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## Changing Gender Relations in Vietnam's Post Doi Moi Era

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*Confucian traditions around gender roles are insufficient to explain gender inequality in Vietnam today. Furthermore, the gender impact of the transition to a market economy must be examined in the context of new social hierarchies arising from that transition. Findings are presented on changing intra-household relations, mobility and social differentiation in the market economy, and new forms of political participation and knowledge.*

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# Changing Gender Relations In Vietnam's Post Doi Moi Era

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## Abstract

This study documents existing evidence on the gender effects of the recent social and economic transition in Vietnam. Although gender disparities are often attributed to Confucian traditions around men and women's roles, these traditions alone do not explain the variant forms of gender inequality in Vietnam today. The formation of new social hierarchies arising from the transition to a market economy further raises the question of whether gender alone without reference to other forms of social differentiation is an adequate analytic construct for assessing the impact of the reforms. This report provides an analysis of national trends, a review of the recent literature on gender, and a household level analysis of gender roles in both an urban and a rural community. Findings are presented on changing intra-household relations, mobility and social differentiation in the market economy, and new forms of political participation and knowledge. Specific recommendations are provided to address emerging gender inequalities at the household and community level and in light of larger national trends.

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## 1. Introduction

Much of the recent literature on gender in Vietnam speculates on the negative effects of the transition to a market economy on women in terms of their position in the household, educational attainment, and workforce participation. Yet, little evidence beyond the decline in social services is provided to document the specific gender effects of this transition. In part it is difficult to document these changes because the baseline data prior to *Doi Moi* (Renovation) on gender are not available to conduct an extensive and comprehensive longitudinal analysis. Changes in gender relations at the household level are also not immediately apparent without in-depth investigation. Finally, it is inherently difficult to specify how macro-level social and economic changes directly affect gender processes and to demonstrate how these effects change over time.

The contribution of this study is to document the existing evidence about the gender effects of the recent social economic changes and to provide an in-depth analysis of these processes at national, community, and household levels. The study specifically suggests how gender itself becomes an important construct for understanding the social economic changes and for analyzing men and women's household level interactions in two dynamic and rapidly changing communities. To make this argument, the study goes beyond the standard hypotheses and assertions to look at how people are interpreting the current social, economic and historical changes from a gender perspective. The study further documents current gender beliefs, practices, and trends at the household level at a very interesting point in Vietnamese history.

This introduction begins with a description of the social and economic changes over the past decade: *Doi Moi* and the recent Asian currency crisis. Chapter Two then summarizes the existing literature on gender and women's issues and covers different domains in the post *Doi Moi* period. Chapter Three provides an analysis of national trends. In that chapter, key macro-level demographic and social indicators by gender are analyzed over time from existing national data sets, where longitudinal data are available. Chapter Four characterizes gender relations at the household level in

two communities. This analysis is based on a random, household survey of over 100 respondents in each community. The survey covered household composition, residence, education, employment, assets, ownership and contraceptive practices. Chapter Five reports on a time allocation study in the two communities, which looked at 240 men and women's allocation of time in households (120 respondents in each community). Chapter Six analyzes people's beliefs and perceptions about gender relations and reported experiences before and after the reforms. This chapter is based on individual in-depth interviews with men and women in their 40's and 50's who came of age prior to *Doi Moi*. While each chapter is organized as a separate analysis, Chapter Seven summarizes the major findings of the preceding chapters and speculates on the overall implications of the entire report.

#### **A. Sites and Methodologies**

The two communities chosen for the household survey, time allocation study and in-depth interviews were: (1) Dang Cuong, a rural northern commune in Hai Phong near the main road and (2) Go Vap, an urban southern district located in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). Within their particular context, they are administratively comparable. Although the selection of these two sites is designed to suggest rural/urban, north/south, permanency/mobility and agricultural/industrial differences, neither community can be said to represent these characteristics. To that extent, the community-level findings at best only characterize the communities in which these studies were based.

Dang Cuong is primarily a farming community but many residents work each day in the surrounding industrial parks and/or migrate for work to Hai Phong City itself. Go Vap is on the outskirts of HCMC. Go Vap developed over the past ten years and many joint ventures with foreign and domestic ownership have opened factories there. In addition, many young people have moved into this district to find employment in the joint ventures.

In each community, a team interviewed at least 100 households (total sample size was 211), which were randomly selected from a household registration list. The team interviewed an adult who

was readily available (not necessarily the household head) and selected different times of the day for these interviews. The 211 adults interviewed included 111 women and 100 men, ranging from 17–58 years of age. The survey covered household composition, migration, and residence, contraceptive use, number of pregnancies, work and employment (including household labor), expenditures, age of marriage, age of household members, educational levels, land and farm assets, housing type and ownership, wages and personal assets, and ownership of other consumer durable goods.

Using instruments developed for other Population Council studies, the teams also surveyed both men and women from a subset of the same households to determine productive age women and men's time allocation over the prior day (a 24-hour period). The time allocation study included both interviews and observations to confirm people's reports of time spent. All told, the time allocation study covered 243 respondents, including 109 men and 134 women.

The researchers developed, field-tested, and revised the survey and time allocation instruments first in Hanoi and later in Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh with two teams of interviewers. The northern team was comprised of sociology students from the University of Hanoi and the southern of law students from Ho Chi Minh University. Several of the law students work with a hotline counseling center and had already participated in earlier Population Council household level qualitative research study. The interviewers assisted with the construction and testing of the survey. Both teams also reviewed the human subjects' protocols to ensure there was sufficient informed consent on the part of the interviewees.

A team of masters' students from Hanoi Economics University entered the survey data into SPSS. The researchers then analyzed and categorized the time spent by specific categories (household labor, outside labor for others, outside self-employment, leisure time, childcare time, meal preparations, transport, eating, sleeping, and living arrangements).

In addition, the two research teams conducted 19 in depth life histories with men and women in their 40s and 50s from a subset of the 80 households which participated in the survey and time

allocation studies. The purpose of these intergenerational interviews was to gather retrospective data on men and women's experiences, beliefs, and perceptions about gender roles and responsibilities. These interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Team supervisors reviewed the tapes and transcriptions to ensure that the accuracy and appropriateness of the interview process. The principal investigators then analyzed the qualitative data according to the major domains outlined in the literature review.

To analyze the national trends, the following national data sets were used: 1989 Census, the 1992 Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VLSS), the 1994 Vietnam Inter-Censal Demographic Survey (VNICDS), the 1995 General Statistical Office (GSO) data on Women and Men in Vietnam, the 1996 National Committee for Population and Family Planning (NCPFP) Selected Data, and 1997 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS).<sup>1</sup> At the time of analysis, the team did not have access to the most recent (1998) VLSS data.

The literature review covered documents in both English and Vietnamese. While not exhaustive, this review addressed the major domains of gender analysis, including household rights, property rights, migration, employment, access to credit, reproductive health, intergenerational relations, and political participation. Finally, the brief background summary of *Doi Moi* and the Asian Currency Crisis, which follows is based on reports and meetings with the financial, business, and donor community.

## **B. The Social and Economic Transition**

Several academic and policy studies have been conducted of Vietnam's first decade under *Doi Moi* and the economic, social, and political effects of this transition (Beckman *et. al* 1997; World Bank 1993; Ljunggren 1993; Thayer and Marr 1993, to name a few). Although *Doi Moi* is widely believed to have begun with the Sixth Party Congress' decision in 1986 to accept the private sector and market

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<sup>1</sup> These may be updated as other data sets (e.g., the new 1997 VLSS and 1999 National Census) are made public.

mechanisms, Ljunggren (1997) observes that there have been several stages in the reform process. As early as 1979 with the New Economic Management Policy, the Party recognized the need to allow certain economic incentives and permitted a contract system in agriculture, allowing farmers to establish direct links with markets, and “fence breaking” by state-owned enterprises (deVylder and Fforde 1988 cited in Ljunggren). “Fence breaking” [*pha rao*] has been a characteristic strategy to initiate economic reforms; first, by violating existing rules and regulations in every day practice (de facto) and then, determining from the response how far the reform can proceed (de jure). Thus, in 1982, there was an anti-reform reaction but also a reorientation of the economy away from the earlier focus on Soviet style heavy industry towards agriculture, consumer goods, and exports.

At the Sixth Party Congress in 1986, the Party recognized that their hybrid economic model would not work and took a more radical approach to introduce Doi Moi to renovate the economic and political system. The party introduced the idea of a commodity economy and in 1987, passed a foreign investment law. By 1988, the Party also introduced reforms to shift farming from the collective to the household. (For purposes of this study, this would result in major changes in time use and allocation at the household level.) In 1989, prices (for rice exports) were determined by the world prices on the international market and Vietnam effectively opened its doors to international trade. The official exchange rate was also depreciated. In one year, Vietnam shifted from being a rice importer to becoming a major rice exporter. In 1993, the passage of the Land Law, which allowed people to transfer land, would also have major gender implications in terms of who had title and authority to make such transfers.

Over the next decade, Vietnam reduced the number of state-owned enterprises by a half from over 12,000 to about 6,000 enterprises. However, efforts to divest the remaining enterprises have since slowed considerably. One concern about the initial pace and effects of the reform process was that many subsidies were being removed without adequate opportunities for increasing household incomes to cope with these losses. In 1996, the Eighth Party Congress argued for the leading role of the state

economy over the private sector and reform efforts slowed. The Party introduced the idea of “equitization” to restructure some 150 enterprises. In January 1999, the Government introduced a value-added tax (VAT). While such a tax represents an improvement over former tax transfer policies, how it will be implemented remains to be seen.

The initial reforms stimulated an increase in private investment, which grew during the early 1990’s. During the mid 1990’s, Vietnam at seven to eight per cent a year had one of the highest growth rates in the world. During this period, the major investors were Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and South Korea. Of the top ten investors, nine were from the region except the U.S. which ranked seventh (Vietnam Times, April 1997). Much (but not all) of this foreign investment was concentrated in the major urban areas — HCMC, Hanoi, Hai Phong, Ha Long, and Danang. Investment inflows encouraged rural-urban migration (and rural-rural was also occurring) with the lifting of former restrictions on movement. In three to four years, HCMC grew from five to eight million and Hanoi from three to five. The Government resisted this spontaneous migration and tried different measures to prevent new migrants from entering the city. The new migrants were denied household registration cards and their job opportunities were restricted to the lowest occupations. Thus, most of the official migration was and continues to be seasonal and circular (Population Council 1998).

In 1994, women workers comprised 53 percent of the total labor force (Anh and Hung 1997). Of productive age women (13–55 years), 71 percent participate in economic activities (Anh and Hung 1997:85). In agriculture, women comprise 76 percent of labor while they are barely represented in heavy industry and construction (Anh and Hung 1977). In 1992, women accounted for 50 percent of the total labor force in the state owned sector. Women are the majority of those employed in the health sector (62 percent) and in education (76 percent) (Anh and Hung 1997:102).

With the Asian Currency Crisis and its impact on regional markets, a large share of the foreign investment pulled out in a period of six to nine months in the first part of 1998. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), inter-bank daily transfer rates declined from \$6 million to



\$200,000. The country suffered an estimated loss of \$2.5 billion due to declining commercial activity and the international debt burden increased by \$1.3 billion in part due to a devaluation of the dong (Giang 1999). The currency was devalued by 17 percent in 1998 (IFC 1999). That same year, growth of GDP slowed to roughly 3.8 percent and this downward trend is continuing in 1999 (IFC 1999).

Many major infrastructure projects — the Hanoi airport, several international hotels, a coal fire power plant in Quang Ninh, and the French oil refinery project — slowed or were shut down. Vietnam's rice exports faced increased competition from the Thai market (when their currency devalued) and further suffered from bad weather, a combination of drought and flooding in different parts of the country. The light industrial sector (whose employees are 95 percent young, single women but managers almost universally men) continued to grow.

Given these developments, the Government decided to finance the completion of the airport, the Hanoi to HCMC highway, the refinery, and a major Hanoi hotel. All of these projects increase the Government's debt burden and mean there is less funding for health and education. At the same time, the Government needs to find a way to address the issues of population momentum and youth's employment as the largest generation in Vietnamese history comes of age.

Currently, almost all agriculture in Vietnam is privately controlled and the informal sector, which has always existed in Vietnam, is continuing to grow despite the currency crisis. Yet, Vietnamese goods are not that competitive on world markets mainly because of the high costs of production (especially of State-owned enterprises), outdated technology, and weak management systems (see Vietnam News 5/31/99:6). The main exports are crude oil, rice, tea, coffee, fisheries, garments, and footwear, which grew 1.07 percent in the first six months of 1999 despite a decline in exports by foreign businesses (Vietnam Investment Review 28 June–4 July). Imports also decreased by 8.7 percent leaving a trade deficit at \$232 million. Rice exports in particular faced greater competition from the Thai market (with the devaluation of the baht) and fell by 30.5 percent in the first two months of the year (Vietnam Investment Review 1–7 March).

The two biggest export growth sectors, which also employ large numbers of women, are textiles and shoes – many of which are located around Hai Phong. Two export processing zones around HCMC generate much of the export growth as well and attract both young men and women to the city. A recent International Labor Organization Report suggests that women are worse off after the Asian Currency Crisis, and have been, on the whole, more negatively affected than men (cited in Vietnam News, October 6, 1999). Although Vietnam is not included in the analysis, some of the trends cited such as migrant women being channeled into the most vulnerable occupations (such as household and commercial sex work) has been documented in Vietnam as well (Vu et al., 1998). In the areas around both HCMC and Hai Phong, the effects of the *Doi Moi* reforms and the economic crisis on gender can be analyzed in terms of household economies, changes in employment and education trends, effects on household income and consumption, and reproductive health.

## 2. Literature Review of Gender Relations in Vietnam

*Since reunification and peace — and especially since the initiation of economic reform — there have been growing signs that the position of women is declining, particularly in rural, secluded and remote areas. In recent years, during which a differentiation between the poor and the rich has been accentuated, women are gradually withdrawing from the activities of society and state management. At the same time, Confucian views of gender inequality are returning. (Tran Thi Que 1995)*

In Vietnam, the formal equality of women and men in society is widely regarded as one of the legacies of the socialist revolution. The struggle for women's rights (*nu quyen*) in the first decades of the twentieth century took up issues of literacy, marriage conditions, and participation in public spheres. Later, the "Women's Question" shifted to the liberation of women (*giai phong nu*) as a condition required to achieve national liberation (Marr 1985; Nguyen Kim Cuc 1997). Once women figured as symbolic forms of the liberation of the Vietnamese nation, relations between men and women within the nationalist movement were not subject to critique, partly out of the anxiety that these problems would divert attention away from the goal of national unity (see Marr 1985; Enloe 1990).

Since the early days of economic reform, studies argue that relations between men and women within households and in society are increasingly unequal both empirically and symbolically (Beresford 1994, 1996; Beaulieu 1994; Brugemann *et al.* 1995; Bui 1998; Croll 1998; Enloe 1996; Gammeltoft 1996; Khuat 1998; Le 1996; Le Thi Phuong Mai 1998; Lofman 1998; Tran *et al.* 1997). Thus, gender has emerged as a key social construct for understanding the effects of social and economic changes on people's lives. However, gender is not the only category of social differentiation to appear as an effect of these reforms. While the reforms have been credited with achieving high growth rates and a dramatic decline in poverty indicators in Vietnam, there has also been an accentuation of differences based on income, educational levels, and geographical location. In this sense, gender differences, like those of poverty and class, may be one of several factors leading to increased social and economic differentiation.

The appearance of gender as an outcome of the reform process does not mean that gender differences did not exist prior to this period. However, “gender” (*gioi tinh*) was not raised as an issue in Vietnam prior to the late 1980’s (Nguyen Kim Cuc 1997:80). The introduction of the term “gender” (versus the earlier “Women’s Question”) can be traced, in large part, to scholarly exchanges and development programs. In the 1980’s gender replaced “women” as a sociological category in the social sciences, development programs, and policy analysis in general. This shift occurred because of the recognition that development was not only about women, but also about how relations between men and women shape differential access to social services. Scholars and researchers now recognize that even policies perceived as gender-neutral may have important structural consequences for gender relations (Corner 1996; Beresford 1994, 1996; Esser 1996; Desai 1995).

As a key construct, gender inequality has also been assimilated into social analyses to account for increasing differentials between men and women’s public versus private lives. While anthropologists contest this dichotomy in analyses of the different domains over which power and authority are actually displayed, much of the development literature constructs these private/public distinctions. For example, one of the narratives of social change over the past ten years focuses on how women’s obligations within the household, particularly in terms of reproductive tasks such as care-taking and domestic work, have restricted their participation in society (Tran and Le 1997; Hoang Thi Lich 1996). Widening differentials between men’s and women’s participation in labor markets, access to credit and capital, and representation in formal decision-making bodies such as the National Assembly configure the social critique around the gender effects of reform (Bui Thi Lan 1998; Croll 1998; Lofman 1998; Luong 1998; Oxfam UK/Ireland 1997; Tran *et al.* 1997). Gender also figures in understanding the effects of the transitional economy as women tend to be employed in the “informal sector” while men tend to be employed in the “formal” or wage-earning sector (McDonald 1994, 1996; Esser 1996; World Bank 1998). Such analyses, however, may ignore how power and authority are

constructed in households and communities, informal and familial channels of credit (such as remittances), and the contribution of household labor to family welfare.

In Vietnam much of the research on gender has contributed to insights regarding family planning programs, contraceptive use, and reproductive health. These are seen as issues which concern both men and women (Gammeltoft 1996; Gammeltoft *et al.* 1999; Goodkind 1995; Haughton *et al.* 1999; Johansson *et al.* 1998; Population Council 1997; Population Council 1998; Huu Van Ngo 1999; Vu Quy Nhan *et al.* 1996). While family planning initially targeted women only, men have been found to be the decision-makers concerning the use of contraceptive methods and the number of children in the family. Studies on sexuality and violence find that many women feel a lack of control in their relationships with men (Belanger *et al.* 1998; Brugemann *et al.* 1995; Derks 1998; Le Ngoc Hai 1996; Le Thi Phuong Mai 1998; Le Thi Quy 1996; Vu *et al.* 1999). Women's vulnerability may be increasing as some enterprises consider the costs around reproductive functions such as maternity leave and child-care responsibilities to be an additional expense (Croll 1998; Trinh Thi 1998).

In some studies, however, the usefulness of gender has been contested because it ignores within category differences, most notably income and geographical location (Paireudeau *et al.* 1996). One of the controversial findings in the literature concerns whether female-headed households, which constitute approximately one-quarter of all households in Vietnam, are particularly disadvantaged. Recent research suggests that female-headed households are no worse-off than male-headed ones (World Bank 1998). Other researchers (e.g., Paireudeau and Nguyen 1996) even question the usefulness of such a category because whether or not the household is female-headed does not account for differences within these households. For example, husbands who live apart from their wives but send money home, women who were widowed early, and single mothers may have very different issues and concerns. Moreover, the category of "female-headed household" does not mean women are the exclusive wage earners for the household. The larger question thus remains as to whether gender *per se* is a sufficiently

discriminating social category of analysis or whether other forms of social differentiation such as urban/rural distinctions, class, and ethnicity also need to be considered.

### **A. Household Relations and Property Rights**

One of the consequences of *Doi Moi* policies was to shift reproductive and productive tasks to the household (Tran and Le 1997). As state services have declined, households have had to pay increasing costs of medical care and educational expenditures. Furthermore, the reduction in state-provided crèches has meant that households (particularly in urban areas) are responsible for care of children and the elderly. A recent time allocation survey conducted in Ho Chi Minh City found that urban women spend almost six hours on housework a day and men spend 1.5 a day; in rural areas women spend 7.5 hours and men a mere 30 minutes (cited in Vietnam News, January 30, 1999). While women want their husbands to share the duties of child-rearing and housework more equally, they are unsure about how it will effect their lives (Brugemann and Franklin 1995:39).

In households, wives and mothers usually manage finances. However, some women have expressed their ambivalence about this task, because they find keeping cash a burden since they could not spend the money without first consulting their husbands (Lofman 1998:21; Population Council 1997:8). Since financial decision-making by these women is limited to household expenditures, it is more a domestic task than a process of empowerment (Lofman 1998; Population Council 1997; McDonald 1995). However, this convention may also limit the activities of men. Some male truck drivers, for instance, do not frequent commercial sex workers because their wives expect them to turn over their entire incomes to their wives (Beesey 1998).

Increasing income allows some women to purchase the services of other women. Independent income may also loosen women's dependence on the household (Khuat 1998). While low-paid female labor has been employed in foreign-invested industries, particularly the garment industry, there is

evidence that young women have gained freedom from patriarchal families with access to an independent income (Liu 1995; Beresford 1994:40).

Household relations are also changing because of rising expenditures for education and health-care; however, the effects have been found to be associated with age rather than gender (Haughton and Haughton 1999; Evans 1998; Theis et al. 1998). Although Vietnam has a high net enrollment rate of 91 percent, only 60 percent of students complete grade five and it takes on average 6.8 student years to produce one primary graduate (UNICEF 1997:1). School enrollments have broadly declined during the transition, and the decline is attributed to changes in opportunity costs and to a lesser extent, deteriorating school quality (Glewwe and Jacoby 1998).

More importantly, there are significant regional and gender differences in completion rates. Boys complete on average 5.8 years of schooling, while girls complete on average 3.4 years (UNICEF 1997:2). Primary school completion for males is also higher in rural (47 percent) and urban (64 percent) areas as compared to girls in rural (40 percent) and urban (55 percent) areas (UNDP 1996 cited in UNICEF 1997). The gender differences are even more evident among ethnic minorities living in remote mountainous areas (Theis et al. 1998). By the time these children are 15 years of age, they are often expected to work as adults. Some ethnic groups perceive higher opportunity costs for girls (Evans 1998:16). This higher cost is often related to the perceived and/or actual poor quality of education and its lack of relevance to these girls' future lives. Sometimes one child also drops out so the younger siblings can study (Theis et al. 1998). How these entitlements are determined at the household level (e.g., birth order or perceived intelligence of the child) may extend beyond gender. With the rising imposition of user fees and need for child labor both at home and informal sectors, such disparities become more profound.

The promulgation of the Land Use Act in the early 1990's significantly changed the relationship between the household and land. Landholders were given five rights to their assigned land (i.e., the right to transfer, exchange, lease, inherit, and use the land as collateral). While this act has been widely

praised, its implementation has been criticized because of Government failure to allocate land impartially and to inform people adequately of their rights (Bui et al. 1997; Sowerwine 1998; McDonald 1995; Oxfam 1997; Lofman 1998; Mondesire 1996). Although men were consulted regarding allocation and land use, women are found to be more familiar with how the land is used and the availability of other resources like medicinal herbs often overlooked by men (Sowerwine 1998; Bui et al. 1997; Oxfam 1997). At Vietnamese Women's Union meetings, these five rights were not discussed and topics were instead limited to family planning and child-care (Oxfam 1997).

Another problem with the implementation of the Land Use Act concerns the registration of the Land Use Certificate (LUC). As the husband is usually the head of household, men generally sign the registry as the head of household, thus making it difficult for women to apply for loans from banks using the land as collateral (McDonald 1995; Lofman 1998; Mondesire 1996). While the law does not stipulate that only one name could be listed, the Land Use Certificates (LUC) were printed for only one signature. Some officials rejected the idea of printing more LUCs because the cost was prohibitively expensive (Oxfam 1997). Another problem with land allocation concerns the lack of provisions in the case of divorce and guidelines for when a daughter moves to another village to live with her husband (Bui et al. 1997; Oxfam 1997; Sowerwine 1998). Consequently, women often are "landless" and thus have a greater dependency on their husband's land (Bui et al. 1997).

The socio-economic changes over the past decade have also reformulated the institution of marriage and specifically the selection of marriage partners (Belanger and Khuat 1996; Knodel et al. 1998). As the government official's role in approving marriage partners and allocating housing has disappeared, young people are now turning to their friends for introductions (Belanger and Khuat 1996). The attitudes of young men were divided between those hoping for a relationship in which the wife is confined to the domestic sphere and in which they are responsible for the social and financial aspects, and those who prefer a more egalitarian marriage. Most women suggested that a four or five-year difference was ideal to maintain the hierarchy of the couple with the man being the leader and the



protector of the wife and children. Women mentioned that they wish their husband to be alike an older brother who will guide, protect, and pamper them (Belanger and Khuat 1996:94). There may also be a shift in attitudes towards sons and daughters as parents tend to be equally involved in the marriage of their children, and in urban areas, daughters have the capacity to support her parents as much as sons (Belanger and Khuat 1996:107, Knodel et al. 1998).

## **B. Mobility and Migration**

The reform process created increased mobility in the circulation of goods and people. Characteristically migration studies focus on movements in relation to origin and destination and ignore the different forms of mobility. Thus, they classify migration patterns in terms of permanent, temporary, and spontaneous. In terms of permanent migration, women are usually more likely to leave home at the time of marriage and thus, are more mobile than men (Haughton and Haughton 1999). The convention of women leaving their parental household to join their husband's (patrilocal residence) may be disadvantageous for women. Women often lose their rights to family land and property and become more dependent on their husband's families. Divorced women, who move back to their former residences, are also ineligible to participate in credit programs due to the length of time in changing their official residence (Tran and Nachuck 1997).

Migration affects household composition and income, which has gender implications as well. Migration is a strategy of wealthier households to acquire capital for investment while for poorer households, migration might be to cover excessive expenditures or to pay off debts (Paireudeau and Nguyen 1996). As migration patterns affect household composition and income levels, the relative position of men and women may change within the household, and in turn, their productive and reproductive tasks.

The feminization of agricultural labor is an outcome of the out-migration of men (McDonald 1995; Croll 1998; Esser 1996). This feminization is in part attributed to the mobility of men while

women usually stay to care for children and elderly parents (McDonald 1995; Croll 1998). While the out-migration of men may give women more control and flexibility over production processes, their daily routine may also be more demanding. This leads to a shortage of labor at certain times of the year, which in turn may encourage children to leave school in order to work in the fields, thus increasing the number of school drop-outs (Esser, 1996; Pairaudeau and Nguyen, 1996).

While internal migration is increasing, this movement is still considered to be a risk, hence more social controls are placed on the migration of women than men. For example, more females than males rely on social networks in the place of destination (Dang 1998:180). One effect of family networks is to bind women's geographic mobility in destination areas to those of their spouses, parents, or siblings, in ways similar to those in their home places of origin (Dang 1998:183). While male migrants have higher levels of education than female migrants, both male and female migrants participate in education and training programs (Guest 1998:9).

In Ho Chi Minh City, female spontaneous migrants tend to be young and unmarried. They work an average of 61 hours a week, significantly more than the 52.5 hours on average by female non-migrants, and the 56.9 hours per week by male spontaneous migrants, however they are paid significantly less. Even though they have the lowest income levels, female migrants are able to save 33.3 percent of their income, the highest rate of saving of any migrant or non-migrant group (Guest 1998:21).

The increasing mobility of people has also been studied in relation to prostitution, which may be affected by mobility and the creation of wealth and/or poverty within households. Mobility, whether measured as increasing discretionary income, leisure time, or the ability to move from one area to another, is linked with increased vulnerability for HIV/AIDS (Brugeman and Franklin 1999:15; Population Council 1998; Beesey 1998). Along Highway Number One running north to south, neither truck drivers nor many of the rural, village women appear to be benefiting from the social and economic changes, but this movement increases the market for prostitution along this particular route. Truck

drivers look for cheap forms of diversion, while the women need income. Some women may travel fifty kilometers from their homes to work as commercial sex workers (Beesey 1998:29), but these women's movements, except across international borders to Cambodia and China, are more geographically confined. Ironically, clients, particularly those in the construction and transport industries, are often more mobile than sex workers (Beesey 1998; Vu et al. 1998).

### **C. Labor Markets, Credit, and Capital**

Since the early days of the reform, there has been evidence that with the decline of social services, certain aspects of the reform process disadvantage women. Rural women are most adversely affected since they have the lowest incomes (averaging 65,000 dong/month or \$US4.68) (Tran and Le 1997:96). Specifically, after the reforms, there has been less social support for the elderly and children and the burden of their care falls more on women (Population Council 1997). In the Government and State-owned enterprises, women with fewer years' experience, less education and training, and early mandated retirement ages are often the first laid off. Likewise with cutbacks in the government bureaucracy, they are also the first to lose their guaranteed employment. Although women held lower level positions than men in the socialist system, there was explicit affirmative action and mandated equality in the state sector. However, men predominated in the top-level positions in the communist party.

With the reforms and declines in public expenditures, there has been increasing privatization of health and education (Population Council 1998). As early as 1990, an estimated 70 percent of health expenditures were through the private sector (IFC 1992). User fees are widespread in both health and education. At the local level, authorities also impose taxes and fees on public infrastructure, social services, security and charity. Adult household members are often expected to contribute their own manual labor for the community good. Men from 18–45 years are required to make this contribution but men often pay a fee in lieu of labor. For women, this requirement is only imposed for those 18–25 years because women's contribution after that is considered through her reproduction and responsibilities for children. To equalize this burden, there has been some discussion nationally of extending these taxes on women up to 35 years.

Following the contraction of the state economy, more women than men have been laid off as redundant workers because of the privatization of state-owned enterprises (Tran and Le 1998; Croll

1998; UNICEF 1994; UNDP 1996). One rationale for this difference is that in the face of pressures of product and market competition, enterprises prefer to recruit or retain male workers rather than meet the benefits or costs to pay for the reproductive time of female workers (Croll 1998:37). Vietnam Airlines, for example, has a regulation forbidding the birth of a child in the first two years of employment (Vietnam Economic Times, January 1998). Such restrictions have also been imposed in garment and other manufacturing industries. One consequence is men are more likely to have wage labor, whereas women are more likely to be self-employed in small businesses or petty trade (World Bank 1998:138).

How labor is valued is also changing because of concerns with profitability. As the labor process shifted from collective to individual responsibility, new incentive and penalty systems were introduced. Workers are paid per piece rather than by the hour. If the division of labor becomes more stratified along gender lines, the wage structure may create a widening disparity between the way men's and women's work is measured and rewarded (Croll 1998: 39). In the south, wage differentials are also more pronounced than in the north (World Bank 1998).

