women at risk of: exploitation, falling further into poverty, trafficking, HIV / AIDS.</p> <p>10. Access to resources, services and other support programs.</p>	<p>Problem tree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case study</li> </ul>	Vulnerability risks and analysis.
<b>Assessment of vulnerability / challenges and opportunities</b>	<p>11. What are the main challenges that poor women face?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job / livelihood security.</li> <li>Risks of social problems and their influence on family, spousal relations, relations between parents and children.</li> <li>Attitude, behavior / perception of community.</li> </ul> <p>12. How do poor women cope with these pressures?</p> <p>13. Women's assessment of the opportunities that they anticipate in future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business, education for children, position in family, community, workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ranking</li> <li>Causal tree</li> <li>Case study</li> </ul>	Understanding of the opportunities and challenges for women, and their capacity to cope with challenges and access opportunities.
<b>Expectations and policy implications</b>	<p>14. Expectations / recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services, vocational training, credit, market services, etc.</li> <li>Recommendations for policy-making and policy implementation.</li> </ul>		

## **Annex 3. Guiding Questions for In-Depth Interviews**

### **1. Selection of interviewees**

Interviewees are selected from the focus group participants, or may be someone who is mentioned in the focus group discussion as a typical example of the particular target group. Criteria for selection includes:

- Having either positive or negative experiences, both economically and socially, as an impact of WTO accession.
- Having a story which is regarded as 'typical' for the target group.
- Being interested in telling the 'true' story for their experience.

### **2. Number of interviewees**

There are at least two in-depth interviews for each focus group (poor women, economic changes, small business owners, migrant workers), one as a positive example and one as a negative example.

### **3. Interview outline for those who have had positive experiences**

#### ***3.1 Information about the interviewee***

- Name, age, marriage status, employment status, education/ qualifications.

#### ***3.2 Description of previous work/job economic activities/well being status of your family 2 years ago***

- What did you do 2 years ago?
- Which sectors did you work in (formal, informal, industrial, job security, etc)?
- Location of work.
- Income of yourself and your household.

#### ***3.3 How did the new opportunities arise?***

- Context of the opportunity, who introduced you? How did you know about the opportunities? Did it come from your own commune, district or from the city or other provinces? Were the opportunities for both men and women or women only?
- How did you access and uptake opportunities? On your own or with support from others? Who supported you?
- How long did it take you to fully respond to the requirements of the opportunities (training, funds for capital, learn skills, etc)?
- Were there trade-offs for you to take up the opportunity? If yes, what were they?
- What was your family's (husband, children) response to you taking up the opportunities, did they support you or not? Why?
- Are there many women (in your village or commune) who could uptake the new opportunities like you did? Who? Any similarities among them (educational level, financial resources, good relations with local authorities, etc)?

#### ***3.4 What are the impacts of taking up the new opportunities?***

- What are the positive changes in your life? (Good economic returns, more income, employment security, etc)
- Who benefits most directly from your successes (yourself, your children, husband, parents)? How / what are the benefits?
- Who benefits indirectly from your successes (job creation for other women in village/ commune, etc)?
- Are there positive or negative changes in gender relations in your family or your community (voice in decision making in the household, influencing community, etc)?

### ***3.5 What solutions or recommendations do you suggest?***

## **4. Interview outline for those who have had negative experiences**

### ***4.1 Information about the interviewee***

- Name, age, marriage status, employment status, education/ qualifications.

### ***4.2 Description of previous work/job/ economic activities/ well being status of your family 2 years ago***

- What did you do 2 years ago?
- Which sectors did you work in (formal, informal, industrial, job security, etc)?
- Location of work.
- Income of yourself and your household.

### ***4.3. How did the problems you face come about? (Causes for negative changes, losses, risk, shocks referred to as 'problems')***

- Context of problems, how did they come about? Did they originate from your own commune, district or from the city or other provinces? Were the problems for both men and women or women only?
- How did you cope with the problems? On your own, or did a person or organization support you? If yes, who?
- What did you have to do to cope with the problems (go for training, look for capital, learn skills, scale down the business operation, sell assets, etc)?
- What is your family's attitude to your solution for coping with the problems? Did they support or not, and why?
- Are there many women in your village or commune who face similar problems? Who are they? Any similarities among them (educational level, financial resources, relations with local authorities, etc)?

### ***4.4. What have been the impacts of negative experiences?***

- What are the negative changes in your life? (Well being status of the household, less income, uncertainty in business, employment, etc)?
- Who is most negatively influenced in your family as a consequence of the problems (you, children, husband, parents, etc)?
- How, and what are the effects (for example education of children, life in household, etc)?
- Are there positive or negative changes in gender relations in your family, your community (voice in decision making in the household, influencing community, etc)?

### ***4.5 What solutions or recommendations do you suggest?***

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