Are female workers, then, worse off during this transitional period? One of the assumptions in the literature of transitional economies is that women are involved in the informal sector because it is less biased but also less secure and lower paid (Esser 1996:9). Yet an increasing number of women are now participating in informal activities, sectors which may offer women upward mobility and economic growth (Liu 1996:7). However, economic growth also creates new risks. Some owners of small-scale enterprises follow a strategy of keeping their enterprises small to lessen their vulnerability and so as not to attract the attention of state regulators, but while such a strategy may protect the woman's position and enterprise, it may also impede their growth (Leshkowitz 1998).

The creation of a private labor market has alleviated the dependence on the state sector for housing allocation and even approval of one's marriage partner (see Belanger and Khuat 1996). At the same time, some women express feeling more vulnerable to problems such as sexual harassment. In focus groups, women and men report that sexual harassment is more of a problem in joint ventures and

privately owned companies than in state offices (Khuat 1999). However, this may also be related to how foreign men (and ventures) become scapegoats for generalized insecurity and fear about the rapid social economic change in the popular press. While a sense of shame in talking about this issue as well as a fear of losing one's job keeps many women silent, these narratives about negative foreign influences are also widely discussed in the press (Khuat 1999).

One of the restrictions on economic growth has been a lack of capital and further investigation is need to determine women's access to capital, particularly micro-credit (Tran and Nachuk 1997). One of the explanations for the finding that women earn 40 percent less than men in equivalent enterprises may be their differential access. The male-female income gap is not a result of schooling, age, ethnic, regional, or age differentials, but rather the allocations that households make involving female enterprises (World Bank 1998:171). While many rural households have diversified their activities, these enterprises still need access to credit, raw materials, and machinery (Croll 1998:31).

The Vietnamese Women's Union has one of the largest rural credit programs of which 44 percent of the money available comes from international donors (UNDP 1996:25). The repayment rate for women is high and under the program women are encouraged to form savings groups to share information. These programs are limited, however, to women to participate in other union activities, and savings groups are often held in conjunction with family planning groups (Sterky 1996). Another limitation of the program is the lack of specialized knowledge among union cadres (Tran, quoted in UNDP 1996:26). Women's access to credit is also restricted by formal banking requirements. For example, complex credit requirements offer little incentive for banks to process small loans, which are critical to many of women's economic activities. Second, the requirement that only household can apply for loans is disadvantageous for many women since household registration documents and land titles are more often in husband's or in-law's names (Mondesire 1996; McDonald 1995; Lofman 1998).

The lack of access to credit may lead to cyclical debt, beginning with crop failure or a family illness. Such debt forces some women into sex work to maintain household incomes and even to survive

(Population Council 1999; Beesey 1998). Several studies (e.g., Derks 1998; Beesey 1998; Population Council 1999) suggest that the growing demand for commercial sex creates a differentiated market with a variety of prices, and different forms of sex work and attendant risks have evolved in response to this differentiated demand. For example, sex workers servicing government officials in high priced karaoke bars face different risks than those working the streets and bus stops servicing truck drivers.

Prostitution must not only be seen as a question of poverty but also as an outcome of the creation of household wealth and economic expectations (Nitzsche 1994; Derks 1998; Population Council 1998). Part of the complexity of this labor market is that as government campaigns have attempted to eradicate prostitution, commercial sex work practices change and different kinds of sex work arise (Le 1996). Increased regulation may also raise the price of sex acts. While prostitution is often been represented as a social evil that emerged with the opening of the economy and increase in international tourists, the majority of clients are Vietnamese men (Population Council 1998; Blomgard and Ternelius 1996:4). Sex work may also contribute to larger household economies but in gender terms the question is then to whom the benefits accrue. Young women may be lured into this market with promises of highly paid restaurant or factory work. Parents or other family members may also be involved, either through a high-interest loan to arrange for their daughter's trip or may even receive a cash payment (Derks 1998:10). Thus, the broader question is how the fulfillment of economic needs is related to the trafficking for commercial sex (Derks 1998).

The emergence of labor markets, including that of commercial sex work, raise the broader question of who secures workers' conditions? While the status of the economy as a "transitional" one has been raised in Vietnam, one of the interesting points of contention is who and what trade unions now represent (Norland 1996). The role of the trade union in containing worker discontent may have smoothed the early structural adjustments of state-owned enterprises. However, their role is changing in face of changing labor relations in state-owned enterprises vis-à-vis an increasing number of joint ventures and foreign funded companies (Norland 1996:22). As a result, there may be increased

differences between the management and labor cultures and practices. For example, the practice of large corporations in sub-contracting to companies in Taiwan and Korea, which then hire workers in Vietnam, has created work sites in which gender hierarchies (e.g., women workers and male managers) effectively mediate other status and cultural hierarchies. Ironically, large multi-national corporations may transfer the burden to subcontractors to provide safe and reasonable working conditions in marginal competitive branches like the shoe and garment industry (Norland nd: 4). The increased economic insecurity for the workers, rising unemployment associated with these new ventures, and/or delayed entry into the workforce are of course of far greater concern.

#### **D. Reproductive Health and Inter-Generational Relations**

Since the mid-1980's, the Government has made the reduction of population growth a development priority and instituted a modified two-child policy (Long and Messersmith 1998). Over the past decade, the Government has drastically decreased its total fertility rate from over 3.0 to 2.7, although the average annual growth rate of 2.1 percent remained the same (GSO 1998; World Bank 1996). The combination of urbanization, high rates of abortion and delayed age of marriage is decreasing the fertility rate in cities. In contrast, rural areas, may be experiencing change to a lesser degree.

Since the early 1960's, abortion has been legal in Vietnam. Increasingly, medical practitioners and couples see abortion (including menstrual regulation) as a method of contraception. The availability and easy access to abortion became key to reaching family planning and population targets. Thus, Vietnam is currently cited to have the highest abortion rate per capita in the world (Guttmacher Institute 1999). The UN (1998:73) estimates that, on average, a Vietnamese woman undergoes 2.5 abortions in her lifetime.

The high dependence on abortion reflects a mixture of demand and supply factors. First, abortion as a method may fit with gender expectations that hold women responsible for implementing



the method of control while men determine whether to employ a method and which one should be used (Population Council 1998). Second, the supply and range of modern methods are also quite limited (especially following the collapse of Eastern Bloc trade and aid). Of modern method users, 65 percent are using the IUD (VNICDS 1996). Third, family planning providers and clients also receive monetary incentives to perform abortions/menstrual regulations, insert IUDs, and perform sterilizations but are not equally encouraged to offer other methods (Long and Messersmith 1998). Not surprisingly, providers also lack the incentive and/or the capacity to provide postabortion contraceptive counseling (Belanger and Khuat 1998:5). Finally, given the stigma associated with premarital sex, young people may be afraid to ask for contraceptives and count on abortions to resolve unwanted pregnancies (Population Council 1997). In Vietnam, then, the increase in abortions is less about women's contraceptive freedom and more about lack of access to other technologies, information, counseling and services and further reflects social taboos of talking about sexual activities.

Family planning, understood narrowly in terms of the rhetoric of a one- or two-child policy and more broadly in terms of family harmony and happiness, engages both individual households and the state. Public sector employees are more subject to official controls. If they exceed the two-child limit they may suffer higher health care costs, reduced salary increases, and less access to employment benefits such as housing (Haughton and Haughton 1999: 99). At the village level, however, leaders may be less motivated to enforce a national policy that conflicts with the desires of their citizens to have a son. These differences are particularly problematic between the central government and local officials (Goodkind 1995: 103). Part of the adjustment in campaign strategies is evidenced in campaign posters representing a two-child family alongside symbols of wealth such as a motorbike (Gammeltoft 1996).

Family planning campaigns focus on women rather than men even though men consistently report they are the main decision-makers concerning family size, contraception use, and choice of contraception (Johansson et al. 1996; Population Council 1998; Beesey 1998). Some men express interest in knowing more about family planning, but consider health clinics the domain of women

(Johansson et al. 1996). Many women report feeling compelled to implement whatever method (if any) husbands prefer. Men's reluctance to use condoms and women's perception that IUDs are inappropriate for Vietnamese women limits the modern contraceptive choices available to couples. Women report being frustrated with men's irresponsibility in family planning (Johansson et al. 1996). Single women, however, are reportedly more confident than married women they can control their chances of being infected with HIV/AIDS (Brugman and Franklin 1995:30). Yet, sex workers report a similar lack of control over contraceptive decisions (Vu et al. 1998; Population Council 1998).

Changing relations between households and the state are likely to affect family planning decisions and strategies. While women report that they are responsible for maintaining family happiness, they also report less control over their sexual and reproductive lives (Le Mai 1998; Khuat 1999). This contradiction is particularly acute in the limited choices women face regarding contraceptive methods. In this light, the rise in abortion may respond to the increasingly privatized nature of family planning decisions, even as the State continues to focus on one modern method for married women, the IUD.

One of the problems around contraceptive use, particularly condoms is that AIDS campaigns focus largely on fidelity as a preventive strategy and portray prostitutes, drug users and foreigners as the major risk groups (Vu et al. 1998; Beesey 1998; Le 1996; Bruggeman and Franklin 1995). This campaign reinforces the perceptions that condoms are not necessary with partners one "trusts", which includes any long-term relationship (Vu et al. 1998; Gammeltoft and Thang 1999; Beesey 1998; Le 1996; Blomgard and Ternelius 1996; Vu et al. 1999). Most sex workers reported always using condoms with new customers but a much smaller number used condoms with frequent customers (Khuat 1998:50). Other problems may include a sense of shame associated with carrying condoms around or simply not knowing where they can be obtained (Blomgard and Ternelius 1996, Beesey 1998; Vu et al. 1998; Population Council 1999).

Family planning campaigns are aimed at married women (Population Council; Blomgard and Ternelius 1996; Gammeltoft and Thang 1999). Young people often do not know where to turn for information because few of the relevant organizations — schools, families, mass organizations and clinics — accept responsibility for dealing with premarital sexuality (Population Council 1999; Blomgard and Ternelius 1996; Belanger and Khuat 1998; Gammeltoft and Thang 1999). Many young women are reluctant to use contraceptive methods because not using any method is seen as a sign of faithfulness and confidence that the relationship would lead to marriage. Some women expressed the belief that pregnancy would be a sign of destiny (Belanger and Khuat 1998). Such beliefs highlight the important role that young men play in the couple's use of contraceptive methods and abortion, so male responsibility should be encouraged (Belanger and Khuat 1998; Blomgard and Ternelius 1996).

Vietnam's one- or two-child policy must still reckon with the strong son preference (Haughton and Haughton 1999; Goodkind 1995). Son preference raises the question of how gender is subsumed by generation within the household. Son preference is usually rationalized by the convention that sons typically support parents in their old age, and sons are needed to maintain the family line (Haughton and Haughton 1999: 98; Rydstrom 1998). However, in several senses the term "son preference" may be misleading. While a couple and their respective families may desire a son, this does not mean that the family desires many sons (Haughton and Haughton 1999:110). Co-residence with adult single children is largely gender neutral, but when older people reside with married children, they tend to favor sons, particularly in the north (Bui et al. 1999:14). While southern respondents were found to be twice as likely to live with a married son than daughter, northern respondents are eight times more likely to do so (Knodel et al. 1998:16). Apart from co-residence, there were no substantial differences in the material or social support sons and daughters provide. In the Red River Delta, daughters are slightly more likely to provide food or other items while sons are somewhat more likely to provide money or major durable items and to make regular visits (Knodel et al. 1998:7).

Gender identification is also part of learning how to behave appropriately (*lam nguoi*). In this sense, gender identification goes beyond social policies and household positions and affects how individuals see themselves in relation to others. One of the distinctions in male and female roles concerns ancestral worship. Because males carry out ritual practices, they are said to have an innate sense of honor (*danh du*) in relation to their lineage. Girls are outside the lineage hence they are socialized more intensely. Girls must demonstrate their morality in how they comport themselves and in their relations with others. Males are less vulnerable to accusations of immoral behavior because part of their morality precedes their individuality that is, they are defined in relation to the lineage (Rydstrom 1998). A girl's failure to behave morally is regarded as a failure of the household to bring up their children properly (Rydstrom 1998).

Gender can thus be analyzed as learned behavior through language acquisition, household tasks, forms of play, and school activities. While tasks for young children do not differentiate along gender lines, children as well as adults perceive that girls work harder than boys. Only girls reported concern for low returns from their labor (Theis et al. 1998). Furthermore, boys are found to avoid on the basis of gender, while girls only avoid tasks if they perceive themselves to be too weak.

For young women the emphasis on virginity is still prevalent, creating a sense of shame concerning premarital sexuality, not only among young women, but also among their parents and teachers (Gammeltoft and Nguyen 1999; Population Council 1997). There is evidence, however, that premarital sexuality is increasing, especially among urban youth (Population Council 1997). This trend also suggests young women's increased income and economic independence. Such changes are creating greater individual freedom and the improvement of women's positions along with less parental control over their adult children.

## **E. Political Participation**

At every administrative level, the Vietnamese Women's Union, a government mass organization, is the predominant body representing women. While the strength of the Union is its countrywide network and a claim to more than 10 million members, the demands on the Union are becoming greater (UNDP 1996:15). The focus on social programs such as income generation and credit schemes, maternal and child health programs, may mean that VWU cadres have no time left for policy-making and lobbying (Beaulieu 1994; UNDP 1996). Another concern is that the very strength of the VWU isolates the concerns of women. At Vietnam Women's Union meetings, women discuss child-care methods but not land issues (Oxfam 1997). In 1988, Government Decree No 163 was passed to ensure that the Women's Union be consulted and involved in any discussions, plans or policies relating to women and children at all levels of government; however, the decree is applied in a very narrow sense (UNDP 1996:14).

One of the gauges for women's participation in public life is the representation of women in state decision-making bodies such as the National Assembly. Women's representation declined in the years between 1975 when women made up 32 percent to the National Assembly and 1992 when this representation fell to 10 percent (UNDP 1996:13). The government has passed several initiatives to improve women's representation in accord with the World Summit on Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women (UNDP 1996). One of these measures was the creation of the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW), which is mandated to implement the National Platform of Action. In the fields of science and technology, the number of women who have obtained advanced degrees is less than 10 percent, which is attributed to the lack of household technologies and the responsibilities of a woman's duties (Hoang 1996:195).

A poignant area of representation is how women's participation in revolutionary struggle and national liberation is commemorated. Many women received belated recognition for their contributions, the sacrifice of their sons and daughters and their loss of reproductive status (Enloe 1996). One

outcome of the post-war reconstruction was the dramatic increase in the number of unmarried women with children. Some women, who either lost their husbands or never married, were sent to work in remote areas. Yet, wanting to affirm their identity as mothers, they nonetheless decided to have children, creating a cohort of unmarried women with children.

While the social stigma of single mothers has waned and the state now recognizes the women's children and their status as mothers (Nguyen 1996), marriage remains a contested regime where questions of recognition and legitimacy are negotiated, both within individual relationships and at the level of national legislation. One major concern is the rising number of reported rape cases and incidents of "forced sex" within marriage (Le 1998). Documented sexual harassment in schools and the workplace suggests that gender relations are contested both in public and private spheres. While such incidents receive publicity through the popular press and are not sanctioned, however, there is little redress in the public sphere (Khuat 1998). Recent discussions in Parliament to promulgate a new marriage law and codes suggest that former socialist norms are being re-evaluated and recast in contemporary terms to reflect smaller families and more virilocal residence (San personal communication 1999).

Studies have also found that people are increasingly turning to television for information (Beesey 1998). The press has also played an important role in promoting social debate around issues of sexual violence (Khuat 1998); however, many reports are still characterized by xenophobic overtones (Templer 1998). As the media plays an increasingly prominent role in disseminating images and information, the content of such messages merits further investigation for its effects on gender relations.

## **F. Gender Renovations**

Social and economic changes have brought about noticeable changes in gender relations both within households and on the state level. At the household level, both men and women's time are undergoing profound changes, which affect social roles and responsibilities. At the state level, the

withdrawal of state subsidies, land allocations to private households, increased mobility, the creation of new labor markets, greater income and economic independence, and an increasingly vocal print culture have had profound effects. One outcome of these changes is the appearance of gender, both symbolically and empirically, as a key area of debate in the process of social differentiation accompanying economic reform. As the National Committee for Advancement of Women (NCFAW) (1999) suggests, “Vietnam is a nation where gender is in transition.”

An increasingly popular explanation for widening gender differentials is a return to Confucian ideals and patriarchy, which subordinate women to men (Khuat 1998). Some scholars argue that Confucian ideals are latent within Vietnamese culture (O’Harrow 1995; Khuat 1998; Le 1995; Nguyen 1997). Male preference thus becomes something which has been “shaped and reinforced over so many generations that is deeply rooted in people’s mind and exists as a social stronghold resistant to opposition” (Nguyen 1997). This line of argument is supported by perceptions of appropriateness regarding the behavior of boys and girls, the emphasis on virginity among young women, and the responsibility vested in wives and mothers for maintaining family happiness. Yet, such references to Confucianism also provide an historical and essential rationale for the backlash they seek to prevent and thus, effectively domesticate gender divisions.

The findings in the above literature review suggest that a reassertion of traditional Confucian beliefs and practices does not explain several gender differentials as is often asserted. The regional variation calls into question the extent to which Confucianism can be assumed to be a latent cultural form or whether these variations themselves create different gender norms. Secondly, the literature identifies several interesting trends concerning son preference. One conventional rationale for son preference is the belief that sons provide for parents in their old age. However, there is also evidence that some parents, particularly in urban areas, consider both sons and daughters as having the capacity to care for them. Thirdly, the stability of Confucianism is constructed around a hierarchy of knowing one’s place in relation to others (*biet tren duoi trong ngoai*), but this certainly is called into question

with increasing mobility and rising incomes. Young women are particularly mobile, arriving to the cities in search of work or moving up in the ranks in foreign companies, sometimes earning incomes greater than their fathers and husbands.

Gender equality exposes the contending strengths of law and tradition in contemporary Vietnam (Mondesire 1996). While women and men are formally equal before the law, differences in the formal treatment of men and women are evidenced especially in the areas of reproductive health, the Land Use Act, and labor ordinances. The decline in the state's ability to influence these relations, evidenced by the changing practices of marriage partner selection, the emergence of private capital, and increased mobility of men and women, suggest that the state's penetration into these relations has declined and so its capacity to promulgate equality. As the capacity of the state in determining these relations lessens, other social determinants, in particular income, class, and geographic location increasingly influence gender relations.

While new hierarchies are not formed just around gender, the literature on sexuality and reproductive health suggests that male dominance continues to have a considerable impact on women's health and social place. The state's emphasis on population control coupled with the privatization of decisions around method choice has led to the dramatic rise in abortion as a contraceptive method. Given the reluctance of men to take reproductive responsibility, women bear the major burden at the risk of their health and well being. Although social prohibitions on talking about sexuality are lessening, the differential control that men and women have over sexual relations (especially premarital) and reproductive decision making are at the core of gender inequality today.

Yet, many trends post *Doi Moi* are quite promising for women and gender as a construct may reflect the need to pay attention to the attendant backlash as roles change and some people's situations improve (both men and women). Gender as a construct also leads to examining other forms of social differentiation that may particularly disadvantage some women or men. The next chapter explores different national trends by gender in terms of education and schooling, work and unemployment, spatial



mobility and migration, marriage and household relations, contraceptive practices and political participation.

### 3. National Trends After *Doi Moi*

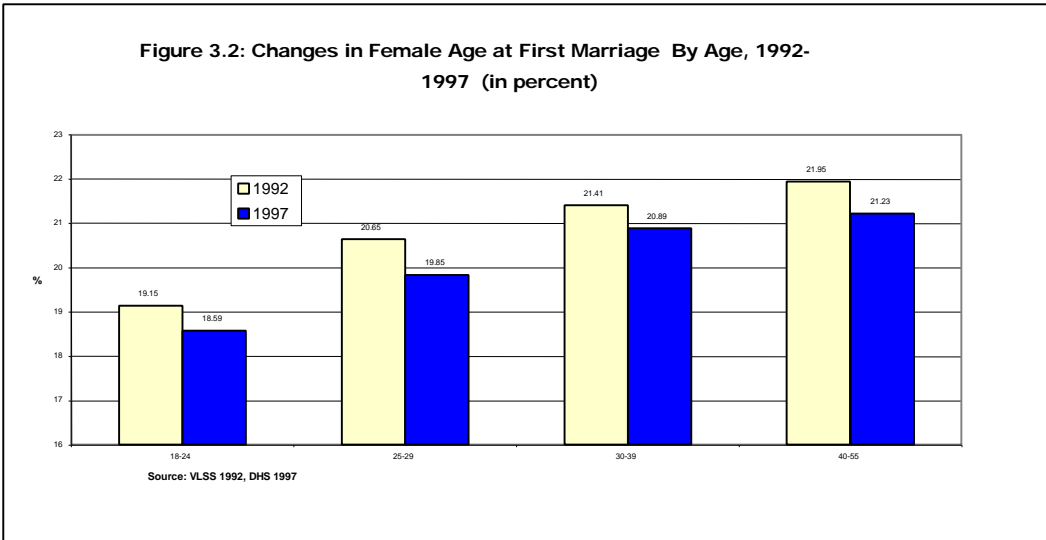
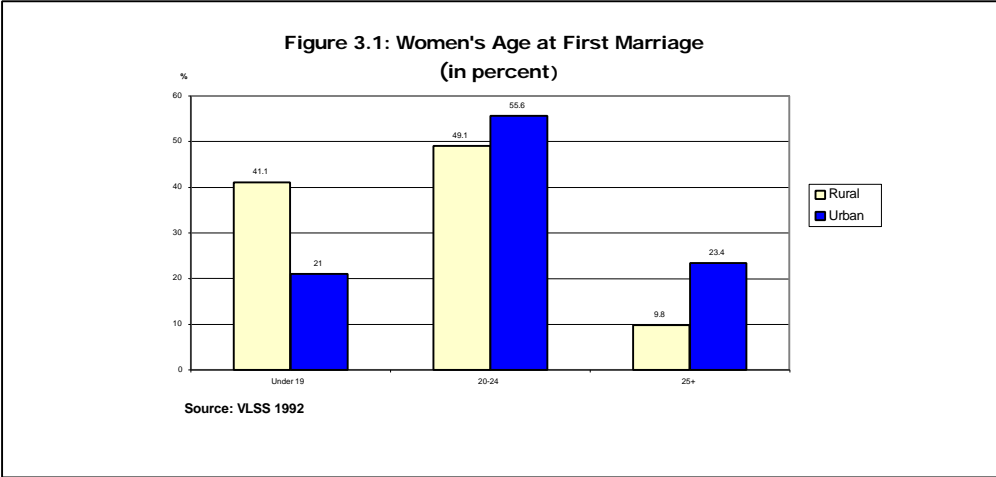
This section analyzes changing gender differentials at the national level during Vietnam's *Doi Moi* period. Nationally representative data sets, the 1989 Census, the 1992 VLSS, and 1997 DHS, suggest some how these patterns may be changing over the past decade and more recently, over the past five years.<sup>2</sup> However, the data sets are not strictly comparable since they are based on different samples. Therefore, these trends are only suggestive of areas where gender differentials should be investigated further with comparable data sets. Data on education, employment, marriage and household structure, migration patterns, contraceptive use and prevalence, and political participation by gender are presented. The purpose is to provide a macro-level context for interpreting the community surveys and qualitative studies carried out in Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh City.

#### A. Marriage Patterns

In Vietnam, most women marry in their early 20s. As shown in Figure 3.1, the 1992 VLSS found that rural women marry at a younger age than urban ones. The mean age at marriage for rural women is 20.6 and for urban women, 22.4. The national mean was 21 years, which fell two years from 23.2 years as reported in the 1989 Census. The recent 1997 VNDHS data also estimate a mean age of 20.1 years for rural women and 22 years for urban women. As shown in Figure 3.2, there is a decrease over time in the age of marriage for women for the same age cohorts and for younger versus older cohorts. Young people today tend to marry earlier than their parents. The older cohorts (aged 40–55 and 30–39) married later because of the war and following that, because of economic hard times.

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<sup>2</sup> The Council requested access to the 1997 VLSS but has not yet received permission from the Government Statistical Office to use this most recent data set, which would have allowed for a comparable analysis.



Figures 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 show changing patterns of marital status for men and women over Vietnam's post *Doi Moi* period. Overall, the percent of men and women marrying has been increasing. While the percent of widowed and separated women also decreased that of divorced slightly increased. As Figure 3.5 shows, far more women than men are widowed because women typically live longer and have fewer opportunities to remarry than men do.

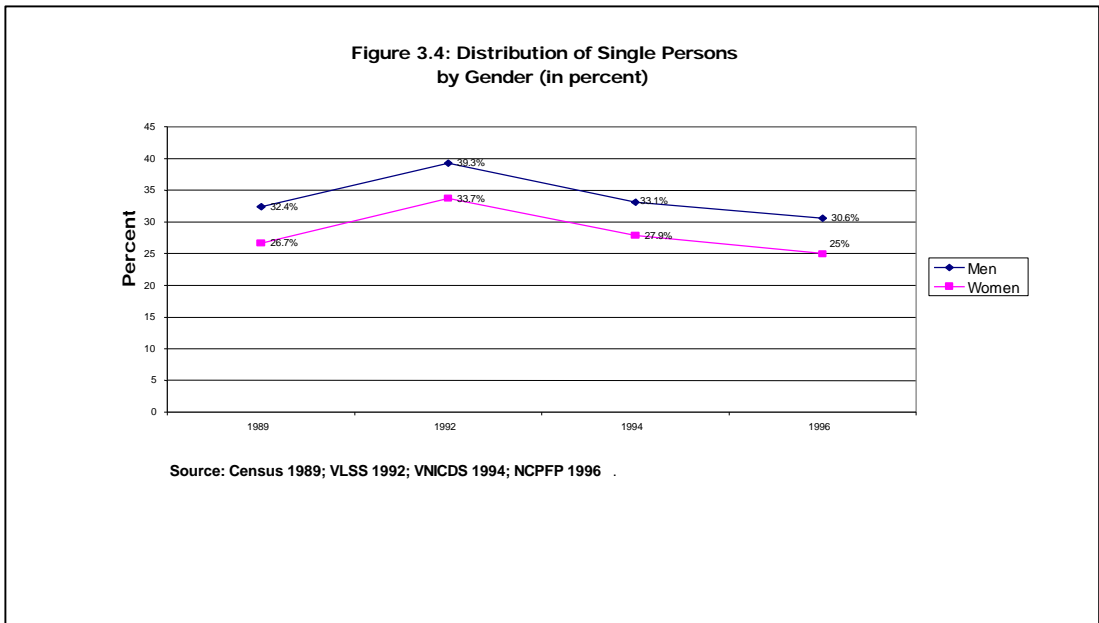
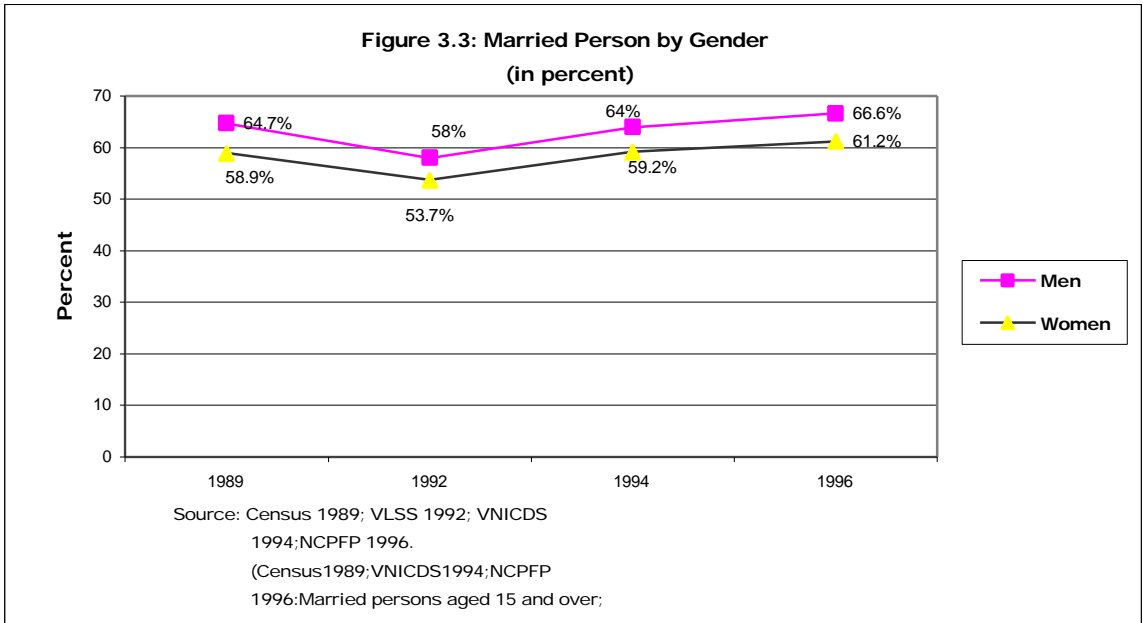
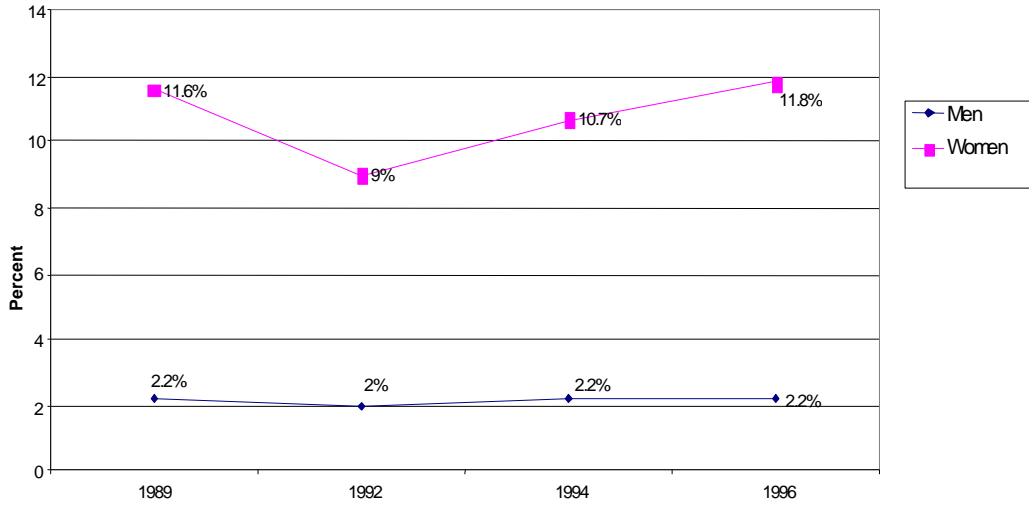


Figure 3.5: Distribution of Widowed Persons by Gender  
(in percent)

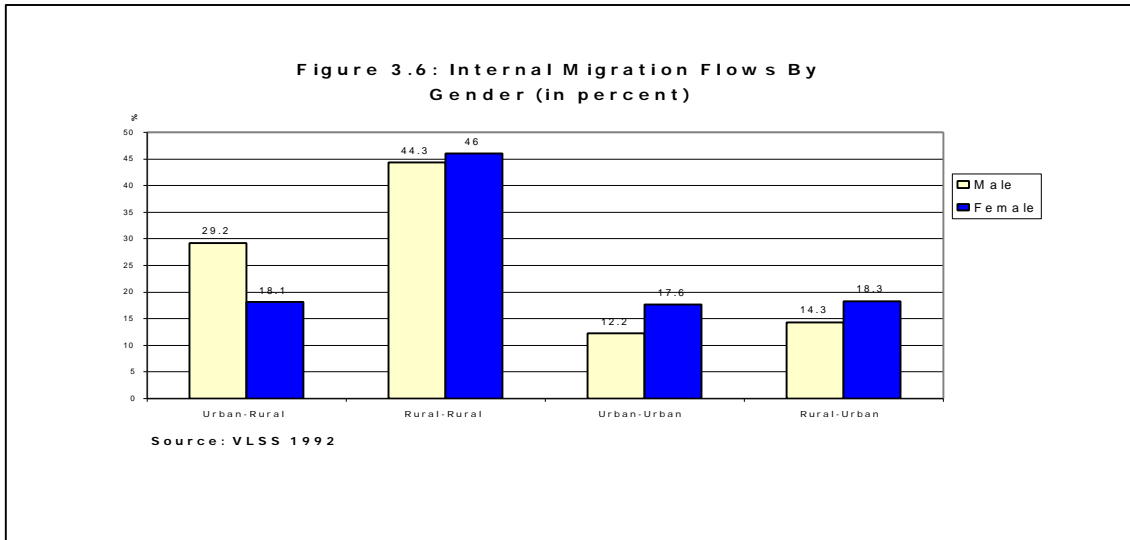


Source: Census 1989; VLSS 1992; VNCDS 1994; NCPFP 1996.

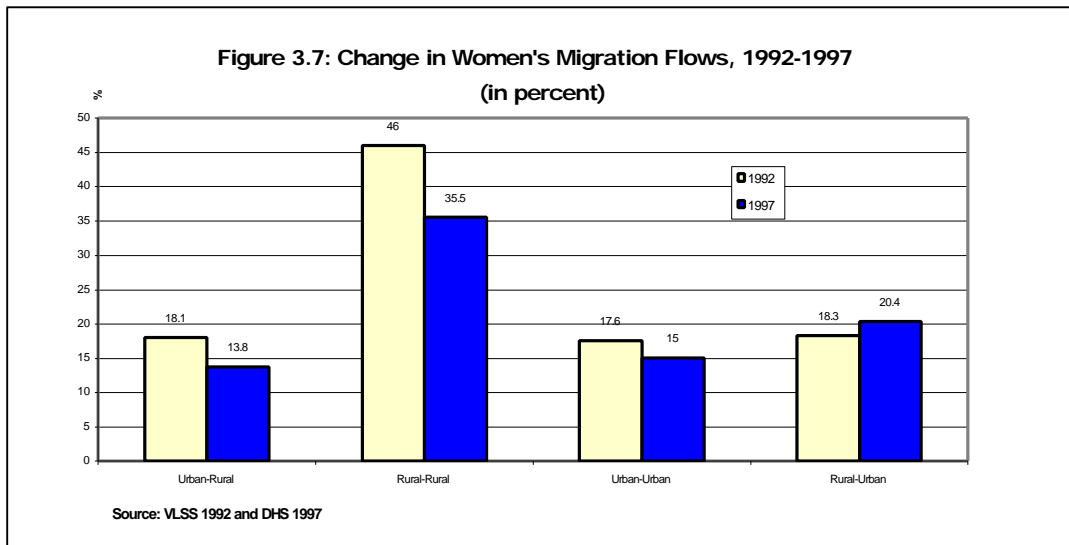
## B. Spatial Mobility and Migration

Figure 3.6, based on 1992 VLSS data, classifies migration flows into four main types: urban-rural; rural-rural; urban-urban; and rural-urban. Women predominate for all types of migration with the exception of the urban-rural flow, which is dominated by men many of whom returned from the army to their home villages. The high level of rural-rural migration indicates the effect of Government-sponsored resettlement programs for both sexes and the search for better agricultural land. The higher levels of female migration to urban areas reflect the opportunities post *Doi Moi* for women in the new factories and export processing zones. The number of female workers coming into the cities to work in trade, services, sewing, and household assistance is also rising. Declining rural incomes have forced many rural households to turn to migration to relieve pressure on limited resources.

Rural-to-urban migration has become a survival strategy for families to cope with difficulties and generate household incomes (Population Council 1998). It has been estimated that about three million undocumented migrants have moved to the major urban areas (MOLISA 1998). Migrants often leave family members behind and send remittances to their home villages. Although male migrants send more income back than females, an equal number from both sexes send money home (Anh 1998). This suggests the continuing strength of family ties and obligations despite their mobility.



As Figure 3.7 shows, however, there has been a recent decrease in these migration flows for women, except for rural to urban migration which increased from 18 to 20 percent of all migration flows that could be categorized for women.

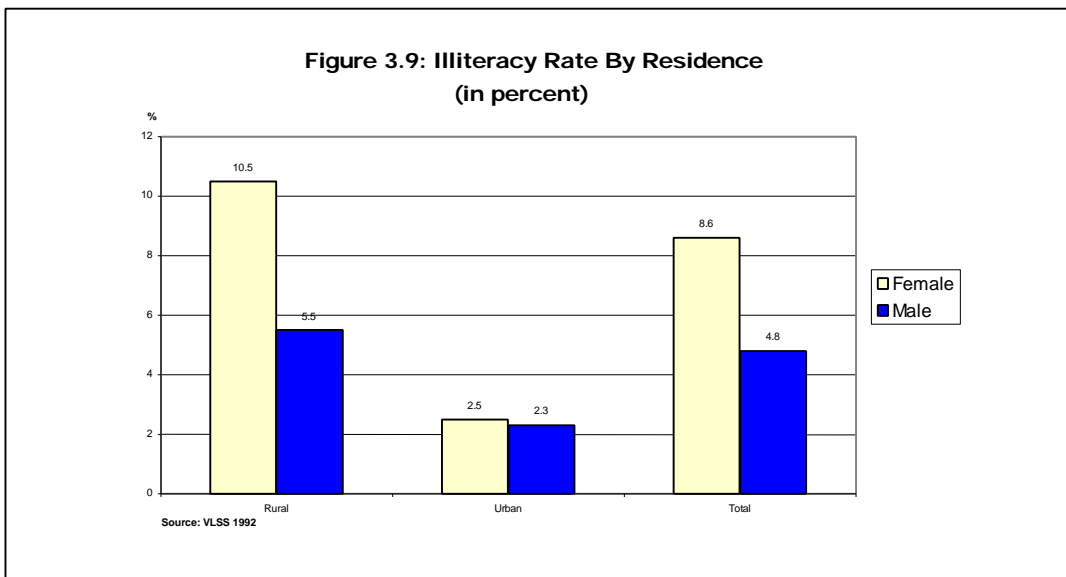
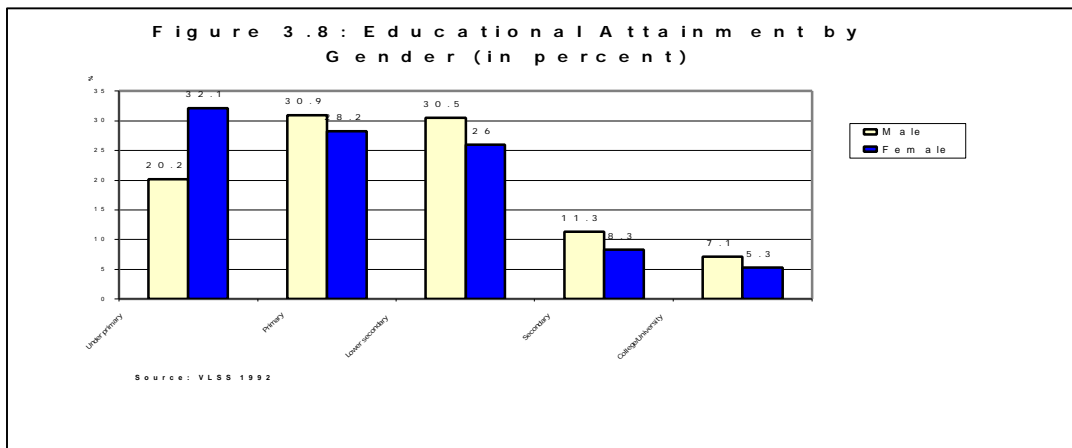


### C. School Enrollment and Educational Attainment

According to the 1992 VLSS, the average number of years of education is 5.89 for males and 4.95 for females. Among school drop outs aged six to 14 years, 63 percent are females and only 37 per

cent are males. These same data presented by gender and rural-urban residence reveals differential patterns in the access to and level of education.

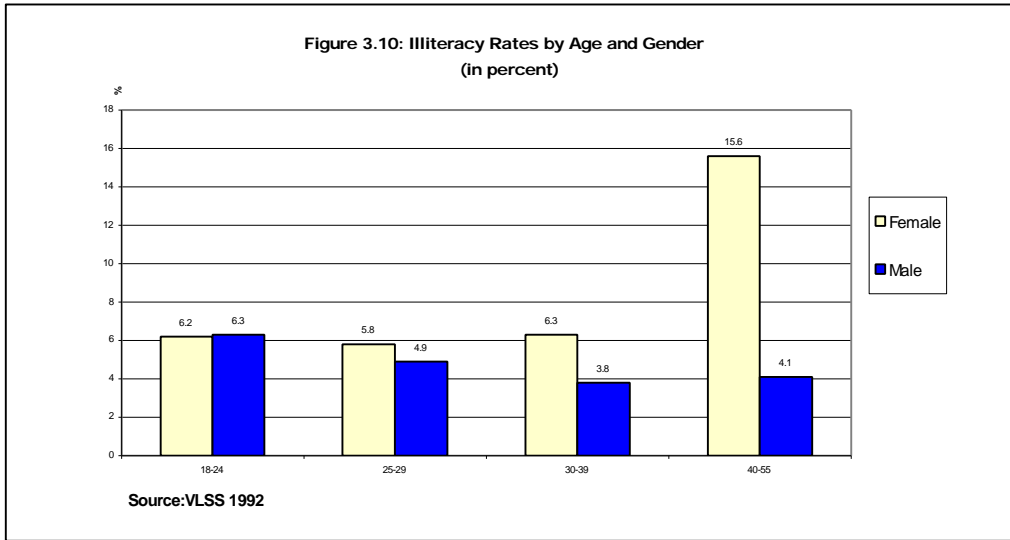
Figure 3.8 shows that 32 percent of females compared to 20 percent of males had a low education level. Females are also slightly disadvantaged across different levels of education. They accounted for lower proportions at the tertiary level. Overall, over five percent of women went to colleges/universities compared to seven percent of their male counterparts. These results suggest some gender differences in schooling and education in Vietnam.



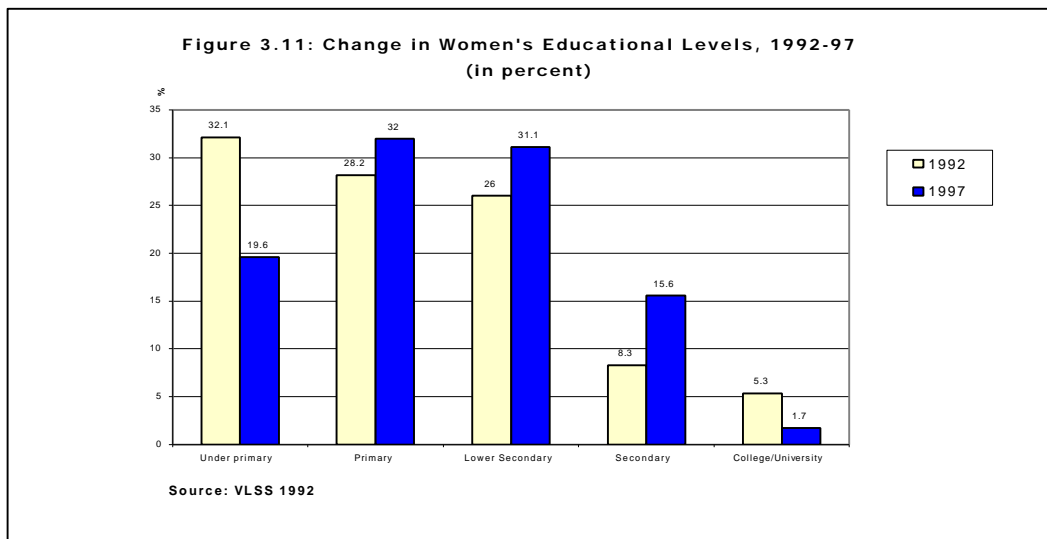


About nine percent of females were illiterate compared to five percent of males. However, controlling for rural/urban differences revealed the contrast across gender between the two areas (Figure 3.9). Illiteracy rates were about the same (2.3 and 2.5 percent) for males and females in urban areas. The gender gap became larger in the rural areas, where the illiteracy rate was much higher, especially for females. About two out of three illiterate persons were women. The results indicated rural women's continuing disadvantage in accessing schooling today.

Examination of educational levels by age and gender seemed to reveal a narrowing gap in illiteracy rates across age cohorts (Figure 3.10). Except for the youngest cohort, a gender gap in illiteracy rates exists for all age groups in favor of men. While the illiteracy rates between males and females aged 30 years and above (particularly those in the 40–45 cohort) are significantly different, the rate is fairly identical for the youngest cohort. This narrowing gap indicates that the young generation in general has a relatively better access to schooling.



Over the post-*Doi Moi* period (1992–97), women have tended to leave school before reaching the highest level of education (college/university). Most of the attainments in women’s education were achieved at the secondary school level. This suggests there may be limited opportunities for women with university degrees in the market economy (Figure 3.11).

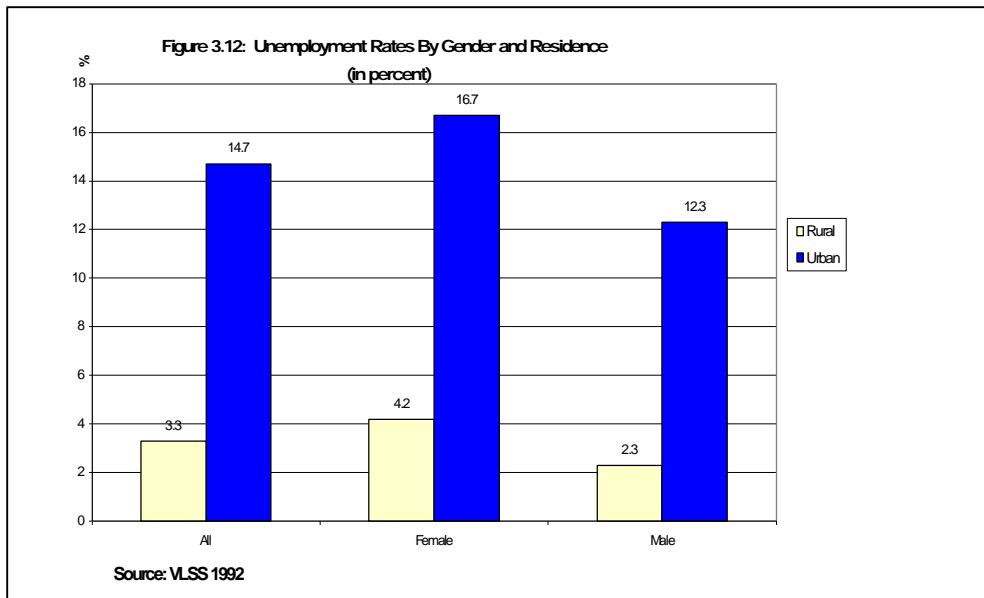


Results (not shown) from the VLSS data also indicated that illiteracy is lowest in the Red River Delta (1.9 percent) and highest in the Central Highlands (26.4 percent). These variations reflect

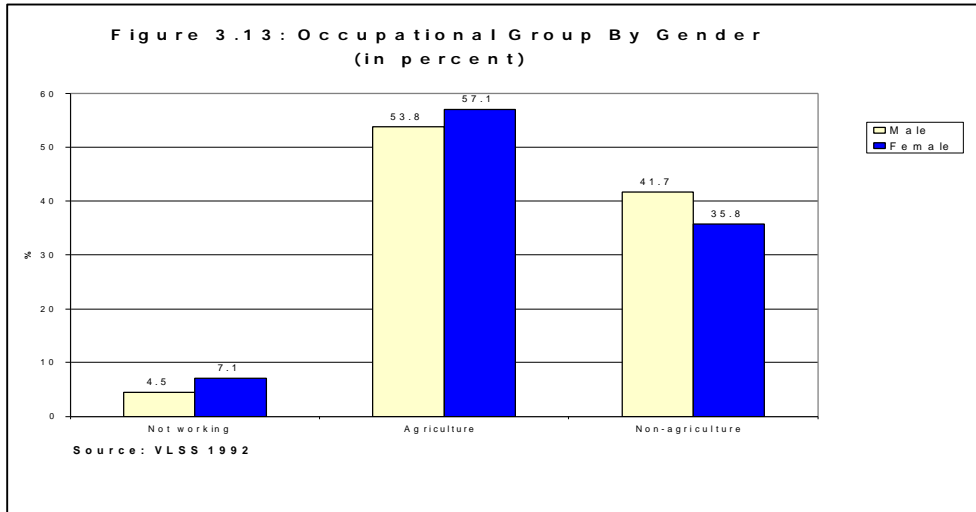
different levels of social and economic development as well as different levels of educational investment between the two regions.

#### D. Work and Unemployment

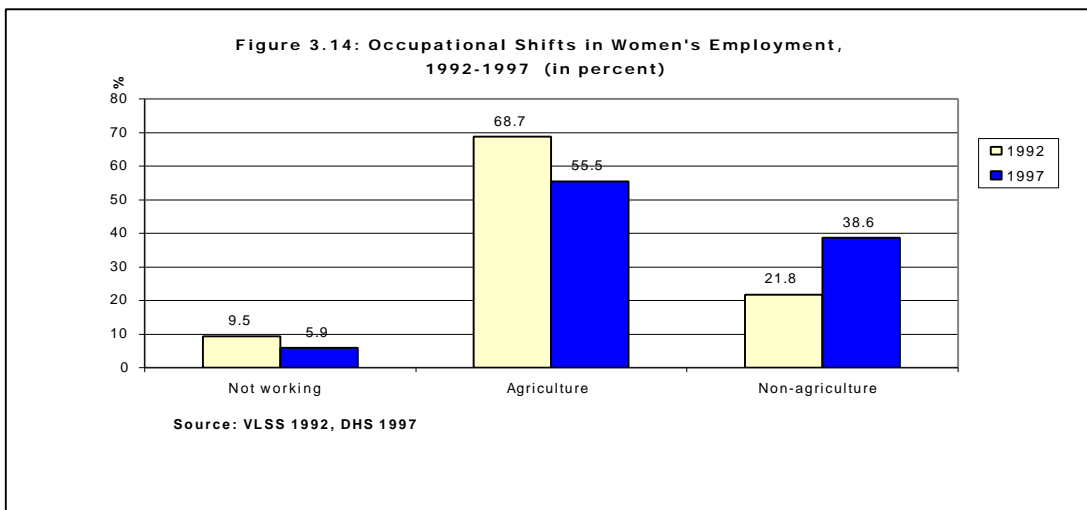
Patterns of work and unemployment vary by gender. There is a remarkable difference between rural and urban areas and to a lesser extent between males and females. According to the 1992 VLSS data, over four percent of females as compared to two percent of males in the rural sector had no employment in the 12 months prior to the time of the survey. Unemployment is higher in urban areas with 17 percent of females and 12 percent of males unemployed (Figure 3.12). Overall, unemployment is more prevalent in urban than in rural areas.

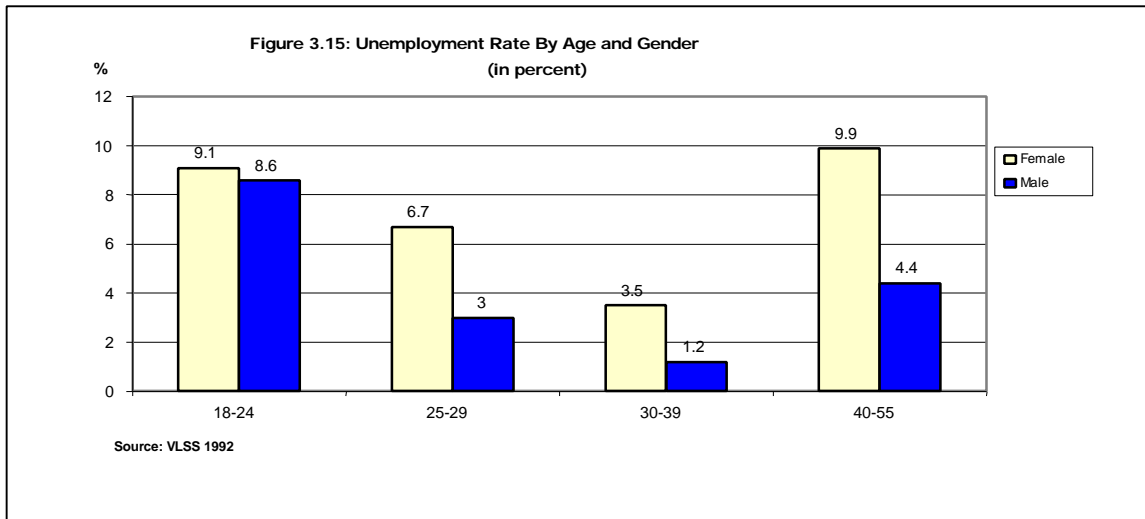


An analysis of occupation by gender shows that men (42 percent) are somewhat more likely than women (36 percent) to leave the agricultural sector for non-farming jobs (Figure 3.13). Women may have a slight disadvantage in the new economy because they have somewhat less education than men do and because family obligations may make it more difficult for them to seek further training.



Over the post *Doi Moi* period (1992–97), women’s occupational status changed (Figure 3.14). The percentage of females working in non-farming occupations increased 17 percent from 22 in 1992 to 39 percent in 1997 (comparison of VLSS 1992 and DHS 1997 data). This coincided with a reduction in the proportion of agricultural female workers over the same period from 68 to 56 percent. These data also reflect female migration to work in the factories and plants around urban areas.



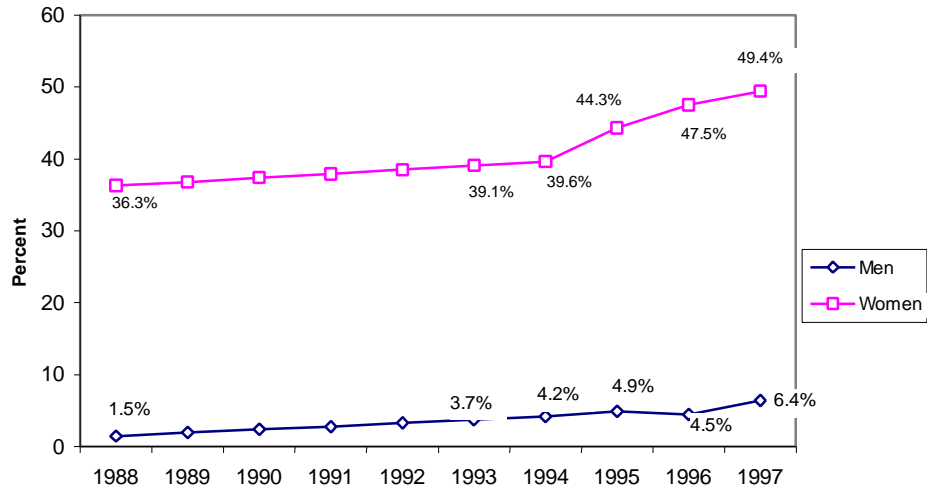


The pattern of gender differentials in work status becomes more obvious when age is considered. As seen in Figure 3.15, the gender gap in unemployment is evident across all age groups. For the major productive age years, men are less likely to be unemployed. However, nearly the same percent of men and women of 18–24 years are unemployed. This suggests that age of entry into the labor force is delayed for some youth. Women’s higher rate of unemployment for those 40–55 years compared to men may reflect the lower mandated retirement age for women.

### **E. Contraceptive Practices**

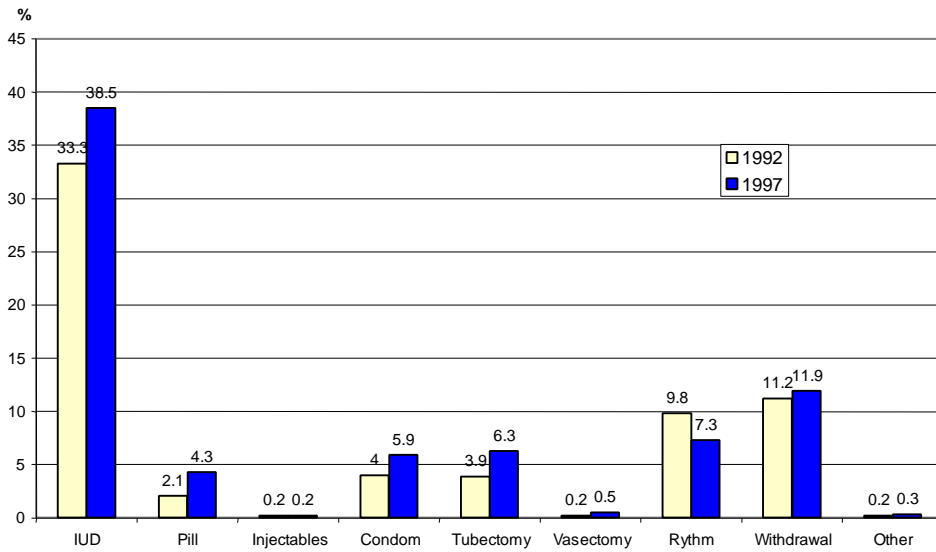
The percent of users of modern contraceptive methods has steadily increased over time (see Figures 3.16 and 3.17). The total fertility rate (TFR) has declined from 4.0 in 1987 to 2.7 in 1998. This rate continues to decline and reflects the success of the family planning program and the demographic transition. As the data in Figure 3.16 show, although the increase in contraceptive use holds for both men and women, women are the predominant users. As seen in Figure 3.17, the most commonly used method in Vietnam is the IUD followed by traditional methods (withdrawal and periodical abstinence). There have been some slight increases in male methods (condom and to a lesser extent, withdrawal and vasectomy). Despite the increasing percent of modern methods over the past five years, the use of oral contraceptives and condoms is still at a low level of only four and six percent, respectively, of current users.

**Figure 3.16: Distribution of Current Users of Modern Contraceptive Methods by Gender (in percent)**



Source: DHS 1989; IVNICDS 1994; NCPFP 1996; DHS  
 Male methods: condom or vasectomy  
 Female methods: IUD, injection, pill, foam and

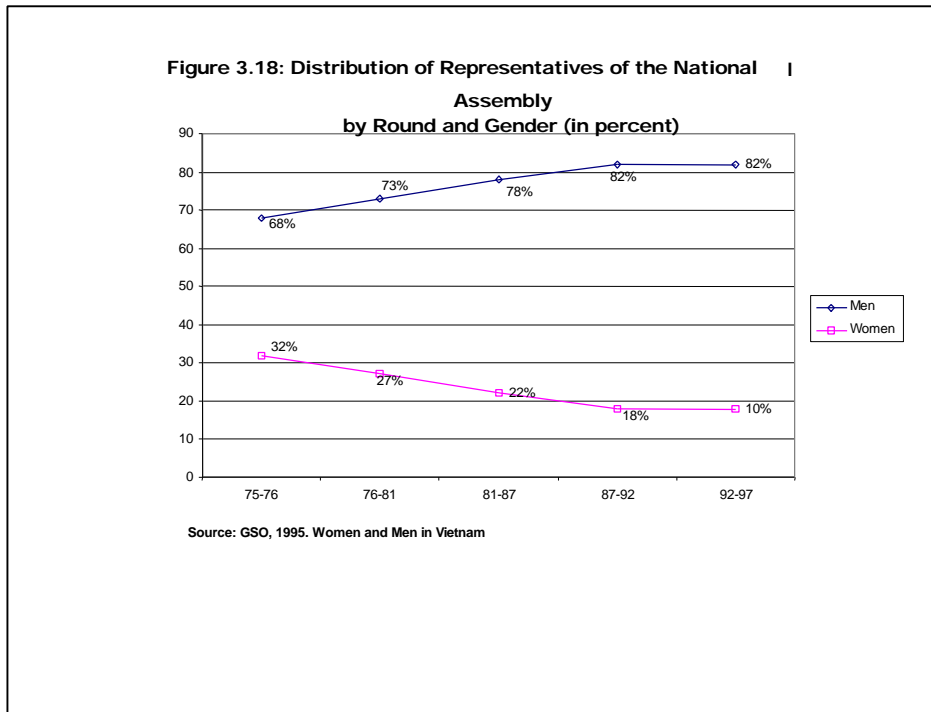
**Figure 3.17: Changes in Current Contraceptive Use by 1992-1997 (in percent)**

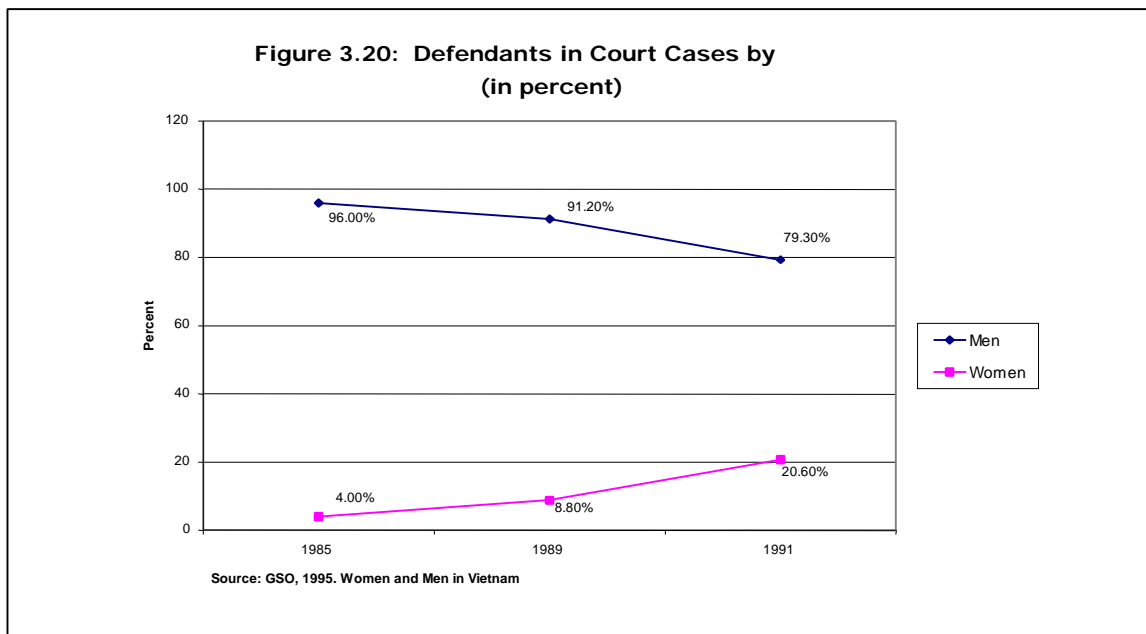
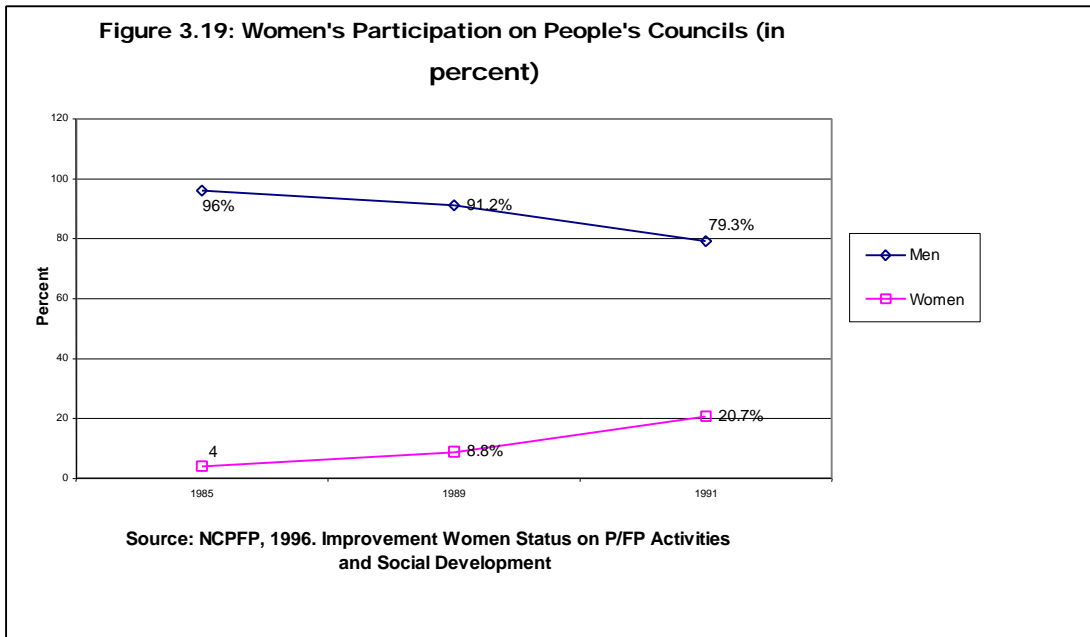


Source: VLSS 1992, DHS 1997

## F. Political Participation

Following *Doi Moi*, quotas for women's representation were no longer mandated and consequently, the percentage of women representatives in the National Assembly decreased from 32 percent in 1975 to 10 percent in 1997. Interestingly, this measure of women's participation has steadily decreased since the 1970's (as shown in Figure 3.18). In contrast, women's participation on local People's Councils has been increasing since the mid-1980's (as shown in Figure 3.19). This form of participation may be more important over the long run since it suggests a trend at the grassroots level. Finally, that women are more engaged in public life may be shown by the increase in women defendants in court cases over time (see Figure 3.20).





### G. Implications of National Data and Trends

As these trends show, gender differentials have increased in several domains — namely education, employment, and political participation. However, geographic residence, age, and mobility mediate these trends. While women are slightly more disadvantaged in terms of labor force



participation, younger women are more mobile and have new employment opportunities in the urban areas. Migration and greater mobility may ultimately offset the disadvantages that women initially face during this transition. Interestingly, with greater economic affluence, the marriage age is moderately decreasing; however, the use of modern contraceptives is also increasing and the fertility rate (TFR) is falling. Although women's political participation is no longer mandated and women are less represented in Parliament, they are more active at the grassroots level and more involved in all aspects of public life.

The next chapter provides an in-depth portrait of gender relations in two rapidly changing communities – one rural, northern and the other, urban southern. Based on a community survey, this chapter explores changing gender relations at the household level and provides an analysis of how the social and economic changes in the post *Doi Moi* period have affected individual lives and relationships.

#### **4. The Gender Transition in Two Communities**

This chapter discusses the results of a household survey conducted in two communities — Dang Cuong, a predominantly rural community of Hai Phong, and Go Vap, a predominantly urban community of Ho Chi Minh City. These two areas are administratively comparable. In each community at least 100 respondents were interviewed.

##### **A. Respondent Characteristics and Household Structures**

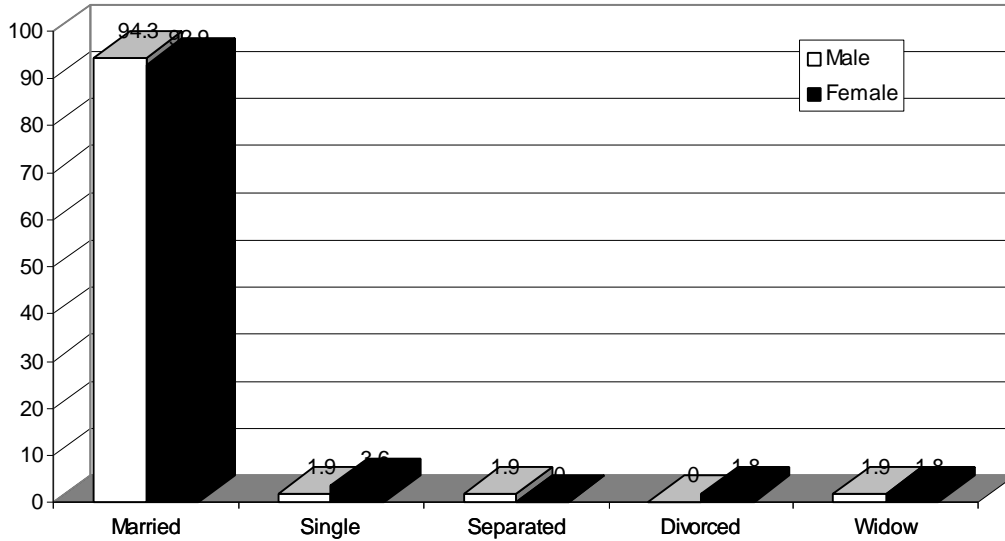
As nationally, in both communities, the sample of 211 people has slightly more women than men (52.6 percent versus 47.4 percent). There is a difference in the regional gender distribution: in Go Vap, 53.9 percent of the 102 respondents are women whereas in Dang Cuong, 51.4 percent of 109 respondents are women.

In this sample, 82 percent of the 211 respondents are under 50 years old, while 18 percent are over 50 years. The average age of the respondents is 40.6. Within the age range of 20 to 29 there were more women than men. Thus, the average age for women is less than that for men (39.7 versus 41.7 years). Two thirds of the respondents are 25–49, 10 percent are under 24 years, and about 11 percent are above 55.

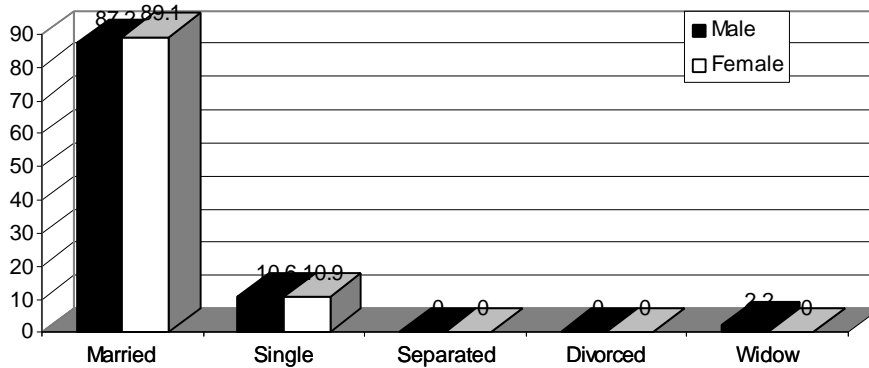
Of the 211 respondents, 91 percent of those aged 17–72 years are currently married, while 6.6 percent have never married. Of the entire sample, only two percent are single as a result of separation or divorce. Among females, 7.2 percent are not married while six percent of men are not. As shown in Figure 4.2, in Go Vap 11 percent of people are single, while in Dang Cuong only about three percent are (Figure 4.1). This regional difference in marital status can be explained by the fact that the population in Go Vap is younger and comprised of more recent arrivals than in Dang Cuong. As is

characteristic of rural communities, the people of Dang Cuong marry earlier than their counterparts in the more urban Go Vap community.

**Figure 4.1. Marital Status by Gender, Dang Cuong (in Percent)**



**Figure 4.2. Marital Status by Gender, Go Vap (in Percent)**



The 188 married respondents have a total of 511 living children — 247 girls and 264 boys. The sex ratio is 0.48. The average number of living children is 2.47 per couple. Over half of the couples have one or two children (55.3 percent); 31.4 percent couples have three or four children; and 13.3

percent have five or more children. Couples in Go Vap tend to have more children than their counterparts in Dang Cuong. This may reflect the larger Catholic community in the south and/or differences in population policies and programs.

The average household size in the two communities is 4.73, with numbers ranging from one to 17 residents. There is a slight difference between the two communities: household size in Go Vap is slightly larger than that in Dang Cuong (4.9 versus 4.57 persons). The maximum size in Go Vap is 17 while in Dang Cuong no household exceeded 10 persons.

Of the 211 households, 56 percent have less than five residents, while 41.6 percent have five to 10 and only 2.4 percent, ten or more. There is a slight regional difference in household construction. In Go Vap, 57 percent of the households have less than five persons; 39 percent, five to 10; and four percent, ten or more. In Dang Cuong, 57 percent households have one to four persons; 42 percent, five to 10; and only one percent, 10.

In both Go Vap and Dang Cuong communities, 80.3 percent of the households are nuclear with only two generations living in them, while the remaining 19.7 percent have three generations. The sample indicates a slight difference in household composition between the two communities: 79.4 percent of respondents in Go Vap live in a household comprised of parents and children while 81.1 percent do in Dang Cuong. Of 21 households with three generations in Go Vap, six have extended family living in them (in-laws, aunts and uncles). In contrast, among three generation households in Dang Cuong, only one of the 20 contained extended family. This difference reflects a more patrilocal household composition in Dang Cuong than in Go Vap.

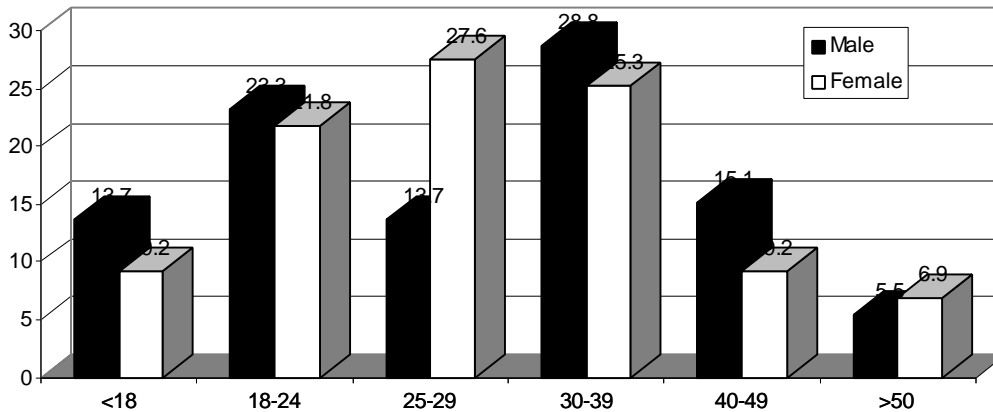
## **B. Mobility and Migration Patterns**

In this survey every respondent was asked: “In the past 15 years has anyone in your household migrated?” Of the 211 households, 36 percent have at least one member who migrated. This may reflect that the rural-rural migration is greater than urban-rural migration in Vietnam. Surprisingly, the

number of households in Dang Cuong (38.5 percent) with at least one migrant is higher than in Go Vap (33.3 percent). However, there are more migrants per household in Go Vap. In total, there are 76 households with at least one member who has migrated, for a total of 160 migrants. On average, there are 2.9 migrants per household in Go Vap versus 1.5 in Dang Cuong.

In this sample, 54.4 percent of the migrants are female and 45.6 percent are male. The migrants on the whole, are more likely to be younger. Figure 4.3 shows that for ages 18–29, there are more women (62 percent) than men (38 percent). Marriage and employment are the main explanations for this migration pattern. During their early adulthood, women and men move for work or marriage. Across the two communities, 70 percent of the migrants are married. Of the 87 migrant women, 81.6 percent are married indicating the relationship of marriage and migration. Women reported migrating from their parent’s homes in order to live with their husband’s family (patrilocal) residence.

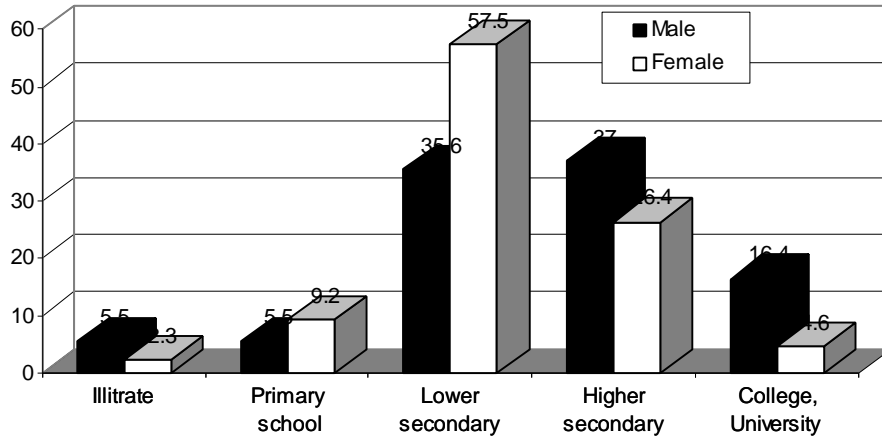
**Figure 4.3 Migration by Age and Gender (in Percent)**



Of the 160 migrants, 132 reported the following positions in the household: wives (18.2 percent), husbands (10.6 percent), children (52.2 percent), relatives (10.2 percent), sons and daughters-in-law (6.8 percent), and grandparents (two percent). Relatives include siblings, nephews, uncles and aunts. Almost everyone has some education. Nearly half of the migrants have lower secondary

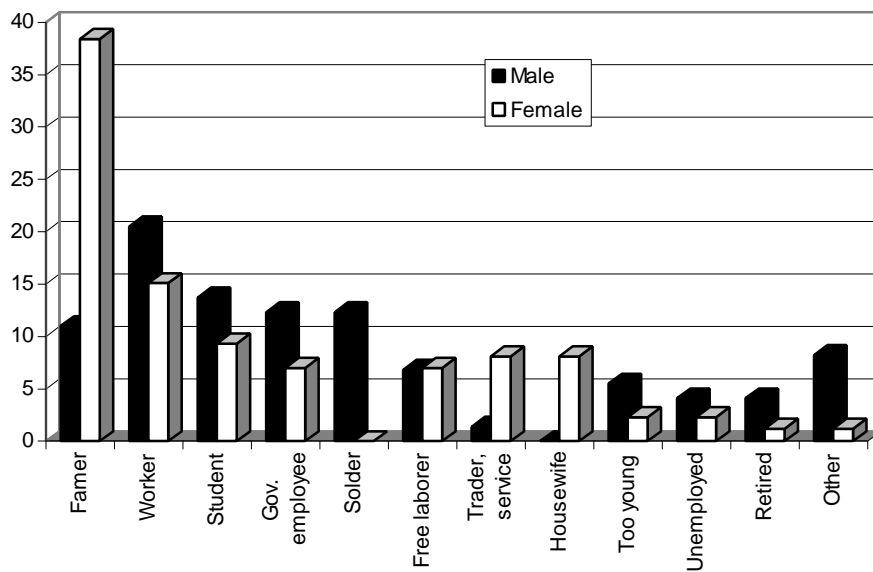
education. Female migrants are, on the whole, less educated than male immigrants: 16.4 percent of men have a college degree or higher, compared to only 4.6 percent women (Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4. Migration Distribution by Level of Education and Gender (in Percent)**



One-third of the married women are engaged in farming (Figure 4.5). Among the male migrants, 20.5 percent are workers, 13.7 percent students, 12.3 percent government employees, 12.3 percent soldiers and 11.0 percent farmers.

**Figure 4.5. Migration by Occupation  
(In Percent)**



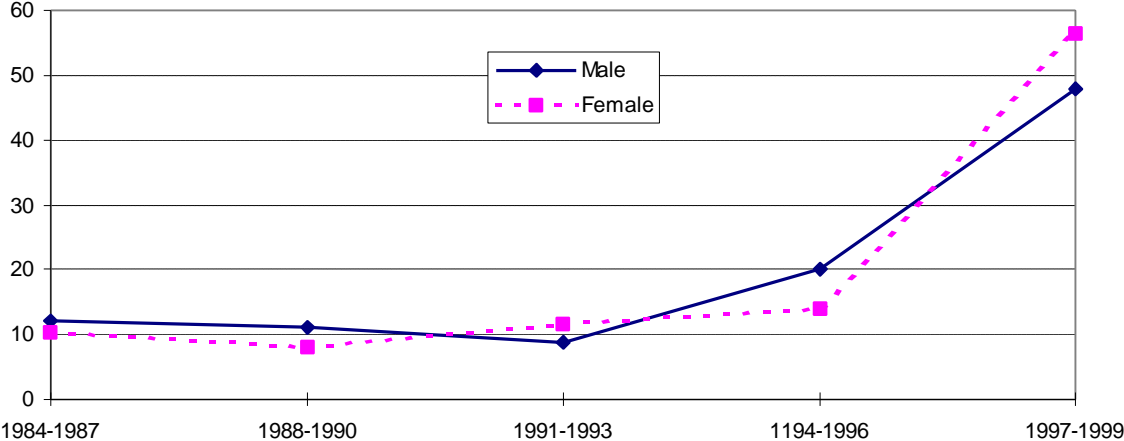
Of the 160 migrants, 63 percent migrated for employment reasons and 37 percent for family reasons. As noted earlier, more women (55.3 percent) than men (16.7 percent) migrate for family reasons. Men (83.3 percent) are more likely than women (44.7 percent) to migrate for employment related reasons including finding a new job or changing one’s place of work.

The data show that local migration occurs more frequently than national, internal migration. Among the 160 migrants 77.5 percent migrated within the region from one commune to another, or to another district within the immediate area. Only one-fifth (22.5 percent) of the migrants moved outside their province.

Nevertheless, this kind of mobility has increased in the post-*Doi Moi* period. Over half of migration cases (52.1 percent) occurred between 1997–1999, and two-thirds between 1994–1999 (Figure 4.6). There were also shifts in gender migration resulting from *Doi Moi*. More men (11.1 percent) than women (8.1 percent) migrated during the initial *Doi Moi* period. However, during the last

two years women surpass men in migration (56.3 versus 47.9 percent). This could be an effect of the Asian Financial Crisis on household relationships.

**Figure 4.6. The Migration by Period and Gender (in Percent)**





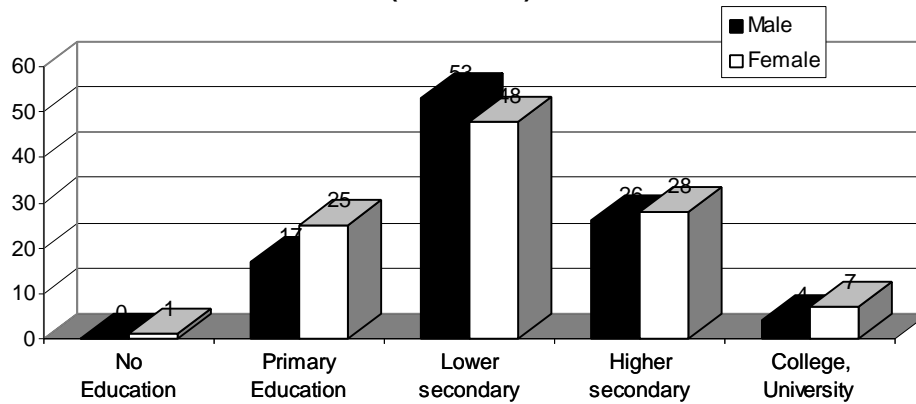
### C. Educational Attainment

As shown in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.7, educational attainment varies by age. Middle aged people are more likely than young adults to have completed lower secondary school. For example, 71.4 percent people aged 30–34 went to lower secondary school, which is twice that of those aged 15–19 and three times that of people over 50 years.

Age Group	No Education		Education Primary		Lower Secondary		Higher Secondary		College, University	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
15-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
20-24	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	5	0	1
25-29	0	0	2	1	3	7	3	6	1	0
30-34	0	0	1	1	12	8	3	2	0	1
35-39	0	0	1	1	12	6	5	3	1	1
40-44	0	1	2	5	14	9	6	7	1	3
45-49	0	0	2	5	7	10	6	1	0	0
50-54	0	0	2	5	2	2	0	2	0	1
55-59	0	0	2	3	2	1	2	0	1	0
60+	0	0	4	4	1	1	1	1	0	0
Total	0	1	17	25	53	48	26	28	4	7

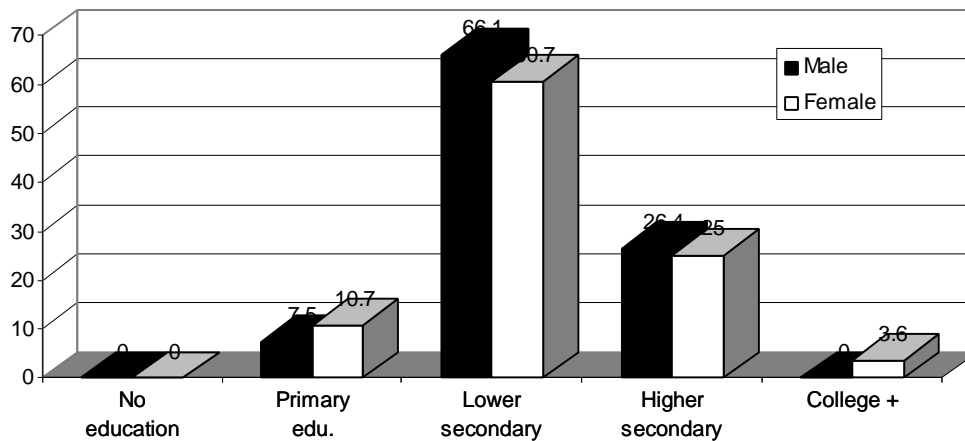
As shown in Figure 4.7, only one woman (40–44 years) does not know how to write and read. In this sample women are more likely than men to have attended high school, college or university. Seven women hold college/university degree while only four men do.

**Figure 4.7. Education by Gender  
(in Percent)**

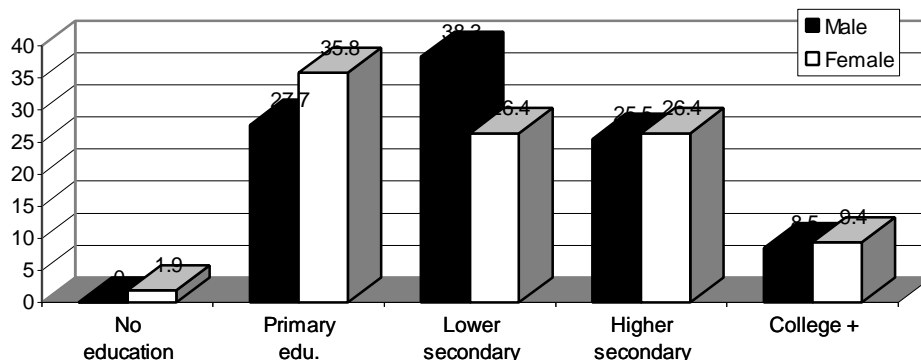


Figures 4.8 and 4.9 show that there is a little difference between men and women’s educational attainment in the two communities. More women (22.9 percent) than men (17 percent) have only a primary school education, whereas more men (53 percent) than women (44 percent) have completed for lower secondary school. Two-thirds of the respondents have had lower secondary or primary school. Thus, it is somewhat surprising that more women than men in the two communities had university degrees (6.4 versus 4.0 percent).

**Figure 4.8. Education by Gender in Dang Cuong  
(in Percent)**



**Figure 4.9. Education by Gender in Go Vap  
(in Percent)**

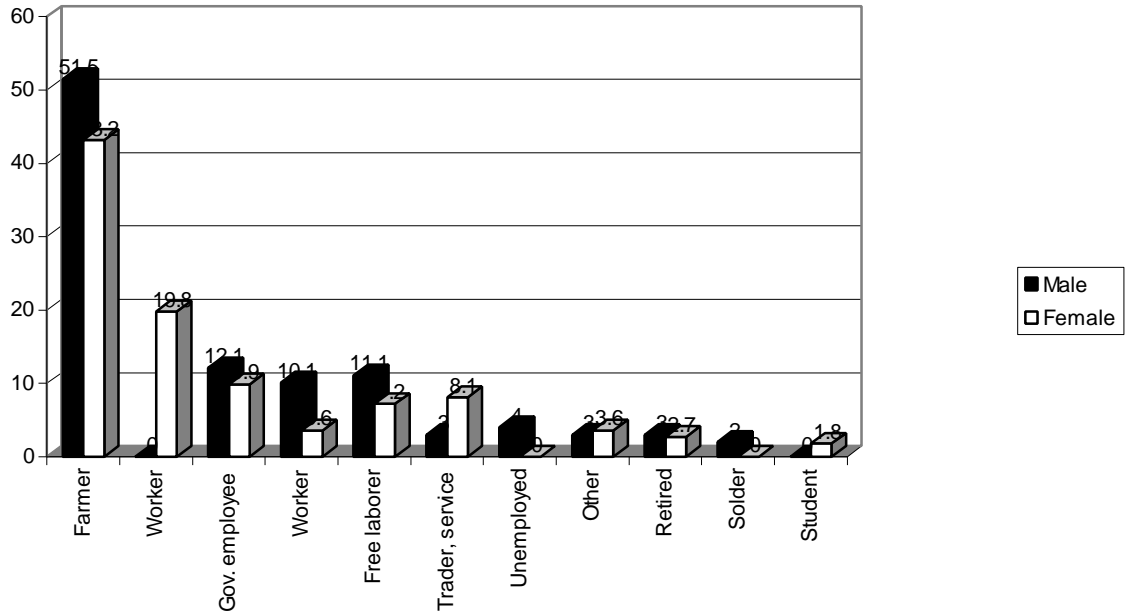


#### **D. Employment Patterns**

Of the 211 respondents, 47.1 percent are farmers. More men (51.5 percent) are working in the agriculture sector than women (43.2 percent). Over 60 percent of the farmers are 35–49 years (Figure 4.10). In addition, the rural/urban difference between the two communities is very pronounced: in Dang Cuong, 80.7 percent of respondents are working in the agricultural sector, whereas in Go Vap, only 10.9 percent are (data not shown).

All 11 women working in the state sector are between 20 to 44 years old. The young age of many female government employees reflects the earlier retirement age for women. Women in every age group consider themselves housewives. Thus, all women report some form of employment. However, one man in the age range 20–24 and three men aged 30–34 report being unemployed (data not shown). Women are also more involved in petty trade and the service sectors, while men are more likely to work as laborers.

**Figure 4.10. Occupation by Gender  
(in percent)**



### E. House and Land Ownership

Questions about land, house and other facilities were used to assess household socioeconomic status. The data show that most respondents (94 percent) live in the same community in which they are registered. Only five percent are registered in one place and live in another.

The adoption of the 1992 Land Law allowed people to move and exchange their land titles; however, not every household was given a land certificate. In Dang Cuong community, 74.3 percent of respondents have land certificates. This suggests there have been few land transactions in this community. In contrast, only 25.8 percent of households in Go Vap have certificates (Table 4.2). The data show 51 percent of respondents have land certificates in the husband's name and only 19.2 percent in the wife's. The fact that 20.2 percent of certificates are in parents' names reflects the important role that elders play in land allocation

Certificate	Dang Cuong (109)	Go Vap (97)	Total (206)
Yes	74.3	25.2	51.5
No	25.7	74.2	48.5
Total	100	100	100
<u>Title in name of</u>			
Husband	56.3	33.3	51.0
Wife	22.5	8.3	19.2
Both	1.3	20.8	5.8
Parent	16.3	33.3	20.2
Other	3.8	4.2	3.8
Total	100	100	100

The information on home ownership indicates the positive impact of *Doi Moi* period on household living conditions. The data show that only 10.6 percent of the respondents owned homes before 1979. Just after *Doi Moi*, from 1986–1989, only 10.6 percent respondents obtained their homes. Less than one-fifth household owners were able to purchase their homes before 1990. During 1986–1989, only 10.4 percent of the families were able to rebuild their houses. In 1990–1992 this figure was 12.0 percent: it doubled in 1993–1995 and tripled by 1999 (Figure 4.11).

**Figure 4.11. Home Ownership by Period  
(in Percent)**

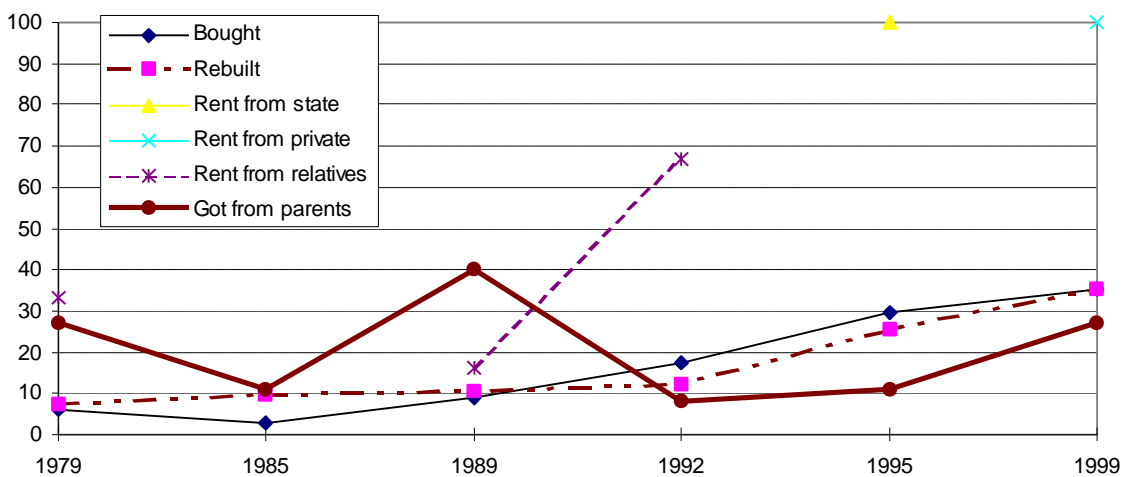
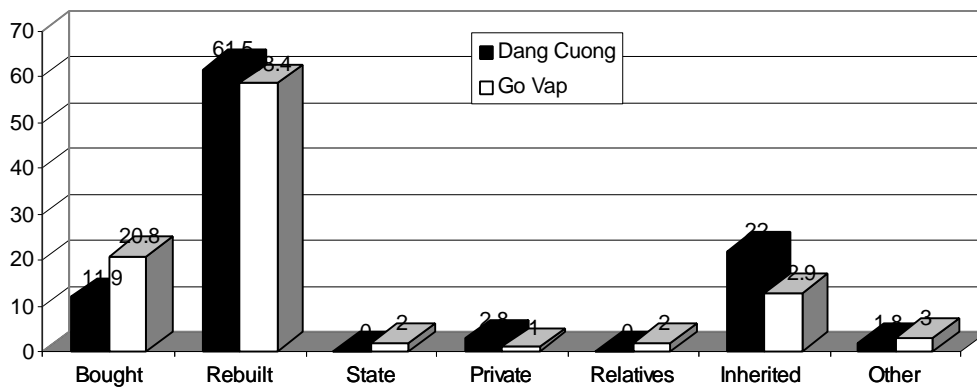


Figure 4.12 shows the difference in home ownership across regions. In Go Vap, people are more likely to buy their house than in Dang Cuong (20.8 versus 11.9 percent). More houses are inherited from parents in Dang Cuong than in Go Vap (22 versus 12.9 percent). Go Vap is attracting newcomers with nuclear families, while Dang Cuong community remains a traditional rural area with extended families.

**Figure 4.12. House Ownership by Community (in Percent)**



Information on housing type indicates differences in living standards between the two communities. In Dang Cuong, 65.2 percent of people live in simple houses or houses with tiles, while in Go Vap, these kinds of houses are not found (Figure 4.13).

**Figure 4.13. Types of house by Community (in Percent)**

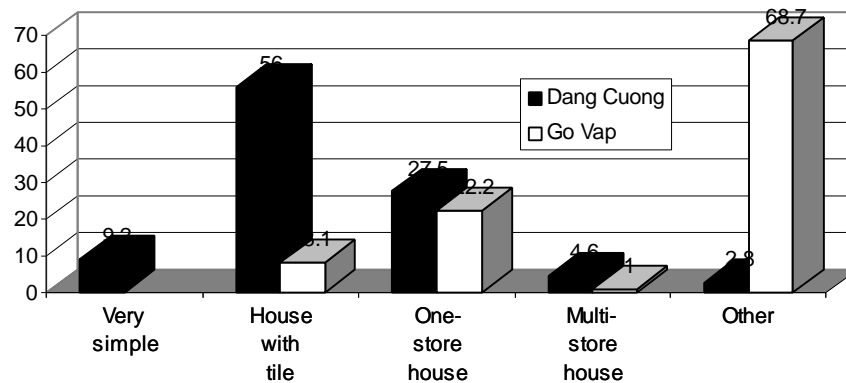
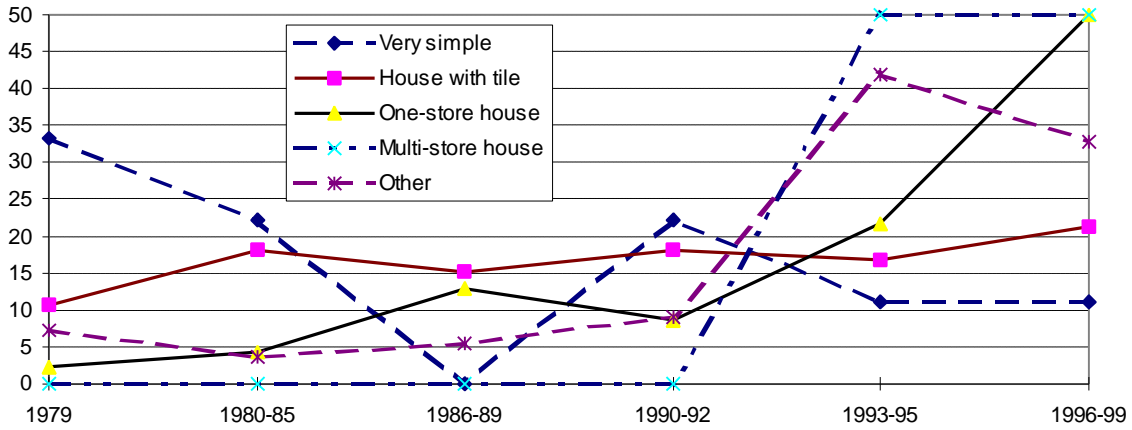


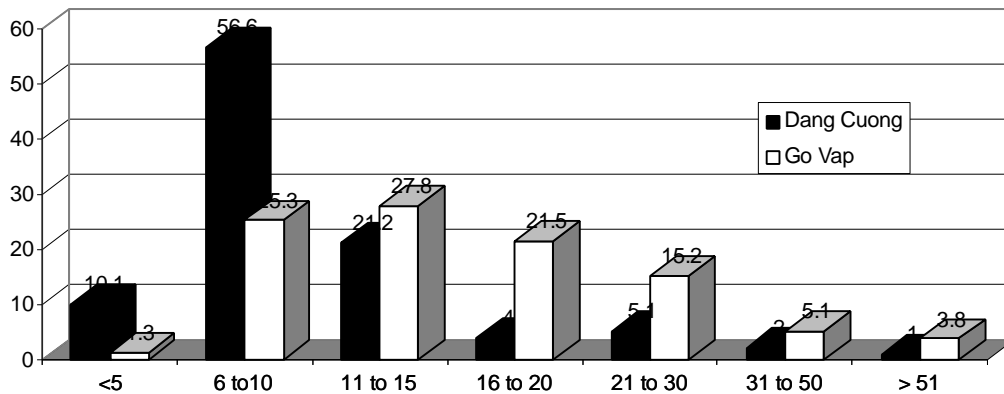
Figure 4.14 shows an increase in the number of houses owned by respondents during the past twenty years. Most (58.8 percent) were built during the last six years and most solid structures were built from 1993–1999.

**Figure 4.14. House by Period (in Percent)**



Nearly 43 percent of the respondents live in a house with space of 11 square meters or less per person. A few households have space above 31 square meters per person (Figure 4.15). In Go Vap the average living space is double that of Dang Cuong (88.8 versus 46.5 square meters).

**Figure 4.15. Living Space per Person by Community (in Percent)**



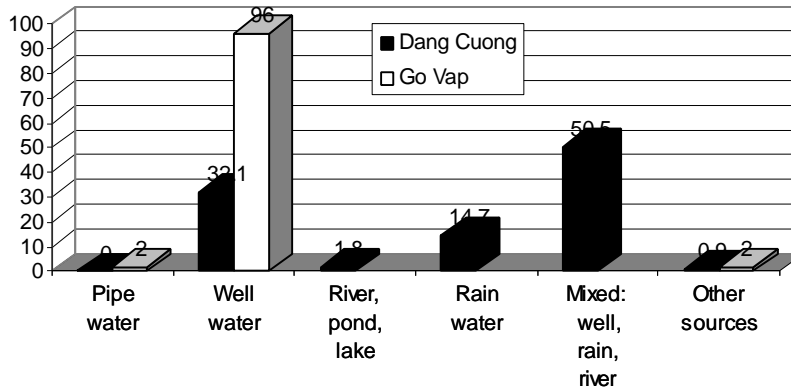
Questions were asked about land ownership patterns. The total land space includes space for housing and gardening, agricultural land, ponds and/or lakes and other kinds of land. Half of the respondents answered questions about land ownership. The data show that one-third households had less than 1,000 square meters, which is roughly equivalent to three sao. Nearly one-fifth of the households have more than 3,000 square meters but only 6.0 percent have more than four thousand square meters. On average, each household has less than six sao (average land space is 1,987 square meters). For farming households of four to five people, this is enough land for agricultural production. These findings are similar to those of other studies, which show that the amount of space per capita in rural areas is shrinking due to increased population density.

Average land holding in Dang Cuong is much larger than that in Go Vap (2446 versus 384 square meters). This reflects the fact that Dang Cuong is a rural area, where farmers are given a set amount of land for agricultural production through their contract with the cooperative. Although Go Vap is urbanized, some residents with large amounts of agricultural land became richer by selling land to newcomers from Ho Chi Minh City and other provinces.

Figure 4.16 shows that most households in Dang Cuong have well water. They dig wells (96 percent) and use water pumps (32.1 percent). People in Dang Cuong drink water from various sources, including rainwater, which is considered a pure source.



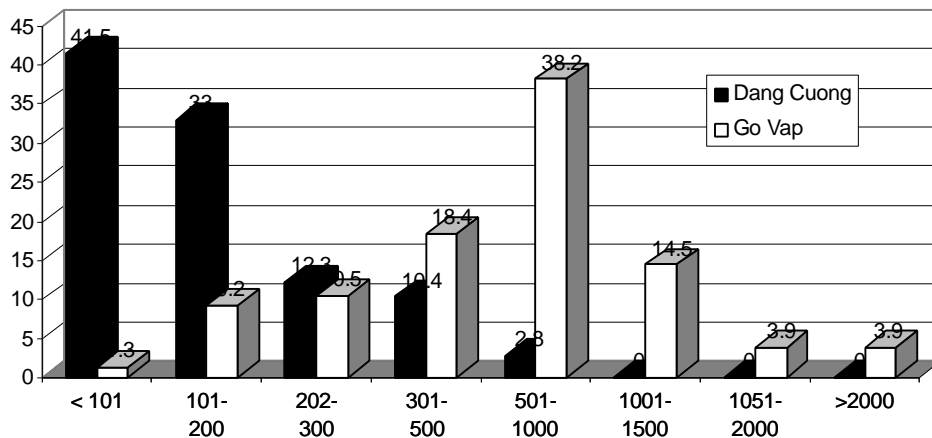
**Figure 4.16. Drinking Water by Community  
(in Percent)**



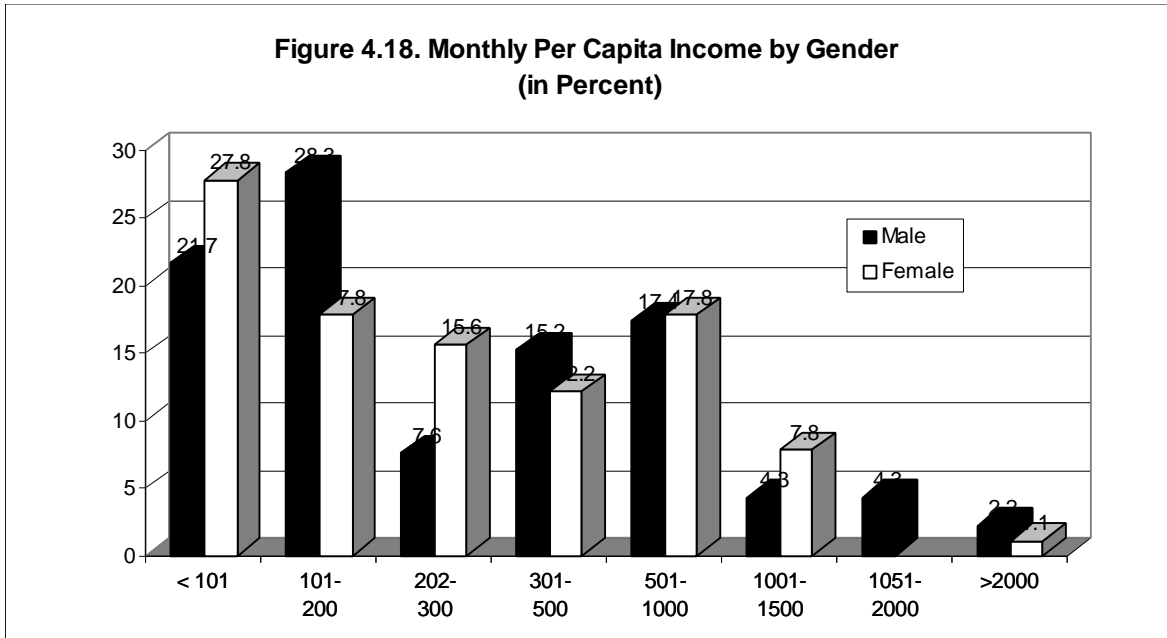
**F. Household Income, Savings, and Debt**

In Dang Cuong, people earn much less than people in Go Vap (194.7 versus 923.1 thousand VND). As shown in Figure 4.17, 41.5 percent of respondents in Dang Cuong reported having per capita income of less than 101,000 VND (US\$7), and 100 percent earn less than 1,001,000 VND (US\$72) per capita a month. More than 20 percent of Go Vap respondents earn between one and two million VND (US\$72-143).

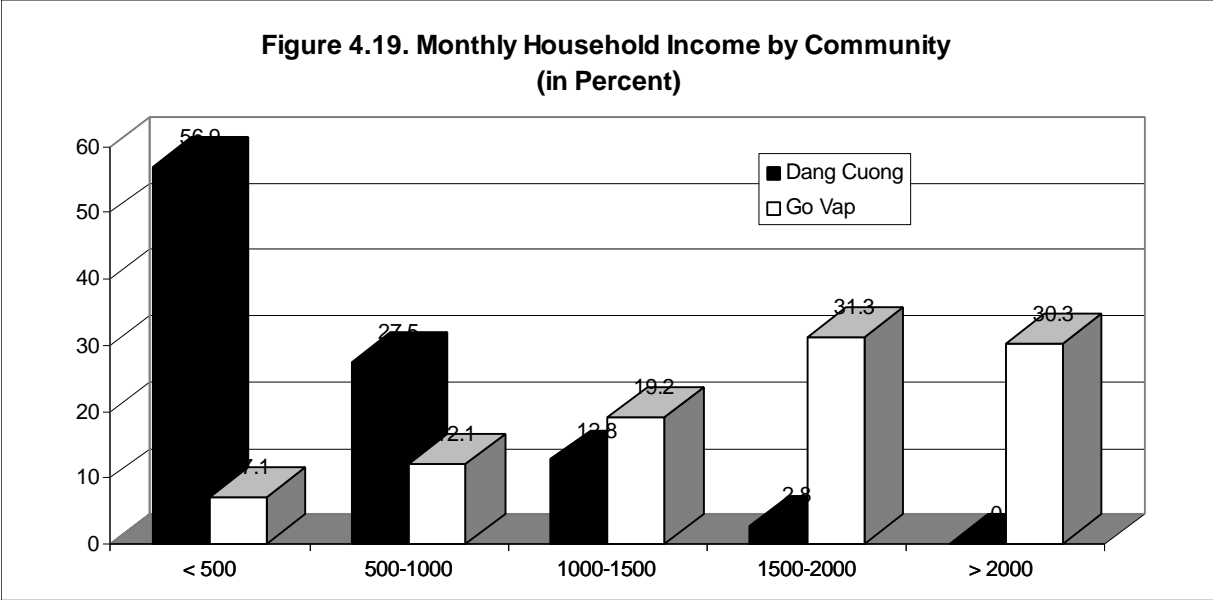
**Figure 4.17. Monthly Per Capita Income by Community  
(in Percent)**



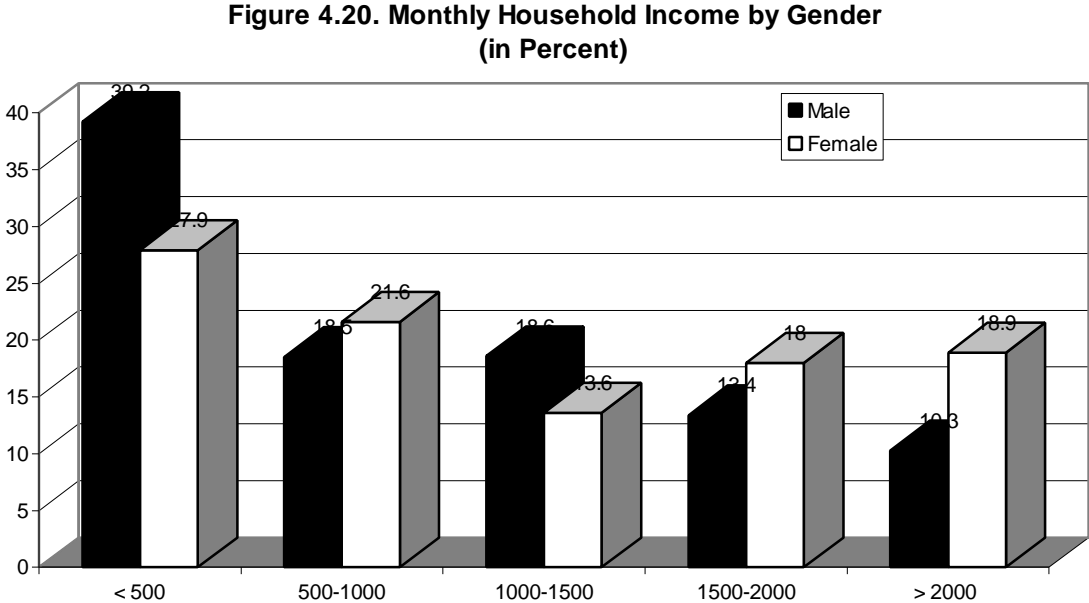
The gender difference in monthly per capita income is shown in figure 4.18. Women earn less than men. The average income for women is 4,489,000 VND (US\$321) or 82 percent of men's average income of 5,478,000 VND (US\$391).



Households in Dang Cuong earn much less than those in Go Vap (4,932,000 versus 1,691,300 VND per month or US\$352 versus US\$121) (Figure 4.19).



On average, women reported earning less than men (Figure 4.20), but the total household income reported by women was more than that reported by men (11,520,000 versus 9,621,000VND or US\$823 versus US\$687).



The average monthly living expenditure for a household reported by men is less than that reported by women (8,204,000 versus 10,479,000 VND or US\$586 versus US\$749 per month). This may be explained by the fact that in Vietnamese families, women are often in charge of household finances, including daily expenditures. The average monthly household income is also more than the average monthly household living expenditure (10,634,000 versus 9,396,000 VND or US\$760 versus US\$671). There are no gender differences with respect to these numbers. This means that many households have monthly savings of 123,000 VND (US\$9). Men may save more than women; the average balance for men is 142,000 VND (US\$10) versus 104,000 VND (US\$8) for women.

However, Figure 4.21 shows that 3.8 percent of the households have a monthly living expenditure of less than 151,000 VND (US\$11) for the whole family. A total of 7.2 percent of households spend between 151,000 to 250,000 VND (or US\$11-18). Slightly more men (6.4 percent) than women (6.2 percent) live under 250,000 VND.

Nearly 45 percent of the households spend less than 501,000 VND (US\$36) a month. Although people are better off than in the past, this level of living expenditure in households averaging 4.7 persons means that half of the households have only the bare necessities. Only six percent of households are rich, spending more than two million VND (US\$143) a month.

The data indicate a gap in living expenditures between the two communities. The average living expenditure in Dang Cuong is less than one-third of Go Vap's (410,000 versus 1.5 million VND or US\$29 versus \$107).

**Figure 4.21. Monthly Household Living Expenditure by Gender (in Percent)**

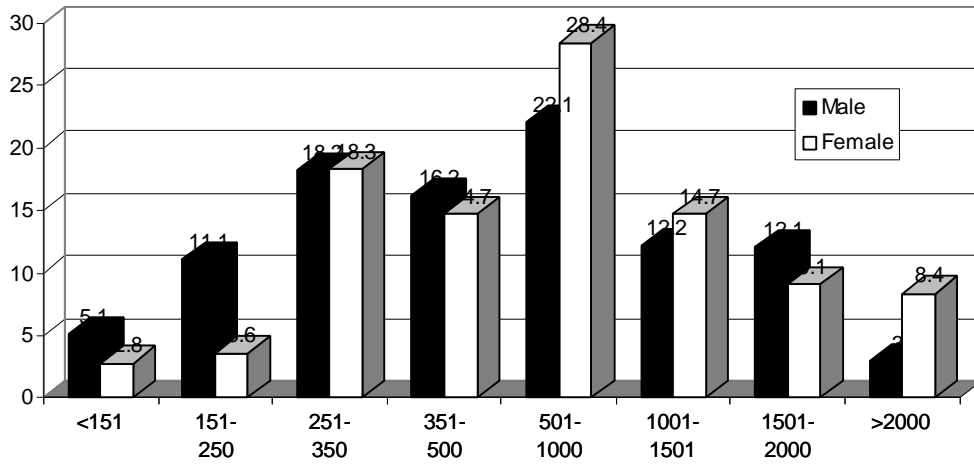
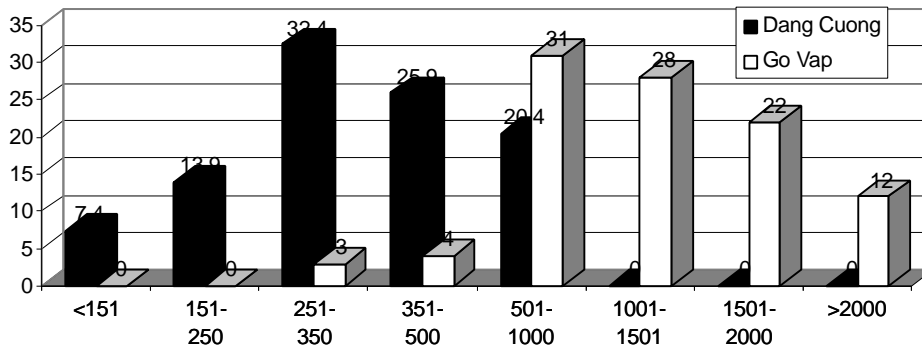


Figure 4.22 further indicates that the average monthly expenditure by households in Dang Cuong is less than that in Go Vap (4,099,000 VND versus 15,117,000VND or US\$293 versus US\$1,079). The household savings of 83,000 VND (US\$6) (calculated as 4,932,000 minus 4,099,000 VND) in Dang Cuong is nearly 50 percent of that in Go Vap (calculated as 16,963,000 minus 15,117,000 VND). It appears that in Go Vap the more one earns, the more is spent.

**Figure 4.22. Monthly Living Household Expenditure by Community (in Percent)**



As shown in Table 4.3, borrowing and lending money are more common in rural than in urban areas. In Dang Cuong, 42.5 percent report being in debt, while in Go Vap, only 15.9 percent did. About 50 percent of the borrowers in Dang Cuong report their debt and amount of the loans, but only one person in Go Vap provided such information.

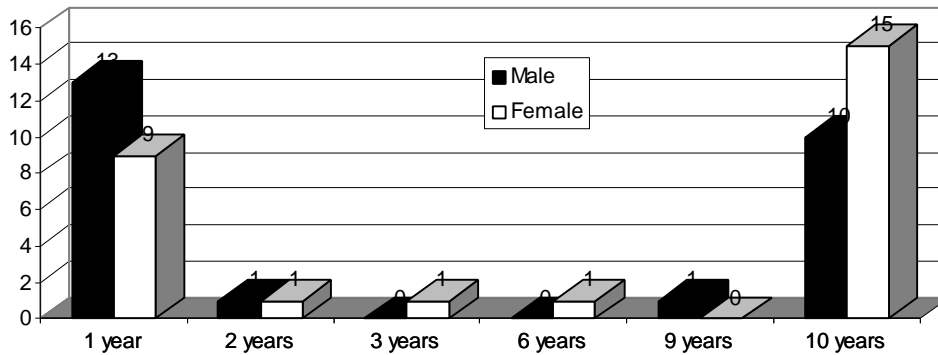
Debt	Dang Cuong (106)	Go Vap (88)	Total (194)
Yes	42.5	15.9	30.4
No	57.5	84.1	69.6
Total	100	100	100
If yes, debt to whom			36.8
State	37.5		40.0
Relatives	41.1		8.8
Trader-owner	8.9		10.5
Neighbor	10.7		3.5
Friends	1.8		
Total	100	100	100

Women are more likely to borrow money than men (34 versus 26.6 percent). They also have more varied sources of capital than men (Table 4.4).

Debt	Male (94)	Female(100)	Total (194)
Yes	26.6	34.0	30.3
No	73.4	66.0	69.7
Total	100	100	100
If yes, debt to:			
State	38.5	35.5	37.0
Relatives	50.0	32.1	41.0
Trader-owner	3.8	12.9	8.4
Neighbor	7.7	12.9	10.3
Friends		6.6	3.3
Total	100	100	100

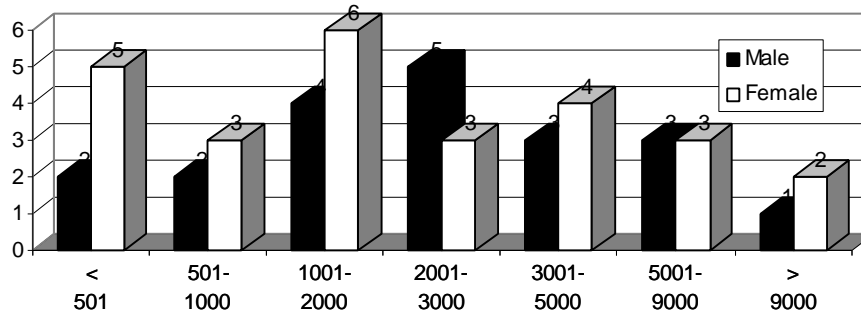
Medium-term debt is not common. Men and women tend to borrow short-term (one-year) or long-term (10 years). Half of those borrowing received a loan for 10 years (25 of 52 borrowers) and the rest received a loan for one year (Figure 4.23).

**Figure 4.23. Debt by Year and Gender  
(in Percent)**



The data show that the average amount of money borrowed by women tends to be slightly less than that of men (3,048,000 versus 3,520,000 VND or US\$218 versus US\$251) (Table 4.24).

**Figure 4.24. Debt by Magnitude and Gender  
(in Percent)**



### G. Household Goods and Assets

Today, most households possess several consumer goods such as electric fans (91.4 percent), bicycles (85.2 percent), and TV sets (81 percent). In Go Vap, 78 percent of households have motorbikes, while in Dang Cuong only 10.1 percent do (Table 4.5). Bicycles are common transportation



means for most of the households in both Dang Cuong (85.3 percent) and Go Vap (85.0 percent). As a rural area, half of the Dang Cuong households use wood and/or coal for fuel. In Go Vap, as in other urban areas, gas and oil are more common. Very few households use electric fuel in both Dang Cuong (3.7 percent) and Go Vap (5.9 percent). More households in Go Vap (17.6 percent) have a telephone than in Dang Cuong (0.9 percent).

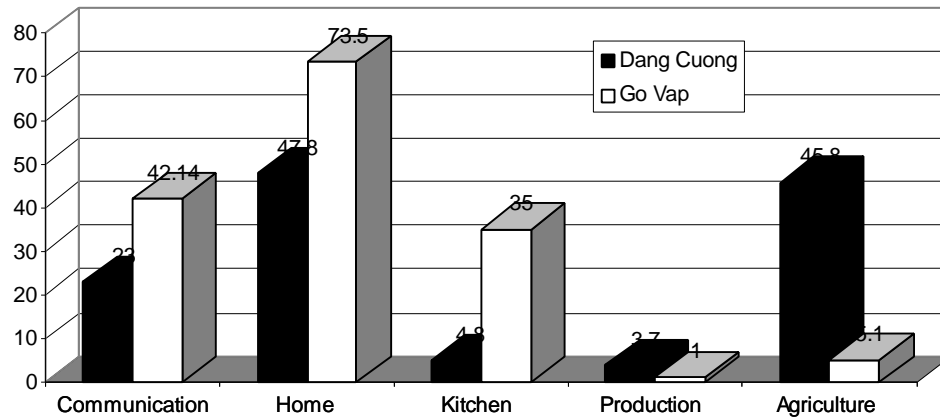
Goods	Dang Cuong (109)	Go Vap (102)	Total (211)
Radio	20.2	44.6	31.9
B&W television	18.7	5.0	12.0
Color television	54.1	85.1	69.0
Video	21.1	58.4	39.0
Telephone	0.9	17.6	7.7
<b>Sub-total</b>	23.0	42.1	31.9
Electric fan	91.7	91.1	91.4
Sofa	44.0	56.4	50.0
Tea board	28.4	51.5	39.4
Cloth board	27.5	79.0	52.2
Bicycle	85.3	85.0	85.2
Motorbike	10.1	78.0	42.6
<b>Sub-total</b>	47.8	73.5	60.1
Wood fuel	57.8	0	29.9
Coal fuel	60.6	0	31.3
Petroleum	0	35.3	17.1
Gas	0	48.5	23.3
Electric fuel	3.7	5.9	4.8
Rice cooker	16.5	58.4	36.7
Refrigerator	3.7	27.0	14.8
<b>Sub-total</b>	4.8	35.0	19.3
Tractor	2.8	2.0	2.4
Milling machine	4.6	0	2.3
<b>Sub-total</b>	3.7	1.0	2.3
Buffalo	51.9	5.9	26.7
Cow	1.8	8.8	3.8
Pigs	78.9	8.8	45.0
Poultry	76.1	2.0	43.6
Fish pond	20.2	0	11.4
<b>Sub-Total</b>	45.8	5.1	26.1

More than half of the households in Dang Cuong have a buffalo to plough the fields, while in Go Vap, only 5.9 percent households have a buffalo. A number of households in Dang Cuong are

engaged in animal husbandry, such as raising pigs (78.9 percent), poultry (76.1 percent), and fisheries (20.2 percent). In contrast, very few Go Vap households engage in these activities, as one would expect of an urban area.

Figure 4.25 summarizes five groups of household goods and assets in the two communities. As shown in this figure, respondents in Dang Cuong have more goods and assets related to agricultural production, while their counterparts in Go Vap have more goods and assets for home use.

**Figure 4.25. Durable Goods by Community  
(in Percent)**

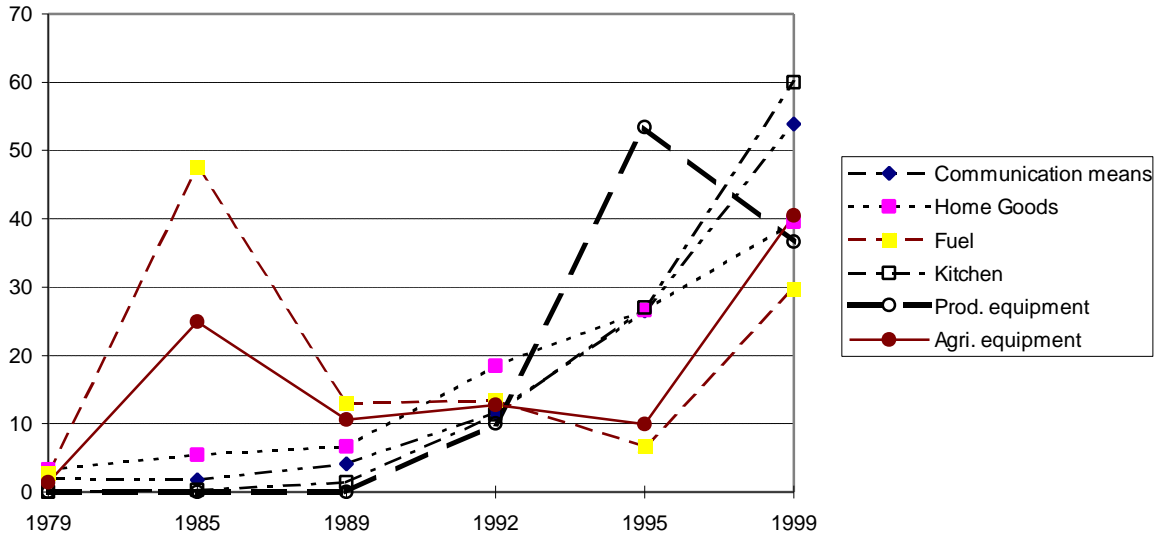


Households have increased their purchase of consumer goods over the past ten years. For example, the percentage of households with radios increased from 11.3 percent in 1986–1989, to 18.9 percent in 1990–1992 and finally, to 30.2 percent in 1996–1999. This trend is more obvious for durable and expensive goods such as electric fans, rice cookers, color TV sets, motorbikes, and refrigerators. For example, the number of electric fans increased from 4.4 percent in 1980–1985 to 39.8 percent in 1996–1999 and color TV sets, from 0.7 to 46.7 percent in the same time period (Table 4.6).

Consumer goods	1979	80-85	86-89	90-92	93-95	96-99	Total	
Radio	1.9	3.8	11.3	18.9	34.0	30.2	100	53
B&W television	8.7	0	8.7	0	17.4	65.2	100	23
Color television	0	3.7	0.7	17.0	31.9	46.7	100	135
Video	0	1.3	0	16.7	33.3	48.7	100	78
Telephone	0	0	0	5.3	15.8	78.9	100	19
<b>Sub-total</b>	2.1	1.8	4.1	11.6	26.5	53.9	100	61
Electric fan	2.2	1.7	4.4	8.2	33.7	39.8	100	181
Sofa	1.0	9.2	6.1	25.5	24.5	33.7	100	98
Tea board	2.6	3.9	7.9	17.1	31.6	36.8	100	76
Cloth board	2.0	7.8	6.9	18.6	26.5	38.2	100	39
Bicycle	8.6	8.6	8.0	18.4	17.2	39.3	100	163
Motorbike	3.6	1.2	7.1	13.1	26.2	48.8	100	84
<b>Sub-total</b>	3.3	5.4	6.7	18.5	26.6	39.5	100	106
Wood fuel	3.9	64.7	11.8	7.8	3.9	7.8	100	51
Coal fuel	1.6	30.2	14.3	19.0	9.5	25.4	100	63
<b>Sub-total</b>	2.7	47.5	13	13.4	6.7	29.7	100	57
Petroleum	0	0	0	16.7	41.7	41.7	100	24
Gas	0	0	2.1	2.1	19.1	76.6	100	47
Electric fuel	0	0	0	22.5	25.0	62.5	100	8
Rice cooker	0	1.4	1.4	4.1	27.0	66.2	100	74
Refrigerator	0	0	3.7	11.1	22.2	63.0	100	27
<b>Sub-total</b>	0	0.3	1.4	11.3	27.0	60.0	100	36
Tractor	0	0	0	0	66.7	33.3	100	3
Milling machine	0	0	0	20.0	40.0	40.0	100	5
<b>Sub-total</b>	0	0	0	10.0	53.4	36.6	100	3.4
Buffalo	1.3	26.5	16.3	10.2	18.4	28.6	100	49
Cow	0	16.7	16.7	16.7	0	50.0	100	6
Pigs	0	19.3	3.6	8.4	4.8	63.9	100	83
Poultry	1.3	21.3	2.7	5.3	8.0	61.3	100	75
Fish pond	4.5	40.9	13.6	22.7	18.2	0	100	22
<b>Sub-total</b>	1.4	24.9	10.8	12.7	9.9	40.5	100	47

Figure 4.26 shows the increase in purchasing power experienced by households over the past ten years 1989–1999.

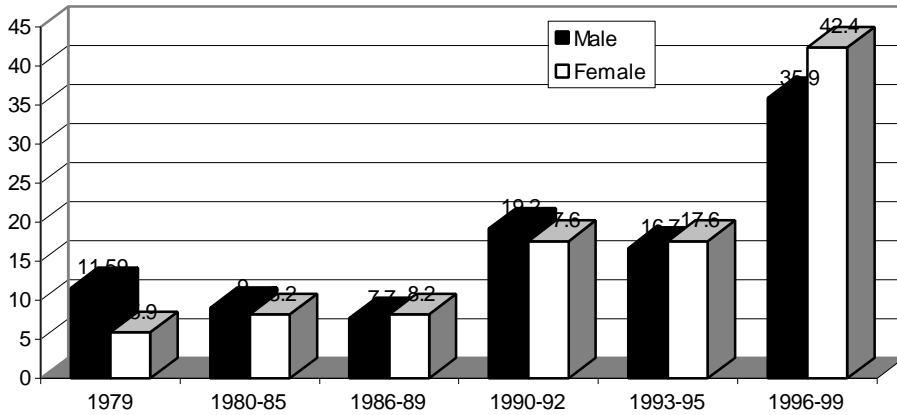
**Figure 4.26. Consumer Goods by Time Period  
(in Percent)**



<b>Table 4.7. Household Durable Goods by Gender (Percent)</b>		
Goods	Male (100)	Female (111)
Radio	36.0	27.9
B&W television	11.0	12.6
Color television	73.0	64.9
Video	31.0	45.9
Telephone	4.0	13.5
<b>Sub-total</b>	31.0	32.9
Electric fan	90.0	91.9
Sofa	48.0	51.4
Tea board	36.0	41.4
Cloth board	48.0	55.0
Bicycle	86.0	82.9
Motorbike	40.0	44.1
<b>Sub-total</b>	58.0	61.1
Wood fuel	27.0	32.4
Coal fuel	33.0	29.7
<b>Sub-total</b>	30.0	31.0
Petroleum	20.0	14.4
Gas	20.0	26.1
Electric fuel	3.0	6.3
Rice cooker	29.0	43.2
Refrigerator	8.0	20.7
<b>Sub-total</b>	16.0	22.1
Tractor	1.0	3.6
Milling machine	4.0	0.9
<b>Sub-total</b>	2.5	4.2
Buffalo	31.0	22.5
Cow	4.0	3.6
Pigs	46.0	44.1
Poultry	45.0	42.3
Fish pond	11.0	11.7
<b>Sub-Total</b>	27.4	24.8

Slight gender differences can be seen in bicycle and a motorbike possession (see Figures 4.27 and 4.28). Before 1979, more men than women had a bicycle and/or motorbike. However, in the past three years, more women than men have bought bicycles (42.4 versus 35.9 percent). Over the last twenty years, the purchasing power of both men and women has increased by three to four times (as measured by the goods and assets purchased).

**Figure 4.27. Bicycle by Gender (in percent)**



**Figure 4.28. Motorbike by Gender (in percent)**

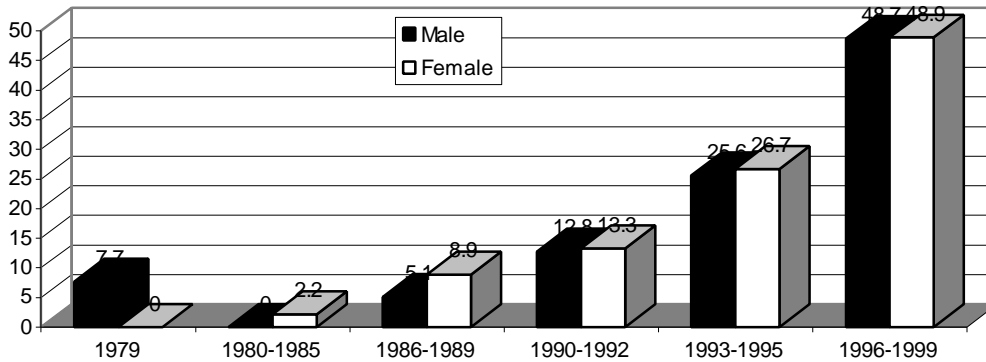


Figure 4.29 summarizes gender differentials in the purchase of durable goods related to communication, home, kitchen, and production.

**Figure 4.29. Durable Goods by Gender  
(in percent)**



## H. Contraceptive Use

Only 3.3 percent of the respondents did not respond to questions about contraceptive use.

Among women of reproductive age (15–49 year old), the most common contraceptive method is IUD.

Of those who responded, 74.4 percent of currently married reproductive age women report using some form of contraception. Of current users, 11 percent use traditional methods (withdrawal or periodic

abstinence) and another 9.8 depend on breastfeeding. Detailed information on contraception is

presented in Table 4.8.

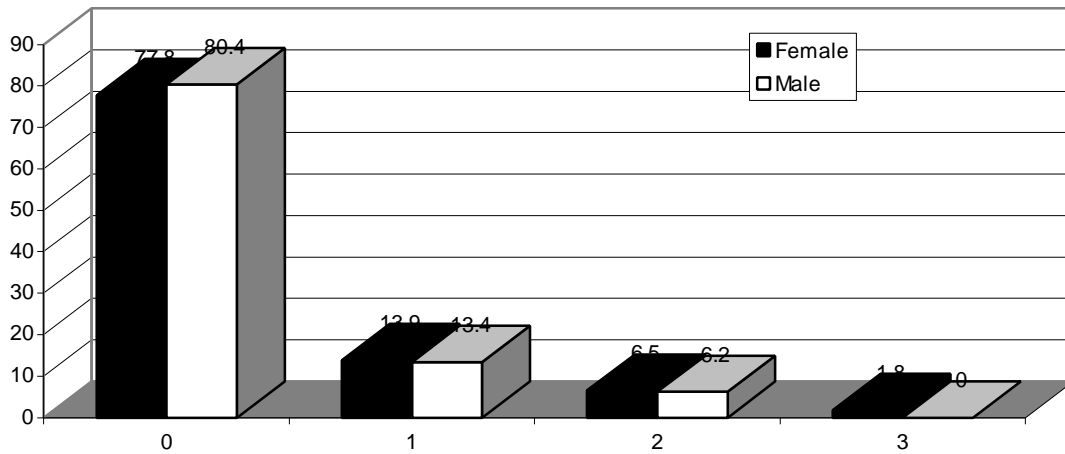
Contraception	Male (77)		Female (82)		Total (159)	
	Past	Current	Past	Current	Past	Current
No contraception	10.4	15.6	7.3	25.6	8.8	20.8
Any contraception	89.6	84.4	91.5	74.4	91.2	79.2
<b>Any modern method</b>						
Pill	6.5	5.2			5.7	3.8
Injection			4.9	2.4	0.6	0.6
IUD	57.1	42.9	1.2	1.2	50.9	35.2
Condom	6.5	9.1	45.1	28.2	7.5	6.9
Female sterilization	2.6	7.8	8.5	4.9	3.8	7.5
Male sterilization			4.9	7.3	5.0	1.9
<b>Traditional method</b>						
Withdrawal	2.6	3.9	7.3	3.7	11.3	5.7
Periodic abstinence	9.1	10.4	13.4	7.3	1.3	10.1
Child feeding	1.3	2.6	1.2	9.8	2.5	1.3
Aging			2.4	3.7	1.3	2.5
Other	2.6	1.3	2.4	4.9	1.3	2.5
No answer	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.2		1.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Of 208 respondents, 14.4 percent of past users reported some problems related to the method of contraception they used (data not shown). One-fourth of women currently using some method of contraception report having health-related problems with it. About half of those problems are complications related to the IUD. Among currently married women under 49 years, 18.5 percent report problems with the use of IUD's.



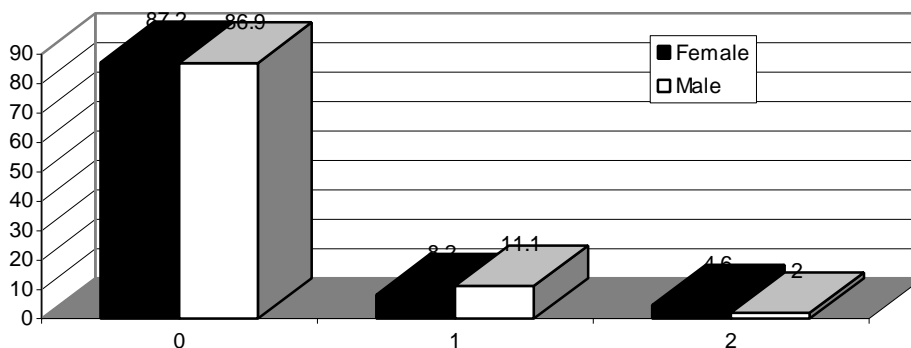
The percentage of pregnancy termination is presented in Figure 4.30. There is a little difference in the percentage of men and women reporting a termination in their household. Overall, 22.2 percent of 108 women (compared to 19.8 percent men) report an experience with pregnancy termination either by abortion or menstrual regulation. These findings differ from those of the 1997 DHS, in which only 15 percent of married women reported an experience with pregnancy termination. Among 24 women reporting a pregnancy termination, 15 reported having one termination, seven women reported having two and two women reported having three.

**Figure 4.30. Abortions by Gender  
(in percent)**



As shown, 12.8 percent of women have miscarried one or two times (Figure 4.31). Miscarriage is considered very harmful for women’s health; a Vietnamese saying states: “one miscarriage is equal to three deliveries.”

**Figure 4.31. Miscarriages by Gender  
(in percent)**



### **I. Summary of Gender Differences at the Household Level**

Several patterns related to gender and the social economic transition emerged from the household level surveys of the two communities. In both communities, households became much more mobile, with mobility increasing quite dramatically after 1994. Households and family size are also smaller than in the past, and the majority of households have nuclear family structures. Across the two communities, 36 percent of the households have at least one migrant. Although this percentage is slightly higher in Dang Cuong (38.5 percent) than in Go Vap (33 percent), the average number of migrants per household is higher in Go Vap (2.9 versus 1.5). More of the migration in Dang Cuong is due to marriage and is confined to the local area within established household units. In contrast, in Go Vap the average household size is slightly larger, and includes more non-traditional members than in Dang Cuong. Thus, differing kinds of household structures may be emerging in rural versus urban communities.

In this sample, small differences in men and women's educational attainment were found. Although slightly more women completed primary, slightly more men completed lower secondary. Overall educational attainment is decreasing. Fewer women complete lower secondary than men, but more attend university, suggesting that parents may be making decisions about both their sons and

daughters' schooling based on their perceptions of present and future earnings in the labor market. As found in other studies, following the reforms there may be both higher direct and higher opportunity costs for keeping children in school.

Slightly more men (51.5 percent) than women (43.2 percent) are working in the agricultural sector. No women report being without employment because all are also working in the home. Women are more involved in petty trade and the service sector. Very few male respondents report unemployment. Women's average income is 82 percent that of men; however, they report a much higher total household income than men do (which reflects women's role as financial managers of households).

Most land certificates are in the husband's name (51 percent) followed by parent's (20.2 percent) and lastly, the wife's (19.2 percent). Most people acquired their house after the *Doi Moi* reforms. In addition, private rentals also went up during this time. Home ownership is less common in Go Vap than in Dang Cuong, and more certificates are exchanged in Go Vap. Most solid houses were built from 1993 to the present. The average living space in Go Vap is double that of Dang Cuong, whereas access to productive land is much greater in Dang Cuong (a rural community) than in Go Vap (an urban one).

Men have a higher savings rate than women. Women (34 percent) than men (26.6 percent) are more likely to borrow money and have more reported sources of capital. Reported debt is higher in the rural households than in urban ones, which may reflect a reporting bias, or the need for rural farmers to make more long term investments in things like agricultural production equipment.

Most households have dramatically increased their purchase of consumer goods over the past decade. The percentage of households owning color televisions increased from 0.7 percent in 1980–85 to 46.7 percent in 1996–1999.

Most married women of reproductive age report using a contraceptive method, and 22.2 percent report having had a pregnancy termination. The major form of contraception is the IUD; however,

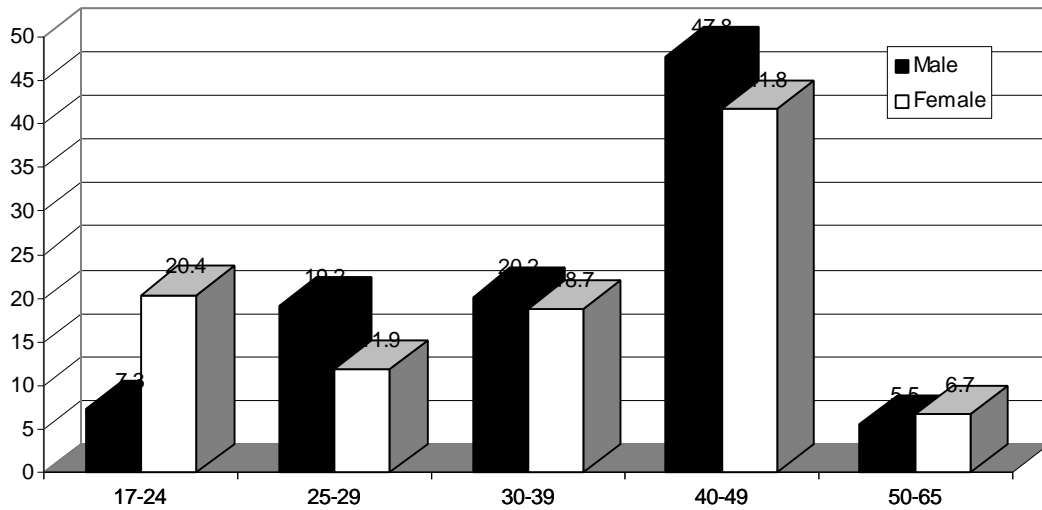
women have expressed some dissatisfaction with its side effects. Natural family planning methods coupled with abortion are being reported at higher rates than in the past.

## 5. Time Allocation and Gender Roles

The time allocation sample includes 243 respondents: 51.8 percent from Dang Cuong and 48.2 percent from Go Vap. In each community, the team interviewed the head of household who happened to be there at the particular time. By meeting people over different times of the day, the goal was to interview both men and women in this survey. In Dang Cuong, 53.2 percent of 126 respondents are women and in Go Vap, 57.3 percent. The sex ratio imbalance may be explained by the fact that men are more likely than women to be employed outside the home. Thus, fewer men were reached for an interview.

Of the 243 respondents, the majority (109 men and 134 women) is between 17 and 65 years of age. For the age cohort 17–24, in particular, more women than men (20.4 versus 7.3 percent) are represented. As a result, the women's average age is less than that of men's (35.7 versus 37.6 years) while the average age of the entire sample is 36.5. Overall, most respondents (93.9 percent) in this sample are of reproductive age and their time allocation patterns are strongly affected by their work and family life (Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1. Respondent Distribution by Age and Gender  
(in Percent)**



For this sample, there are small differences in household size by sex of the respondent. The average number of people per a household is 4.7 for men and 4.9 for women. Almost half of the respondents live in a household with 3–4 persons. This means that most live in a nuclear family, which includes a husband and wife with one or two children. Nearly 48 percent respondents live in households with five people or more.

**A. Rest and Leisure**

In terms of time allocation women rise a half an hour earlier than men (5:05 versus 5:37 am with the average hour being 5:20 am) but they also go to bed as late as men (at 21:57 pm). This makes the amount of working time for women longer than for men (16'57" versus 16'34" with an average time of 16'47").

Table 5.1 shows that among those rising before 5:00 am, there are more women than men (60.4 versus 51.4 percent).

**Table 5.1. Sleep Patterns by Gender**

(in percent)				
Hours	Rising		Sleeping	
	Male (109)	Female (134)	Male (106)	Female (131)
Before 5:01 a.m.	51.4	60.4	-	-
5:01 – 6:00 a.m.	28.4	28.4	-	-
6:01 – 7:01 a.m.	18.3	11.2	-	-
After 7:01 a.m.	1.9	0	-	-
Before 21:00 p.m.	-	-	5.7	7.6
21:01 – 22:00 p.m.	-	-	24.5	27.5
22:01 – 23:00 p.m.	-	-	40.6	35.9
After 23:01 p.m.	-	-	29.2	29.0
Total	100	100	100	100

## B. Productive Activities

Men spend longer hours on wage labor inside and outside than women do (4'6" versus 3'17" inside and 7' versus 5'43" outside). On average, people spend 3'38" for wage labor inside the home and 6'16" for wage labor outside. For inside and outside wage labor combined, 22 percent more men spent two hours longer than women (11'07" versus 9'00" with the average time being 10 hours).

The data show that 15.1 percent men have full-time wage labor at home, while only 4.9 percent of the women report wage labor inside the home. More men than women are working at home for six or more hours (28.3 versus 16 percent). This indicates that self-employment is more pervasive for men than for women.

The pattern of work outside the home differs for men and women. Among female respondents working outside their home, 47.6 percent spend less than 360 minutes (six hours a day) and 23.4 percent spend more than eight hours. The distribution of working time outside the home for men shows that 27.1 percent spend less than six hours and 28.7 percent spend more than eight hours a day.

For those working outside home, the average travel time for men is 20 minutes longer than for women (69 versus 49 minutes). This means that work places are closer for women than for men.

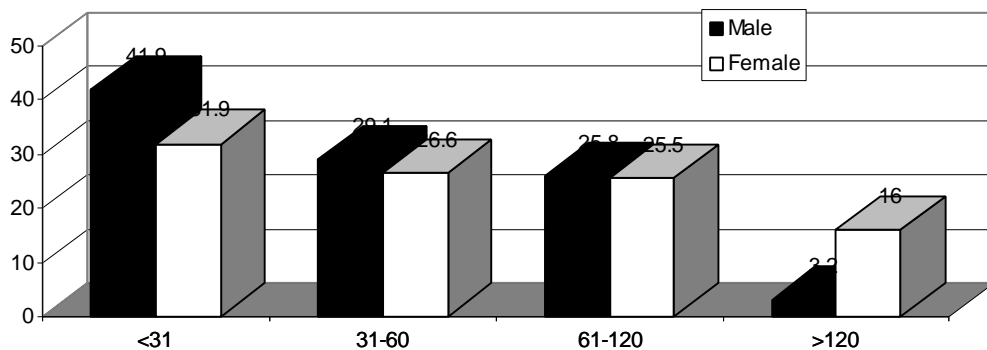
Patterns of time allocation for unpaid housework clearly indicate a differentiation of gender roles. The amount of time spent by men in doing housework including cleaning the house, shopping and

cooking is 75 percent that of women (122 versus 186 minutes). How people recalled time spent may also reflect gender roles and expectations. Of the 134 female respondents 101 women reported that they spent almost two hours every day shopping and cooking for the family. Among 109 male respondents, only 21 mentioned spending time for so-called “women’s jobs,” which take them 64 minutes a day. Men spend 58 minutes cleaning house and women 73 minutes a day. The average time spent cleaning is 69 minutes.

Unlike farmers in Dang Cuong, people in Go Vap district spend more time cleaning their houses (86 versus 52 minutes) and shopping and cooking (122 minutes versus 90 minutes). This reflects different lifestyles and forms of household construction in the two communities. Unlike a farmer’s house, a modern house in urban area needs to be cleaned with special instruments that are not relevant to more simply constructed houses in the countryside.

Of the few male (31) respondents reporting some time cleaning their houses, 41.9 percent spent less than 31 minutes a day and only 3.2 percent spend more than two hours. This is different for women: 16 percent reported that they spend more two hours a day cleaning their houses (Figure 5.2).

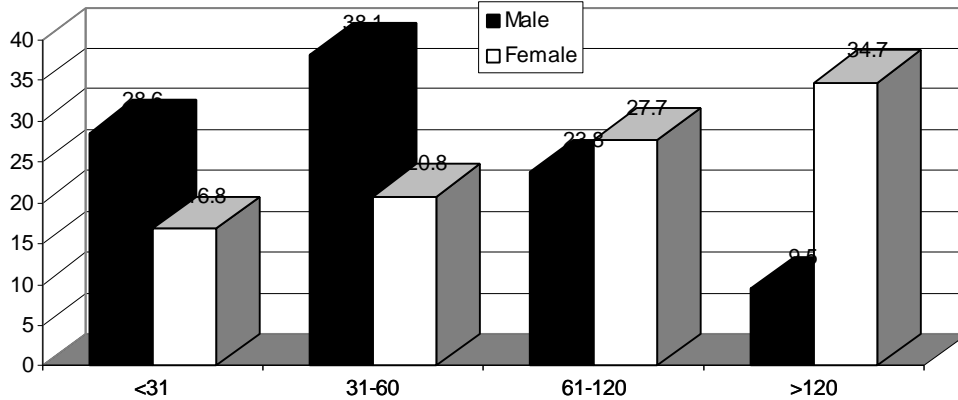
**Figure 5.2. House Cleaning Time by Gender  
(in Percent)**





Traditionally, Vietnamese women prepare food for the family and men make money or do heavy labor, such as building a house or preparing land. Almost all women reported cooking and shopping for food. One-third of women spend two hours or more completing these jobs every day (Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3. Shopping/Cooking Time by Gender (in percent)**



About 12 percent of 243 respondents report that they need to look after their children. Of those with children, women reported spending equal amounts of time as men and taking care of children requires 140 minutes a day.

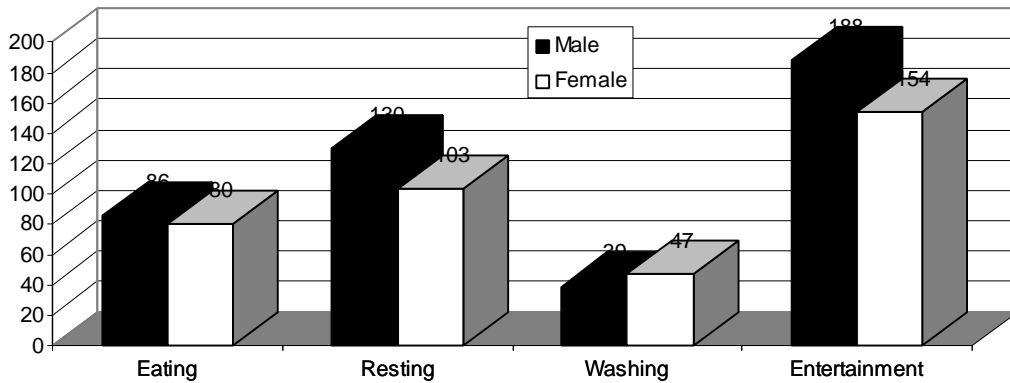
Only three percent of the 243 respondents (five men and three women) reported that they need to take care of their parents. Women reported twice as much time as men (190 versus 87 minutes) for this responsibility.

Nearly 7.5 percent of the 243 respondents (10 men and eight women) engage in learning activities. There is not a gender difference in the amount of learning time: on average, women and men spend 115 minutes, or about two hours a day.

### C. Living Activities

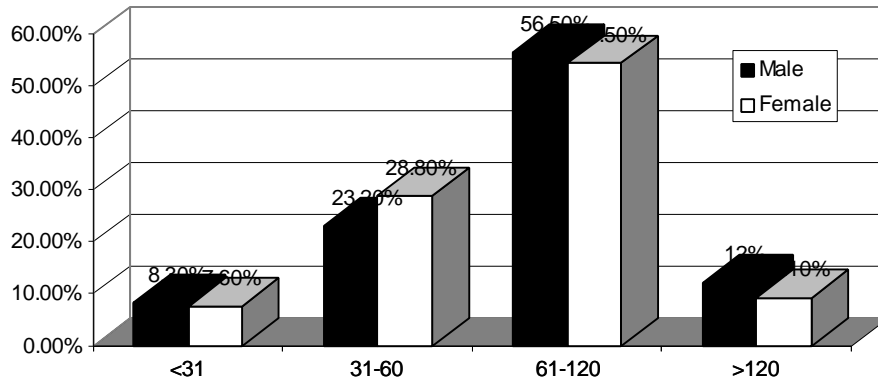
Men spend one hour longer than women eating, resting, washing and in other leisure activities (7'23" versus 6'24" compared to the average time of 5'12"). Although the amount of time eating and drinking is almost the same for men and women, women spend more time preparing food and washing dishes (Figure 5.4). Men have more time to rest (130 versus 103 minutes) and entertain (188 versus 154 minutes) than women do. Both men and women entertain themselves by watching television, listening to the radio and talking. In many cases women tend to do several things at the same time. For example, a woman feeds pigs or chickens in the evening while she is watching television.

**Figure 5.4. Mean Time for Entertainment  
(in Minute)**



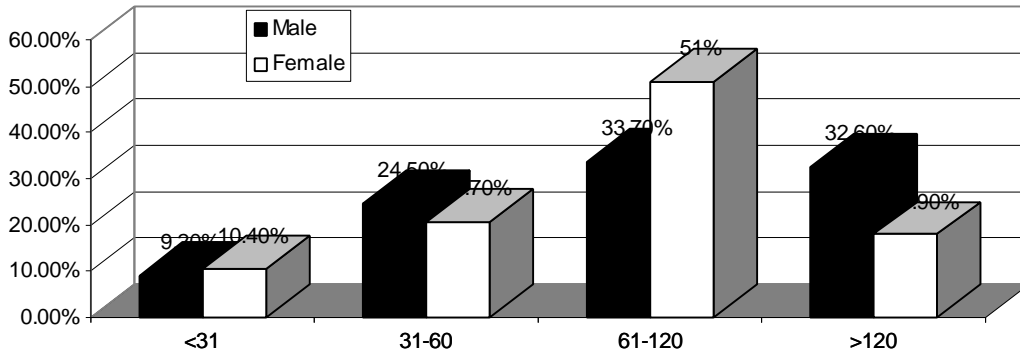
There is a slight difference in the time spent eating between men and women. Figure 5.5 shows that nearly 57 percent men spend at least an hour eating, while half of the women have at most an hour.

**Figure 5.5. Time for Eating by Gender  
(in Percent)**



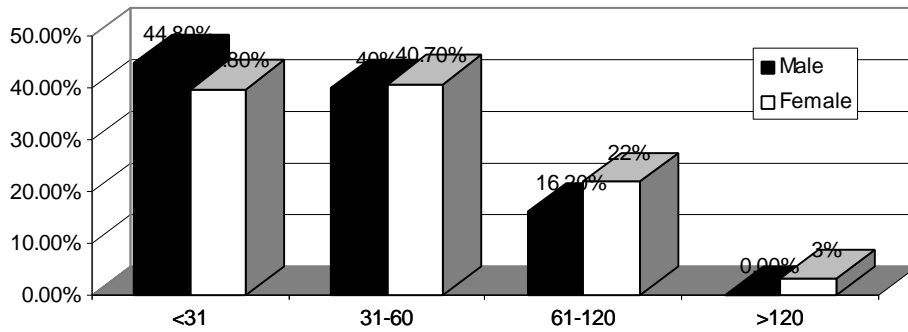
The data also show that 33.7 percent of men versus 13.9 percent of women spend two hours or more for resting and taking naps each day (Figure 5.6).

**Figure 5.6. Time for Resting by Gender  
(in Percent)**



Although there are slight gender differences in time for washing (Figure 5.7), women are more likely than men to bathe children and wash children's and husband's clothes.

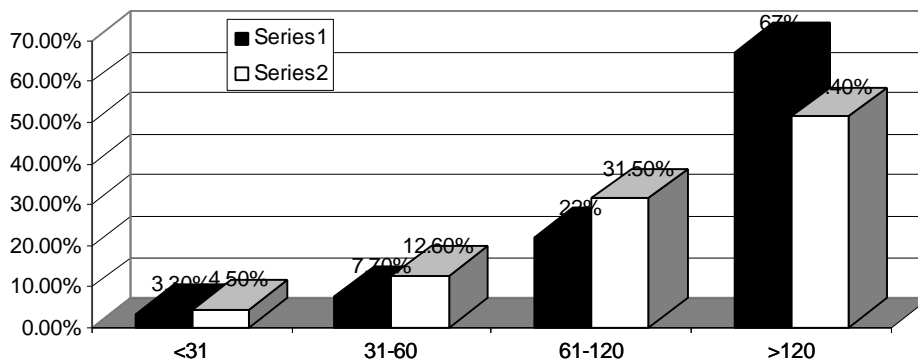
**Figure 5.7. Time for Washing by Gender  
(in Percent)**



**D. Recreation**

As shown in Figure 5.8, men are more likely than women to spend two or more hours for entertainment a day (67.0 versus 51.4 percent).

**Figure 5.8. Time for Entertainment by Gender  
(in Percent)**



There are differences in time allocation between the two communities. People in the urban community tend to spend more time for household production activities than do those in the rural. For example, Go Vap respondents spend 89 minutes eating compared to 77 minutes in Dang Cuong. Those

in Dang Cuong spend 120 minutes for resting compared to 111 minutes in Go Vap. Respondents in Go Vap spend 50 minutes washing compared to 37 minutes in Dang Cuong. Finally, those in Go Vap spend 176 minutes for entertainment compared to 164 minutes in Dang Cuong.

Four case studies (5.1–5.4) from the two communities are presented next to demonstrate some of these urban/rural differences in time allocation.

## E. Case Studies of Couples in Two Communities

### Case 5.1. Time Allocation by Mixed Occupation Couple in Dang Cuong

	Activities	Wife		Husband	
		Hours	Time	Hours	Time
1	Getting up	5:15 am.		6:30 am.	
2	Washing	5:15-5:20	5	6:30-6:40	10
3	Feeding animals	5:20-5:30	10		
4	Boiling ground nuts for sale	5:30-5:45	15		
5	Preparing breakfast	5:45-6:00	15		
6	Eating			6:40-7:00	20
7	Going to the market	6:00-6:05	5		
8	Going home	6:05-6:15	10		
9	Washing	6:15-6:30	15		
10	Going again to the market	6:30-6:40	10		
11	Selling ground nuts	6:40-8:00	80		
12	Going to the grandmother			7:00-7:30	30
13	Drying paddy, rice straw			7:30-8:00	30
13	Going home	8:00-8:05	5		
14	Harvesting rice			8:00-10:00	120
15	Doing housework	8:05-8:30	25		
16	Going to fetch goods	8:30-12:00	210		
17	Preparing lunch			10:00-10:30	30
18	Going home	12:00-12:50 pm.	5		
19	Preparing land			10:30-11:00	30
20	Resting			11:00-11:30	30
21	Doing housework	12:50-12:20	15		
22	Eating	12:20-12:40	20	11:30-12:00	30
23	Resting			12:00-1:00 PM	60
24	Washing	12:40-1:00	20		
25	Resting	1:00-1:30	30		
26	Going to the factory			1:00-2:00	60
27	Visiting parents	1:30-4:30	120		
28	Going home	4:30-4:40	10		
29	Piling rice	4:40-5:00	20		
30	Preparing dinner	5:00-5:30	30		
31	Working at the factory			2:00-10:00	480
32	Washing	5:30-6:00	30		
33	Feeding pigs	6:00-6:30	30		
34	Going home			10:00-11:00	60
35	Washing			11:00-11:10	10
36	Eating	6:30-7:00	30	11:10-11:20	10
37	Closing the selling stand	7:00-8:30	60		
38	Sleeping	8:30		11:20	

This family has four members: husband, wife and two small children. Both the wife and the husband are engaged in farming but the husband works in a factory. As seen above, the husband spent most of his time on the factory work, post-harvest and farming jobs, while the wife spent most of her time on selling activities and housework. On the day prior to the interview, the wife got up at 5:15 a.m. while her husband got up a quarter of an hour later but in the evening, she went to sleep three hours earlier than her husband.

**Case 5.2. Time Allocation by Mixed Occupation Couple in Dang Cuong**

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Wife</b>		<b>Husband</b>	
		Hours	Time	Hours	Time
1	Getting up	5:00 AM		4:00 AM	
2	Washing			4:00-4:30	30
3	Feeding animals	5:00-5:30	30		
4	Animal vaccination	5:30-6:10	20	4:30-8:30	240
5	Harvesting rice	6:10-11:00	290		
6	Resting			8:30-10:00	90
7	Working for others			10:00-11:00	60
8	Preparing lunch	11:00-11:30	30		
9	Eating	11:30-11:50	20	11:00-12:00	60
10	Resting			12:00-1:00 PM	
11	Feeding pigs	11:40-1:00 PM	80		
12	Drying rice	1:00-1:15	15		
13	Drying paddy	1:15-1:30	15		
14	Working for others			1:00-4:00	180
15	Harvesting rice	1:30-5:00	200		
16	Going home			4:00-4:30	30
17	Drying rice	5:00-5:15	15		
18	Preparing dinner	5:15-6:15	60		
19	Having dinner	6:15-6:30	15	4:30-5:30	60
20	Feeding animals	6:30-7:30	60		
21	Resting	7:30-9:00	90	5:30-7:00	90
22	Watching TV	9:00-11:00	120	7:00-9:00	120
23	Sleeping	11:00		9:00	

In the second case (5.2), the family has six members including four children. Three are grown and the fourth is going to school. Both the wife and husband are farmers, but both also work on non-farm activities. The husband works for others in the community for additional income. The husband spent some 110 minutes during the day for himself, while his wife had 35 minutes for herself.

The wife is involved in petty trading and she did most of the housework, while the husband helped in preparing lunch while his wife was out. They both dried rice in turn when one of them was busy with other work. Only the wife did all the work of caring for the livestock, including preparing the foods feeding the pigs, while the husband did all the harvesting activities.

The husband also has a second job. On the day prior to the interview, he got up early to take care of livestock in Dang Cuong community. This job kept him busy but paid better than his farming job. This also meant that he did fewer household tasks.

His wife, on the contrary, did most of the household work including cleaning, feeding pigs and poultry, drying rice straw and harvesting and helping her husband in his work. As a result, she had no time for rest and for herself during the day until after sunset.



### Case 5.3. Time Allocation by Mixed Occupation Couple in Go Vap

	Activities	Wife		Husband	
		Hours	Time	Hours	Time
1	Getting up	3:30 AM		5:30 AM	
2	Doing morning exercises			5:30-6:00	30
3	Washing	3:30-3:45	15	6:00-6:30	30
4	Going to the market/work	3:45-4:00	15	6:30-7:00	30
5	Opening the shop	4:00-5:00	60		
6	Working (in the shop *)	5:00-11:00	360	7:00-12:00	300
7	Closing the shop	11:00-11:30	30		
8	Going home	11:30-11:45	15	12:00-12:30	30
9	Eating	11:45-12:30	45	11:00-12:00	60
10	Preparing food	12:30-2:00 PM	330		
11	Having a nap	2:00-4:00	120	1:00-2:00 PM	60
12	Going to work			2:00-2:30	30
13	Working			2:30-4:30	120
14	Going home			4:30-5:00	30
15	Washing	4:00-4:30	30	5:00-5:30	30
16	Doing housework	4:30-5:00	30		
17	Preparing dinner	5:00-6:00	60		
18	Eating	6:00-6:30	30	5:30-6:00	30
19	Reading			6:00-7:00	60
20	Doing the housework	6:00-7:00	30		
21	Doing the bookkeeping	7:00-8:00	60		
22	Watching TV	8:00-9:00	60	7:00-9:00	120
23	Sleeping	11:00 PM		11:00 PM	

\* During this time she also had breakfast and bought food and other items for the next day

Case 5.3 shows the time allocation of a couple living in Go Vap. The husband is 46 years old and the wife, 44. The husband has an outside job while the wife works in food services. This couple has two children (a daughter aged 22 and a son aged 18) and three nieces. These three young women (age 20–25 years) are engaged in the family foodservice business. Thus, the total household size is seven persons (five members in the family). Although they bought a piece of land in 1991, they do not yet have title to it. Their reported earnings are three million VND (US\$214) a month.

The wife had less time (60 minutes) for leisure, while the husband had 210 minutes during the day. The wife spent two hours less than her husband did for wage labor outside the home but spent two more hours for wage labor in the home and one hour doing housework. In total, she spent two more

hours than her husband working. They both went to bed at the same time, but during the daytime they had little time to be together, except during meals.

**Case 5.4. Time Allocation by a Farmer Couple in Go Vap**

	Activities	Wife		Husband	
		Hours	Time	Hours	Time
1	Getting up	4:50 AM		4:30 AM	
2	Washing	4:50-5:10	20	4:30-5:00	30
3	Watering vegetables			5:00-7:00	60
4	Preparing breakfast	5:10-6:00	50		
5	Eating	6:00-6:30	30	7:00-7:30	30
6	Having coffee			7:30-8:00	30
7	Feeding animals	6:30-8:00	90		
8	Daring	8:00-9:00	60		
9	Weeding	9:00-11:00	120	8:30-11:00	150
10	Washing	11:00-11:30	30		
11	Preparing lunch	11:30-11:20:30	20		
12	Eating	12:30-1:00 PM	30	11:00-12:00	60
13	Resting	1:00-3:00		12:00-2:00 PM	
14	Weeding, looking after animals	3:00-5:00	120	2:00-7:00	300
15	Washing			7:00-7:40	40
16	Taking care of children	5:00-7:00	120		
17	Preparing dinner	7:00-7:30	30		
18	Eating	7:30-8:00	30	7:40-8:10	30
19	Watching TV			8:10-9:00	50
20	Taking care of children	8:00-9:00	60		
21	Sleeping	9:00		9:00	

In case 5.4 in Go Vap community, both the husband and wife are farmers. The husband is 45 years old and his wife is 40. They have three children: a daughter, nine years, and two sons aged 13 and 17.

The couple has a long working day from early morning until late at night. Both work together. They have three milking cows. Their reported earnings are about 1.5 million VND (US\$107) a month. During that day they did most of their work and leisure activities together but the wife spent three additional hours taking care of the children.

## **F. Gendered Time**

As this time allocation study shows, women rise earlier than men but retire to bed at the same time. Thus, their average working day (16'57" versus 16'34") is longer. However, both men and women are working very long hours (16'47") when work inside and outside of the household is counted.

In this sample, men spend on average two hours longer on wage labor both inside and outside the house than do women. Within the household, 15.1 percent of men report full-time employment at home while only 4.9 percent of the women do. Men's household labor time, however, is 75 percent that of women's (122 versus 186 minutes). People in Go Vap (an urban area) also spend more time in housework than do those in Dang Cuong (a rural area). Men and women both report spending almost equal amounts of time taking care of children. They also spend equal amounts of time studying.

Men have more leisure time than women do (an average of 130 versus 30 minutes). Both men and women are entertained by watching television, listening to the radio and talking. However, women do more simultaneous tasks (e.g., feeding the animals while watching television). Men spend more time resting and eating, while women spend more time washing and cleaning during the day.

## 6. Narrating *Doi Moi* in Two Communities

People in Go Vap (an urban community) and Dang Cuong (a rural community) were surprisingly eager to describe how the economic reforms had affected their own lives. The people interviewed were in their 40's and 50's and have lived through the American conflict, post war reconstruction, socialized production, famine, *Doi Moi* and now the emerging market economy. There were interesting differences between the two communities in how each one talked about these changes in their lives. Interesting differences also emerged in terms of how men and women were each experiencing and articulating these changes especially when age, residence, and employment status (class) were also considered.

Go Vap residents talked more than their counterparts in Dang Cuong about working in the new economy and how women's positions had become more equal in the household. The reasons they suggest for these changes are: (1) younger women have more opportunities in the labor market; (2) older women may be the major wage earners of the household income (particularly if their husbands have retired from the public sector; and (3) women's contribution is becoming increasingly critical to meeting rising expectations of higher standards of living and to maintain these standards in face of falling prices for goods and services. Go Vap residents surprisingly spoke little about their past experiences prior to *Doi Moi* except to compare changes in living standards but many people about their concerns for the future especially for the younger generation.

Dang Cuong residents most of whom were farmers, on the other hand, spoke about changing forms of production and their concerns about income diversification activities. Some women suggested that their lives are improving because they have more access to information from television and both men and women appreciated the improvements in living standards. However, women in Dang Cuong were worried about having enough money for their children's education and had hopes for their own lives improving through investments in their children. Women were also very worried if they did not have enough resources to provide for their children's future and this burden caused much distress in

their lives. Men, to the extent these issues arose in both communities, talked about the need for more civic and political education to assure the transmission of good moral behavior and values to young people.

Individual interviews were held with 19 men and women in their homes over two to three meetings and two community meetings were also held in Dang Cuong. A total of nine people were interviewed in Go Vap and 10 in Dang Cuong. The interviews included an almost equal number of men and women (nine men and ten women). The interviewers met people in their residences after an initial contact through a family planning worker or local party official and after the person agreed to meet with the interviewer. The initial introduction was followed up at least twice and at least one visit was taped and later transcribed. The interviewers began the sessions by explaining they were there to learn about the changes taking place in people's lives since the economic reforms and especially how these changes had affected the interviewee personally. Since the interviewers were young men and women in their 20's, the interviewees often treated the question and ensuing conversation as an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience with the younger generation.

Several new themes and insights emerged from the interviews. The texts of the transcripts (both in Vietnamese and English) had complex narrative structures (signifying a rapport and engagement in the conversations). For purposes of structuring this analysis, the major categories from the study were explored. These include household relations, migration, work and employment, school and education, reproductive health and generational ties, and political participation in terms of the gender implications. In each category, a predominant narrative emerged as follows: increased expectations, mobility, monetization, deferred gratification, smaller and nuclear family structures, new gender and age relations, and the signification of wealth. Throughout the interviews, a predominant narrative is how the market economy privatizes social relations while increasing expectations of the future. As an urban man (43 years) explains to the interviewer, "Now young people have a better chance to work and their

productivity is higher. I think now life in families seems to be better than in the past. People get richer and richer.” The next sections explore each of these narratives in greater detail.

### **A. Television, Brick Houses and Rising Expectations**

All the respondents describe dramatic improvements in their lives after *Doi Moi*, in terms of basic infrastructure (food, water, and sanitation) and ownership of durable and consumable goods. In rural areas, the interviewees speak first about the improvements in basic living standards such as water, food and sanitation. Some examples of the shift from the past in terms of being better off in terms of material welfare are:

*Then we raised pigs, caught frogs at night for food. Raising pigs is easier now (rural man, 50).*

*In the past people lived in great poverty. Now they can enjoy a more comfortable life. In the past, they didn't even have enough water to use in daily life. In the dry season, you could not find any water in the well. So people had to carry each bucket of water from a long distance. But since the small river was dug, water is brought to each family. What's more, people can make use of electricity. Electricity makes life more convenient (urban woman, 49).*

*Everyone living at the time was in difficulty. I could see it because I traveled a lot. The nation got through wars; the country was poor, backward. There was not enough grain, food, everything (rural man, 50).*

Both urban and rural women and men describe deprivation and suffering prior to *Doi Moi* from acute food shortages. In observing how their lives have improved, one farmer observes that people have progressed from a diet dependent on sweet potatoes, as a staple, to having enough rice. Now, he explains, people even have enough food to recognize the need to add meat, fish and vegetables in their weekly diets. In several interviews, food deprivation — specifically the different kinds of food one had to eat and how one could get enough to eat — serves as a metaphor for the earlier suffering that people experienced.

Basic improvements in health standards also occur after *Doi Moi*. A rural male, for example, observes that the expanded program for immunization (EPI) only began after Renovation. Describing how children's health status has improved, he says:

*They were vaccinated in 1994, 1995. Before that they were not and some got dangerous diseases and died.*

Women also report being pleased to be able to buy medicine in the pharmacies and to self-medicate. On the other hand, people are very concerned about the treatment they now receive in the public health care system. One male veteran who seems particularly angry observes that he is willing to pay more for private care in order to be treated decently by the doctors. "They invite you to sit down and have tea," he observes. The apparent improvements in people's health status may have had some effect in the willingness to have smaller families over the past decade. Nevertheless these observations also suggest that people's confidence in public services and treatment is eroding.

Along with improvements in basic health and nutrition, one rural party cadre describes optimistically how the improvements in basic living standard are leading to greater confidence in the economy but also rising expectations:

*All people benefit from the improvements. No one is suffering from hunger. Life is better. They have more time to watch TV and assist each other. They are in a contest for a better economic life and purchasing durable goods. We believe in the policy of the Party and hope for a better life.*

Almost everyone reports how they had access to more consumable and durable goods when the subsidies were lifted in the early 1990's. The lifting of the subsidies was particularly important for rural people's access to more goods whereas Go Vap residents already had some access to a bigger market. In Dang Cuong, these changes had a dramatic effect on household construction and the shift to more durable forms of housing.

*Before there were very few brick houses with tile roofs but now all houses are, even flat concrete roofs (rural man, no age given).*

*In the past, I just had a straw house. And every day I was afraid of typhoons, storms. I was very worried when storms came. Now with the assistance of my parents and of the society I can rebuild the house. It is not big but it is enough for me and my child (rural woman, 44).*

*Life has improved. For example, there are asphalt and concrete roads in the village. A very concrete example is that recently all houses (except for five houses) were built with bricks and roofed with tiles. There are 153 dwellings and most people use clean water. The most important change is that many families have modern latrines, bathrooms, and water closets (rural man, 43).*

Effectively, *Doi Moi*, replacing the former straw thatched structures, brought more concrete into rural communities. For the rural single woman above, having a more permanent structure provides a greater sense of security for her and her child. Sanitation also improved.

Both Dang Cuong and Go Vap residents are excited about acquiring televisions and much of their leisure time is spent watching TV. This technology is pervasive in everyone's life after the economic reforms. While the absence of food symbolizes the hardships and deprivation endured, television signals the increased affluence. Having a TV — particularly individual ownership of color sets — symbolizes how much life has improved and even though people often watch as a group, this form of entertainment is very much a private household activity. Describing how access to television has transformed their lives:

*In the past, people could not know anything about social information. Now they know everything. People may not understand as well as listening to people arguing on TV. When they watch TV, they can understand at once (rural woman, 44).*

*In the past, you were rich to own a black and white TV. Now nearly every home has colored TV with seven or eight channels to choose from (urban woman, 50).*

*Young people know more things from TV, radio, tapes, as they watch every day so they know more about sex. They have a lot of changes when they reach teenage. They know more, they know everything (rural woman, 46).*



Although both men and women talk about owning TV sets, as shown above, women also describe the information gained.

Rural women in particular see television as a way to gain new knowledge and information to improve their daily lives. One rural party cadre member is excited about being able to witness the national debates and to have an informed opinion on these larger issues from watching live performances of the proceedings on television. At the same time, men and women in both communities are aware that television transmits new forms of knowledge and information from elsewhere and they worry about the effects of this technology on the younger generation.

Some respondents attribute a different morality and social values among youth based on these new goods and technologies in their lives. A 49-year-old urban woman implying a kind of moral superiority in the past says to the young interviewer, “Now you have a motorcycle to travel to school. In my day, we had to walk.” An urban male asserts, “In my opinion, the young people of the past worked harder. Now they have support with the help of technology and machines.” The older generation also sees the differences in expectations from one generation to the next. The 44-year-old rural woman cited above, for example, observes, “In the past we could not even dare to dream of having a television, could we?”

With all the various changes, the older generation feels greater pressure to guide and educate their children appropriately. Men are especially concerned about “social evils”:

*When my wife and I watch a film and my children want to watch it, then I must consider whether the film is suitable for their age or not (urban man, 42).*

*If the parents ignore their children or at least don't know how to bring their children up correctly, then their children will be seduced into drugs, alcohol, or crime. The young people have no ideal to follow. They don't know what they are living for (urban man, 40).*

*If the society does not pay attention to educating them on the revolutionary ideology and way of conduct, I am afraid there will be political and economic effects for the society and the country (rural male, no age given).*

*As there are more social evils nowadays, such as drugs, heroin, than in the past, so they [children] need to be watched more carefully (urban male, na).*

Economic development and television are thought to bring western values even though most Vietnamese youth only have access to national channels. Two concepts about raising children are also suggested in these statements: (1) that children may be seduced into immoral conduct and (2) that they must be watched carefully. These two ideas reflect people's fears and concerns about relating to the outside world and also, the prolonged period of childhood and adolescence that delayed entry into the labor market may bring.

From the positive side, an urban male also observes that there was more family violence prior to *Doi Moi* and that parents now have more time to spend with their children:

*In the past because people were poor, they became hot tempered. It was easy to make them displeased. That's why there was a lot of family violence. Their concept about family has changed since they become rich. They work together to support children and they find themselves more equal to one another.*

Thus, he sees violence as a function of poverty and deprivation and suggests that there is greater equality in gender and inter-generational relations after *Doi Moi*.

Despite the concerns about social evils, one woman reports:

*In the past, there were no social evils but now, as the society advances social evils are more and more, even burglars, robbers. But once we started to construct a cultural village, there are no more serious cases (rural woman, 50).*

Similar to the previous speaker, she believes that the changes create new patterns of social interaction, which are often summarized as social evils. In Go Vap, the interviewees define these in terms of cocaine addiction and prostitution while in Dang Cuong, they express fears about gambling and alcohol. However, people also report that all practices are evidenced in both communities. In both places, this generation considers coffee an addiction but smoking is not cited (even though this practice is on the rise among youth). In response to the changing social pressures at the household level, the Dang Cuong

community decided to create a “cultural village” to try to prevent these practices within their own community through “self-criticism”, social pressure and awareness. As the speaker suggests, many people in Dang Cuong think this is an effective strategy and take personal responsibility in watching after their own children.

In almost every interview, there is a sense of putting the difficulties of an earlier era behind and forgetting the hard times. This may be seen partly by people’s reluctance to talk in detail about the past whereas they are quite willing to talk about the time after *Doi Moi*. As one woman says,

*I hit the hardest time in the past so I just don’t want to think about it anymore. Let bygones be bygones (urban woman, 49).*

There is also much optimism and hope about the future because of the *Doi Moi* reforms. People describing how life is getting better say:

*We get more money, more food, fish, we have meat twice a week. We have television, means of transport, concrete roads, pumps for watering our gardens and our lives are more hygienic (rural man, 50).*

*My life is much more relaxed and comfortable now. Hundreds of times better than in the past (urban woman, 49).*

*Since Vietnam opened our door and foreign companies started investing here, our life has been changing for the better. More jobs are offered to more young people. As a result the standard of living is increasing. In the subsidized times, life was so hard. The salary was not enough for food (urban woman, 49).*

As these statements suggest, along with the improvements in living standards has come rising expectations and hope for a better future. A 40-year-old resident of Go Vap, however, wisely observes that the changes go beyond having a television, more to eat or particular manifestations of social evils.

He advises the interviewer:

*Every family has its way. Don’t judge them by the furniture they have. To me, they may have more convenient household devices but it doesn’t mean they are better or happier. Life now is more difficult as well as jobs. You can have a good job today but be unemployed tomorrow. Nothing is certain. But to be more exact, I see more families enjoy their lives.*

## B. Coming from Somewhere Else

Even as improvements in living standards are changing relations within households, greater mobility is having an effect on household relations and interactions with the outside world. In the socialist economy, households interacted with the outside world through registration into community and social production. With the introduction of the market system, households become more autonomous units of production for the benefit of families. Within these units there is also greater mobility of labor and capital. Increased flexibility and the ability to move quickly are often critical to success. Thus, access to bigger markets and more information are necessary for competing effectively and for improving household welfare.

After *Doi Moi*, wealthier people can afford to travel and there are more public sponsored trips. As one couple explains, the man now has reunions with his former military unit and other retired officers while his wife can afford to go on a holiday to see a well known pagoda and tourist site. People also complain about not having enough money to travel and said that they watched TV instead. The possibility of travel and such trips were much less frequent, less affordable and more restricted earlier. People also lacked the means of transport and most Dang Cuong residents were dependent on bicycles for their infrequent visits to Hai Phong, the main town just a few kilometers away.

As the earlier statements suggest, television is also enlarging people's geographic vision. As one rural party cadre member, observing an urban/rural difference in vision, explained,

*In general, women can understand 70–80 percent of what is shown on TV. The problem of rural women is the shortage of time. Women in cities have better conditions. Here they work hard but the income is low. I think if women here had conditions as good as the urban women, they would not be left so far behind.*

A Dang Cuong resident (also cited earlier) is proud of the opportunity to engage at the national level (even if this engagement is only symbolic). For Vietnamese of all ages, the world cup soccer competitions have become a national past time. Both sexes enjoy these matches (and it is almost obligatory for men to know the latest scores) while (as suggested in the quote above) women also report

watching home economics and cooking classes. Thus, for them, TV appeals to and enforces the domestication of their lives in increasingly private households.

Remittances and overseas employment contribute to household wealth and allow some households to make investments in new technology. In Dang Cuong in the north, the remittances and earnings from abroad are reported from the former Eastern Bloc countries while in Go Vap in the south, people report ties with western countries. For example, a man in Dang Cuong from his earnings in Siberia is able to buy a grinding mill while a family member from Germany (the former German Democratic Republic) lends money to another household in the community. In contrast, one Go Vap woman describes how her daughter sends remittances from Australia:

*I don't have to worry much about my finances as I did before because my daughter who is living in Australia sends me money every month and my son who is working as an accountant in a company also gives me 500–600,000 dong so I can live well (urban woman, 46).*

What is particularly interesting about this woman's statement is that she lives apart from both her children but feels financially secure because they have left home for better jobs and opportunities and continue to support her.

The consequences of mobility may be different in rural and urban areas. As the previous chapter has shown, internal migration increased after *Doi Moi* and more women than men migrate because of marriage. In Go Vap almost everyone is a migrant from the past ten years and has come from another part of Vietnam. The new household structures include nuclear families, single members and non-family members within households. In Dang Cuong, the households are primarily extended families and even though many adults work outside the community on a daily basis (e.g., in the larger Hai Phong market or in the new factories along the main highway), they retain their household residence and registration there. Given these different rural/urban patterns, it is harder for outsiders to marry into an established rural commune. One woman in Dang Cuong reports that her son has married a "southern girl" and that it is difficult for her daughter-in-law to find work because she comes from somewhere

else. However, observations in the communities and the survey findings both suggest that marriages outside one's immediate social network and other forms of mobility are becoming more common. In all likelihood, this woman's son would not have brought his Southern wife home to Dang Cuong prior to *Doi Moi*.

Urban/rural differences are articulated in terms of mobility of capital and labor. Even though Dang Cuong residents see the new factories and export processing zones only a few kilometers away, they do not yet talk about themselves as a cheap source of labor as heard in Go Vap. "We are easy going and have cheap labor costs," says one urban male. "We have a lack of capital and technology. Foreign companies need our human resources. If we make a deal, both sides will benefit," say another urban man (43 years). In Go Vap, several people also comment on the need for both men and women to work outside the home and to find new employment opportunities in different locale. In both communities, however, households have become both sites of production and consumption.

Given the increased mobility of labor and capital, some residents in Go Vap express nostalgia for their home of origin.<sup>1</sup> One man (40 years) contrasting his sense of place in Go Vap versus Hue in Central Vietnam says,

*I had lived in a busy and noisy city for a long time so when I came back to my hometown, I felt the silence and peace of the place. It brought me back to my soul and I could hear my voice deep inside.*

As these comments suggest, mobility and the sense of "coming from somewhere else" is more likely to be expressed among urban men and women in Go Vap than among those in Dang Cuong even though the latter are also on the move.

### **C. Only Money**

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<sup>1</sup> Typically people also return to the ancestral/parental village at Tet.

After *Doi Moi*, title to land became a direct source of household income and wealth while differential access led to increased disparities between different households even within small rural communities. This is not to say that such disparities did not already exist in terms of one's access and place in the local party organization, which in turn determined access to better plots of land and new productive technologies during the collective period. After *Doi Moi*, however, access to land particularly in a community such as Go Vap where land prices are rising, is a major source of wealth for some families. A 42-year-old man in Go Vap observes,

*Some other people got rich partly because they sold their land. But as far as I know some families became poorer after they sold their land. They had nothing left and have to work for others.*

Several Dang Cuong farmers describe the changes in terms of patterns of production and land tenure. Of all the aspects of life before *Doi Moi*, issues of land ownership and forms of production are most intensively discussed. Analyzing the different forms and processes of production since the American War, one rural, 50-year-old man in Dang Cuong explains:

*Cooperatives were formed long ago, after the Peace, there came revolving production teams and then cooperatives. After that, the product contract to households started.... It means that land is assigned to households on a rationed basis of 360 square meters (sao) per person.*

His depiction reflects the different periods leading to the land reforms in the north and the allocation of land to individual households. These patterns evolved somewhat differently in the south and to some extent, there has always been a private sector there. Thus, the economic reforms have been much more dramatic in the north than in the south. Elaborating on how the cooperatives worked, he observes:

*The better land you got, the more output you had to pay. Sometimes it reached 90 kilograms a paddy per sao but sometimes only 30 kilograms. The State collects output by that way. At that time the cooperative was still the investor, then it took what it paid and what was left was for us.*

After the reforms, these patterns changed and the better off farmers in Dang Cuong, such as this man, were able to diversify their crops and obtain higher yields (now that there are incentives to do so).

Several people in Dang Cuong discuss having access to better strains of rice with higher yields and being willing to experiment with different varieties after *Doi Moi*. One man reports being both self-taught and receiving some training. Dang Cuong farmers also invest in new livestock and equipment (which they can rent out) to increase rural incomes. While an urban woman in Go Vap proudly describes how her vegetable yields have increased with the use of new insecticides, she would also like more skills and training about insecticide use. Women from both Go Vap and Dang Cuong are also somewhat concerned about the potential toxic effects of increased insecticide use.

Off-farm labor and seasonal migration has increased as a strategy to maintain rural incomes after *Doi Moi*. The relationship to how much land one holds also affects whether individuals leave the agricultural sector, migrate, and become laborers in the manufacturing or service sectors. The productivity of one's holdings further affects how much off-farm labor is required and what other kinds of economic activities are developed. These differences are affecting gender relations because often it is women who seek and find work in factories first. As a man from Go Vap reports:

*Generally speaking women work harder than men. For example, you can see in the big factories, there are more women workers than men workers. Men cannot keep up with the speed of working like women do. And women are more durable physically.*

These kinds of justifications for women's labor outside of the home while seemingly progressive also suggest that women are more exploitable (e.g., the suggestion that women can work faster). Other justifications for privileging female over male labor are that women can endure longer hours, they work harder and/or they are more docile than men. Such explanations rationalize a growing manufacturing sector predominantly comprised of male managers and female workers (and in the case of foreign joint ventures of male managers from other Asian countries). Another rationale given for employing women in these new ventures is that they are a cheaper source of educated labor (and that educated women will take jobs that educated men will not). An urban man (42 years), for example, believes that "Because



men have no skills to go to work, they have to work on the land. Women go out to find a job in the factory instead.”

Another man from Go Vap observes how opportunities for women have changed with the Renovation:

*Women are really smart. In the past they couldn't have what they can today. They could only work as a secretary, and in their house, their main place was in the kitchen.*

Prior to *Doi Moi*, the kinds of employment available to women were limited even though there was formal equality in the labor market. Most women were farmers. An urban woman (49 years) from Go Vap describes how women's entry into the labor market is critical to their autonomy:

*Women must be regarded equally as men and they must go to work like women in other countries. In the past, Vietnamese women had to live on men because they could not make money. And it's not good. When you have to use someone else's money, you'll sell your freedom.*

This particular woman had been forced to find work after her husband faced early retirement from the public sector. For her, this new experience of being the primary wage earner was quite liberating.

Several other women speak more in terms of the necessity of working outside the home to address their children's needs.

In some households, women now earn the household income especially if the men have lost jobs in the public sector and/or been forced to retire early. A 49-year-old, Go Vap woman describes how her retired husband now depends on her to support the household: “My husband is now retired and taking care of the house. I'm the breadwinner in my family.” Later she reports that her life has also improved since she became a housekeeper for an expatriate family, “Since I began working for the Foreigners, my life is stable and smooth.”

Not all women are pleased about the pressures on women to seek employment outside the home and they wonder whether these changes are positive for women or their families. One Go Vap woman (46 years) says:

*In my opinion women should stay home take care of the house and children. This function is less important than the function of making money but it helps to keep the family happiness.*

When faced with the pressure to earn money, women and men voice concerns about women's conflicting roles. Women in contrast to men face a double burden in working outside the home. Their role as caretakers of children is seen to conflict with their role as wage earners (whereas men do not experience this same tension). Privileging one's work over family obligations for women is also seen to interfere with family harmony and happiness. In contrast, there is little to no discussion of men's responsibility in this regard. The burden of care taking may be particularly acute for urban households where there are more nuclear and smaller family units. The increasing costs of childcare and nurseries also put new pressures add to this burden. In Go Vap, the erosion of other traditional support systems is more apparent. Some Go Vap women report that they cannot afford to work outside the home because they lack the necessary social support.

Despite the formal equality prior to *Doi Moi*, men and women during that time had less access to money. Since many Vietnamese women control household expenditures and family income, the increase in capital (versus bartering) may enhance their status in the household. Rural men and women in Dang Cuong report taking on more loans and borrowing first from other family members and then other sources. One rural woman (46 years) observes, "People often buy on credit." In a rural meeting in Dang Cuong, the participants reported,

*We had to borrow from our sisters and brothers, from others who had savings and we paid them with interest. We borrowed to buy commodities. Then we accumulated some money and made some profits.*

However, one male participant also reports at the meeting, "I never use interest for reinvestment but for re-lending." In contrast, the interviewees in Go Vap did not discuss their access to credit.

People living in Go Vap particularly see the need for dual income households to keep up with the changes in the new economy:

*My wife also goes to work and I see it's very natural. Women should go to work to catch up with the changes of society, to upgrade their knowledge, and to contribute to the country.*

*Furthermore, they can earn money to support their own life and their family (urban man, 43) [emphasis added].*

*In my time, it was the responsibility of the husband to go to work to support his family and the wife stayed home to take care of the house and children. But now, both husband and wife must go to work at the same time to support their family. Even when they both work, they are unable to support their children well (urban woman, 50).*

*Now nearly all families have their members work as workers (urban man, 42).*

As the last speaker observes, increasingly households (especially those in urban areas) depend on the economic contributions of all adult family members and parents are very worried about children's idleness. Whereas in the past, most children joined their parents in the field or went on to some form of guaranteed employment in the state sector, today those same youth (particularly if they are not involved in some form of agriculture) sit around home and spend time looking for work. A woman in Go Vap describes this dilemma in her family. She says that her daughter used to stay home and do nothing all day so finally she sent her off to work in a factory.

The workforce has also become increasingly competitive especially as more people from rural areas seek off-farm employment. Yet, some people remain hopeful that there are more opportunities now than in the past with the right set of skills. For example, two men observe:

*It means the competition now is harsh and we need more skills, even more tricks (urban man, 40).*

*I think there are more job opportunities now than before... The employment possibilities cannot meet the number of people entering the labor force, resulting in more difficulty in finding jobs or studying further (rural man, na).*

Delayed entry into the workforce is increasingly common for both young men and women, and Dang Cuong parents report paying to keep their children in school longer so they can acquire more skills so as to compete better in the new labor market.

Among both men and women there is greater concern about financial security and a focus on money. A 43-year-old Dang Cuong man observes, "We have to work for money." Another woman in

the same community complains that she cannot earn enough to give her children the bicycles or the birthday parties that her neighbors' children have. Thus, for some people the pressure to earn more also means meeting increasing expectations particularly among young people. Two men in Go Vap tell the interviewers,

*I must say that I'm rather pleased with my life. But I still hope for better in the future. My salary is just enough to live a normal life.*

*Now young people have a better chance to work and their productivity is higher. I think now life in families seems to be better than in the past. People get richer and richer.*

At the same time, people observe that life has become increasingly insecure and there are more concerns about having enough money. For example, one man reports:

*My parents had seven or eight children but I have only two. However, I don't think that I can support them well (urban man, 43).*

In Go Vap, both men and women complain about falling prices for agricultural products and increased inflation for processed and consumer goods (reflecting the decline in subsidies coupled with increased tariffs and the value added tax). A woman who sells in the market fears that she is making less all the time and that competition is increasing (thus, further bringing down the price for her goods). She describes her business as a "complete failure" because she has to sell her vegetables wholesale and there is too much competition.

Such insecurities also lead to marital and familial discord and are seen as the reason for the increasing divorce rate especially among young urban couples:

*Why is divorce increasing? Because they don't have a job or they don't have enough money to live. When you're broke, nothing can make you happy. Then there will be quarrels (urban woman, 49).*

*When they don't have enough money to spend, they get easily angry with each other. And, they don't often talk to one another whenever they have to decide on something (urban man, n/a).*

*When they fall in love, they are blind and deaf to old people's advice. They insist on getting married. But once they start their family life, they can't make it good. Then they think of divorce (urban woman, 46).*

Even though the divorce rate is still very low in Vietnam, the marriage age is decreasing and with the financial pressures and growing competition on young couples, marriages may be more contested than in the past.

One rural man, discussing the changes in social relations with the advent of market economy, observes “in the cooperative or war period, these relations were better, people cared more for each other than now. Under the market mechanism, these relations became worse.” A 40-year-old man in Go Vap also says, “To me the young people of the past were less interested in money.” Another Go Vap resident of the same age, however, explains:

*In the past we didn't have much work to do. And we didn't spend much. That explains why we didn't have to work very hard. Things aren't the same now. People just work and work. And I realize the more they earn, the more worried they become.*

Men and women in both communities are somewhat concerned about the increased focus on money and the insecurity that comes from always needing more. In perhaps, the best expression of these concerns, an older man from Dang Cuong complains that with the opening of the market economy, people are “running after money. People are competing for getting rich.”

While Renovation has brought greater opportunities to both urban and rural areas, it has also created new economic relations based on money and capital and increased consumption. In the rural areas, such as Dang Cuong, there has been a major shift over time from revolving production teams to cooperatives to product contract schemes and a work point system (in the early 1980's). Decision 10 to allocate 1.3 sao per farmer and to allow for private land use created an incentive for farmers to experiment with different varieties of rice and other forms of production. Subsequently, in the rural area, there has been a diversification of farming systems into livestock, nurseries, and other capital investments. Off-farm employment has become a strategy to maintain rural incomes and women are

often the first to find opportunities in the new export processing zones. Younger men and women to the extent they can afford to do so, are delaying entry into the labor market by getting more skills and training.

In Go Vap, interviewees express more fears about rising costs, falling prices for their goods, and losing ground. As one man suggests, people should not be judged by their material goods and possessions. However, more women are looking for work outside the home and all adult family members may be expected to work. In some cases, the household is also dependent on the woman's income alone.

Even though work was reportedly boring in the past, there may have been more social bonds, at least in rural Vietnam than there are now in the monetary economy. Now people work for themselves and there is more insecurity about making enough money – in part to meet with rising expectations. Several men and women of the older generation are concerned about how “running after money” affects social values and the behavior of young people today. The stark contrasts between the past and present in terms of work and the different forms of production are summed up nicely by a 43-old Dang Cuong woman:

*In 1986–87, I was working for the State then and getting rice by the rationing book and queuing for moldy rice, not good rice as now.... Now we no longer worry about rice. Now we are short only of money.*

#### **D. Sacrifices for the Future**

Ironically, even as parents are concerned about the morals and values of youth today, they are also sacrificing enormously to ensure that these same youth have the right skills and education to succeed in the new market economy. Men and women in Dang Cuong in particular believe that education is correlated with increased employment opportunities and that even though the costs are high, it is worth the investment. As two rural Dang Cuong women report,

*We are poor but we create the conditions for our children to learn so that they can have the skills and knowledge to find jobs. In general we work hard for them.*

*We just want our children to have a good education so that they can have a good job in the future.*

Men and women in both communities cite the need to invest equally in the girl's education. An urban man (40 years), for example, "Now women get a better education so their status and their jobs have improved." Yet, this perception is incorrect. Girls' educational attainment is still less than boys (even though it is increasing). There may also be differential treatment in how girls and boys are treated in school. Expectations of boys' success and their social performances may also be higher. A Dang Cuong woman complains that her son's education and living costs are higher than they would be for a daughter:

*If he were a girl, he would have spent less. Spending for boys costs more. Every week he comes home, I have to spend hundreds of thousands of dong. The more I give him, the more he spends. I just gave him 500 thousand. If I gave more, he would have spent more.*

There is also some concern from fathers about girls being too well educated. A Go Vap father says,

*I want my daughter to master many subjects. But she should not get high in her education or it's very hard for her to find a husband.*

His statement suggests why girls' attainment of higher education is decreasing. The kinds of job opportunities for young women in the labor market may also not require more than secondary schooling.

A Dang Cuong father (42 years) argues that girls' status is improving but also betrays the continuing social preference for sons. He states, "I am now more than 40 years old and have two children, two girls who I see as boys." On the other hand, another Go Vap father advises instead,

*If they [daughters] have a high educational level, they will find it hard to choose a husband. So men have to study hard to catch up with women.*

This latter statement reiterates the belief that girls behave better and consequently do better in school.

Recognizing the increased competition and how it plays out in gender roles and expectations, an urban

Go Vap mother (50 years) says:

*The more knowledge you have, the higher status you gain. That way women will be respected by men and it creates equality in society. Sometimes I even believe that women can surpass men.*

Throughout the interviews, women were more likely than men to discuss their children's education. Because they often manage the household income, they may also be expected to be more involved than men in assuring their children's welfare and in the details of what kind of education and how much is needed. A rural woman (46 years) observes, "Women are more responsible for child caring, men are responsible for hard work." In the rural areas, a Dang Cuong man (43 years) says, "There is a saying – 'Grandmother and mother are blamed for their naughty child.'" The same rural woman explains:

*When attending the parent's meeting and hearing that our children had bad results, we feel ashamed.*

There may also be a greater shift in responsibility on women, too, because people reportedly have higher aspirations about their children's future. For example, women worry about the high costs. A 46-year-old, Dang Cuong woman complains, "Children are going to feed teachers." Observing the increased demands and expectations, a Go Vap, 40-year-old woman says:

*I don't know why but in the past, parents paid little attention to their children and they only wished to have enough food to feed them twice a day. But now, there are many things to worry about them. Sometimes I get a complex when my children come home and ask me to buy them what their friends have.*

She goes on to describe how there has been a reversal in the respect and attention paid to different generations:

*When I was young and lived in my parents-in-law's house, I had to give every coin I could earn to them. I was always in a nervous state of mind thinking of money and helping parents take care of life. But now my children aren't. We still have to work to feed them now.*

Such comments reflect the pressures on women to take care of parents and their particular filial obligations and how these expectations are changing. Likewise a 46-year-old urban woman explains:

*In the past we had to follow our parents' instructions. We had to do what they wanted us to do. Like when my father wanted me to go to work but at the same time I was too young to go, then he asked me to accelerate my age so that I could be accepted. Or, my parents forced me*



*to marry my husband. However, we can't do that with our children anymore. They won't obey us. They have their own mind.*

People in both communities are proud of the greater “cultural knowledge” and awareness of young people that has come with the Renovation. This observation is made in both communities.

*The young people of today are much more knowledgeable and more realistic and their cultural knowledge is even wider (urban man, 43).*

*Everything looks different today, more cultural and civilized (rural man, 50).*

Yet, the older generation also tells the interviewers that they are worried about young people. A 46 year-old urban woman says, “I don't know why the young people now seem to live fast as if they were going to die.” A 40-year-old urban man admonishes,

*I wasn't born with silver spoons. On the contrary I had nothing in hand when I started my life – no house, no parents, no money, no job.*

By implication this urban respondent suggests that the interviewers (who are young and in their 20's) are more privileged. This man also explains how he was able to return to school later in life to complete his education and he sees this as an advantage to obtain new skills. He therefore provides some advice:

*The young people are taught mostly technical skills and not on training good behaviors. If I could reform the educational programs, I would focus on teaching young people to know and practice the ethics inherited from the past.*

A rural man provides similar advice for bringing up the younger generation. He recommends two kinds of civic education:

*I think that one, including the history of the older generation, revolutionary, patriotic spirit, ideas serving the nation in films, educational programs for the young generation. Educating them on the love of the nation to the people. Second, being honest in doing business in society.*

Interestingly, such recommendations were only made by men while women who reported being more involved in children's daily care and education focused on skills and training.

For the older generation, providing education and training are very concrete ways to guide the younger generation and to prepare them for the new market economy. Fathers are concerned about transmitting ethics and good civic behavior, while mothers focus more on getting the necessary skills

and information for the new economy. For youth, staying in school is a way to defer entry into a competitive labor market. In these reflections, people suggest that they value girls' education as much as boys'. However, it may be that girls' educational experiences and expectations of their attainment are lower even as these gender differences may be narrowing. As the demand for women's labor increases, expectations of girls' attainment are likely to increase.

There may be some rural and urban differences in expectations as well. The rural respondents believed that education and training are correlated with increased work opportunities. To the extent that they can afford to do so, they speak of the importance of investing in their children's future although they complain about the high costs. Urban parents describe a broader range of skills and knowledge needed in the new economy and the need for flexibility to adapt to the changing situation. Both rural and urban women describe a shift in generational roles and responsibilities. In the past, children were expected to care for parents while, in the present, parents (especially mothers) are expected to care for their children. This shift may reflect the changing relations of production, the demand for increased technical skills and training, and possibly, the delayed entry of youth into the market economy. In contrast, many youth in the past were expected to follow in their parents' work or profession (the majority were farmers) and to alleviate their parents' burden at an early age.

### **E. Smaller Families and New Gender Relations**

One reason for the increased focus and investment in youth may be that people are having smaller families in both communities. Both urban and rural women express regrets if they have had more than two children. Referring to the family planning messages, they bemoan the effects of large families on family happiness and welfare. Having many children is said to create economic distress and financial hardship within households. A rural family planning worker argues that smaller families are more the norm because of the suffering caused by having a large family. One urban woman cites

economic reasons for why she decided to be sterilized after six children. She is also certain that her family would have been better off financially if she had acted sooner. Such statements suggest the absorption of the State rhetoric around family planning in people's every day explanatory systems. Thus, an explanation for differential economic outcomes is the number of children one has.

While discussing the need for small families, women and men also report difficulties with the IUD and side effects. Rural men and women complain of the limited availability of contraceptives but also say that it is best to have some children. Men and women in Go Vap speak of a shift from the IUD to natural family planning according to the menstrual cycle coupled with condom use. One man reports that he is uncertain that the IUD provides sufficient protection so he uses a condom. Such explanations suggest a lack of confidence and knowledge in this method or may serve as a socially acceptable reason for using a condom when one has more than one partner.

Women in both communities tended to extol the improvements they have experienced in gender equality:

*There are more and more changes in the role of women in the family over time. We are more involved in heading the family and ourselves (rural woman, 50).*

*Now we are enjoying equality between men and women. In the past the husband was the master and the wife was the servant. But it is no more. I see husbands nowadays respect their wives and they share in the decisions. It's wonderful (urban woman, 50).*

However, their comments are also based on their perception that young people's lives are better and that there is greater equality among the younger generation than their own direct experiences. Such comments may further reflect a desire to provide advice to the younger interviewees.

Several women also describe how being able to discuss issues openly is evidence of the greater equality and changing power relations in marriages. Some examples of comments from both rural and urban women are:

*Now men are more respectful. In the past, the husband had the privilege of keeping all the power in the family. A wife was not permitted to oppose her husband's idea. But now they*

*can decide together. If they don't agree on the decision, they'll start a quarrel (urban woman, 49).*

*In the past, when there was a new daughter-in-law, she would be the person to work hard. There was no equality, freedom then. Women had to follow the will completely of the husband's family (rural woman, 44)*

*When we were young, I didn't dare to argue with my husband. Now my son-in-law gets drunk and my daughter complains about it (urban woman, 40).*

Interestingly, this last speaker later admits that the changing power relations have had a positive effect on her own marriage and that her relationship to her husband has been more positive than were her parent's in this regard:

*When I was young, my father was very hot tempered. My mother could not persuade him at all and he could do anything he wanted. Now I talk to my husband and he listens to me. So I think women are more equal to men now.*

This and her prior statement confirm that greater equality in the power of men and women in households provides women with more leverage and strategies to protect themselves from abuse. However, as discussed earlier, financial insecurity is also causing more pressure and stress in families and is cited as a reason for more marital strife.

The men in Go Vap were more likely than those in Dang Cuong to raise the issue of changing gender roles explicitly (perhaps because they also report more women supporting and/or working outside the household). To some extent, these men concur with women's perceptions that relations within households are becoming more equal and they discuss how gender roles and relationships are changing. A 42-year-old urban male suggests:

*I think that women must go out to work and to learn more. They must be treated equally as men. There must be no sex discrimination inside and outside the home. Women shouldn't hide themselves in the kitchen.*

Another 40-year-old, Go Vap man admits:

*Both men and women work hard. However, women seem to spend more time than men. After eight hours of work outside, they continue their work at home. I can see women work harder than men.*

Another urban male (no age given) says, “Traditionally, the husband makes the final decision but it’s best after the discussion with the couple.” The same 40-year-old, Go Vap man cited above advises,

*Men should apologize first. If you don’t make a mistake but you are brave enough to say sorry, then you are a real hero.*

These discussions suggest that new partnerships and ways of relating to one another in households are developing and may be influenced by changes in women’s education and employment.

Women themselves express hope that their lives are getting better. Even if their own living situation is difficult, they are optimistic about the prospects for the next generation. They also see the changes as evolving. As one 44-year, Dang Cuong woman predicts, “There will be more changes in coming years, I think so.”

## **F. Leaking from the Roof**

Even as men and women in both communities are quite hopeful about the direction of change, they are also very concerned about increased social differentiation and the accumulation of wealth in their lives. There are two socially and politically correct, related narratives to articulate these concerns – the first, is the concern with social evils and the transmission of good values to the younger generation and the second, is the concern about corruption in Government.<sup>2</sup> As disparities increase, people are very concerned that youth not lose their moral values and “run after money”. At the same time, they are concerned that Government officials’ behavior be controlled and that those in public office not be allowed to use their power and privilege to gain at other people’s expense. This latter concern also suggests the increased differentiation and tension between public and private and that a public official can be gaining at the expense of private individuals and households.

People also fear that money itself can be corrupting and suggest that it divides rich and poor, old and young, and rural and urban. One 42-year-old, rural man, for example, reports:

*Addicts are mostly children of rich people, then these children attract other poor ones. It is similar to prostitutes. It started along with the economic development. The economic development also divides people into rich and poor. In the countryside it is revealed in different forms, it is different in the town.*

Underlying his discussion of heroin addiction are his concerns about the increased social differentiation between rich and poor. As a rural resident, he also fears increased stratification along rural/urban lines. Another rural man (44 years) echoes an awareness of increased social stratification. While speaking of the positive effects of reform, he also observes, “We have more than 200 kilograms of rice per person. We are not rich but above average.”

The second concern about corruption in Government also reflects this tension about increased accumulation of wealth and social stratification. Several rural community members observe:

*In fact enterprises are doing business with less inputs and more outputs to make profits to feed state employees (rural meeting, no speaker identified).*

*Higher level officials have to work for eight hours a day but some do not work so much, they go to play badminton (rural meeting, no speaker identified).*

*[on the issue of corruption] It is precisely leaking from the roof (rural man).*

The final speaker uses the image of a house implying that there are different levels of power and authority and that if those at the top level are corrupt, then this affects the entire structure.

These concerns may particularly resonate with this generation because they have seen and sacrificed so much. The veteran cited earlier for example is somewhat embittered because the public health care system is not addressing the pain he continues to suffer from the war. Men particularly remember the sacrifices they made during and after the war to rebuild the country. As one 42-year-old urban man points out, “After the War, we had to reduce the harmfulness and construct the country from zero.” Another 50-year-old rural man remembers his time of imprisonment in the south. “During the War, we were suffering and sacrificed, lost something, like time was lost.” This generation especially older men articulate their frustration that the younger generation is losing the values for which they fought. At the same time, they are also frustrated as they near retirement age that they are no longer benefiting to the same extent as others did in the past from public subsidization. At the rural meeting, one person, contrasting state subsidies in the past, observes, “The State gives very little. There is no more giving.”

In contrast, women in these interviews do not discuss these issues of corruption or of the suffering they may have experienced in the past. There is also no discussion of the role of the State or what they believe may be owed to them by the State. They are more concerned about household security and welfare (the brick home versus the leaky roof). In contrast to men’s discussions about

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<sup>2</sup> This “corruption in government” concern is much like the “tough on crime” agenda of the U.S. in that in both cases such measures are seen as an effective way to control the potential negative effects from increased income disparity. In the socialist regime, Government officials are being controlled and in the U.S., lawless citizens.

preserving the moral values of the past, women talk more about meeting children's future needs. They are also more concerned about changing marriage and family obligations and describe a shift of power and authority that implies a decrease in women's filial obligations to her in-laws. The different voices of men and women may reflect that men have more at stake in preserving the patriarchal lineage and these shifts in power, authority, and obligations threaten the traditional relationships.

Despite the concerns about the reforms, several people also talk about the positive political changes they observe. One major change is the ability to meet openly and socially in informal groups. Even though birthdays and parties to celebrate the construction of a new house represent costs (and are sometimes quite extravagant), people also value these new informal forms of social interaction and are willing to make the necessary outlays. Informal rather than party-led meetings are also becoming more common. As two Dang Cuong residents observe:

*Women often meet every month. We attend all meetings but we do not have clubs (rural woman, 50).*

*We meet more often. There is no difficulty for us to meet. For some of us, we could meet only recently. Frankly speaking, before we did not have a chance to see each other because of a lot of things, including personal ones. Recently, we meet often. This is a good sign of an advanced society (rural man, 50).*

Much of the discussion around the political changes after Doi Moi comes from Dang Cuong where residents are aware and proud of their efforts to construct a "cultural community." People in both rural and urban areas mention the idea of being more "advanced" now because of this right to meet informally and to have access to new forms of knowledge. These women's initiative to meet informally rather than waiting for a mass organization to lead them may be some evidence of their informal political participation at the community level (which may also be more feasible given the increased pressures on women's time).

The predominant approach in these discussions is pragmatic. People express a general optimism about the political changes. They are supportive of the Government's reforms. For example, one 50-year-old rural male speaks to the general sentiment when he observes, "People believe in the



Party's and State's policies and are happy with their decision on Doi Moi." At the same time, this generation is also concerned about the increasing accumulation of wealth and does not want the changes to affect the values and morals of youth or of Government officials. A veteran appealing to the need for a deeper appreciation of values derived from past experience advises, "The more difficulties one has experienced, the more he may find of value in his life. This gives one the will to live." A 40-year-old, Go Vap man, expressing the balance of both the positive and negative aspects of these changes, explains:

*At any time there are advantages and disadvantages as well as happiness and unhappiness. It's like yin and yang. So we can't say life now is better than in the past but it can be said that young people have more chances to develop themselves if they want. For example, if they want to pursue further education, they can get it easily or if they want to have a good job, they will be able to find it. But to me, the most important thing is that they have to identify their own way of living (urban man, 40).*

Thus, this generation expresses a mixture of hope and skepticism that reforms will continue to improve their lives and not surprisingly, women especially place their hopes on the younger generation to find the way.

### **G. Gender Differences in the Market Economy**

As the preceding sections suggest, men and women report different experiences and perceptions of the social and economic reforms. Young women may have more access to factory work and other forms of employment but their competitive advantage may be that their labor is more exploitable than men's. Young men and women both face more competition and report periods of idleness while waiting for employment. In contrast, they suggest that youth in the past moved seamlessly into helping with agricultural production or into guaranteed forms of public employment.

Women may have more control over household finances than men may and this control may be more significant in a monetized economy. At the same time, there are increasing financial pressures on women to provide for their children's welfare and education. There is also the added pressure of rising

household expectations and of social obligations, such as birthday parties and housewarmings that have financial implications (thus, social relations become monetized). Such pressures may propel more women to work outside of home even though (as shown in the previous chapter), there is little indication that women's work burden within households has decreased. While women in the past worked outside the home as well, there was less demand for women's wage labor. Thus, women face a heightened double burden.

The increased competition in the market creates more work opportunities for women in the manufacturing sector. Women's work outside the home appears to improve gender equality within the home. The improvements in equality and resulting empowerment of women gives them more voice vis-à-vis men and men themselves recognize that women are more equal. There has also been a shift in women's filial obligations from in-laws to their children. These shifts and improved economic welfare may mean that there is less household violence than in the past. At the same time, the greater financial insecurity is said to create more marital discord among young couples, which is likely to result in a higher divorce rate.

The creation of wealth and greater social differentiation resulting from the market economy creates some concerns among both men and women. These concerns are articulated as "social evils" in terms of the behavior of the younger generation and as "corruption" in terms of the behavior of public officials. Both women and men express their concerns about the younger generation but the latter concern is more gendered. The changing relationship of the State to production and social relations may have more long-term consequences for men both as veterans with entitlements and in terms of patriarchal lineages (since land titles are exchangeable).

Men and women's participation in public life and relationship to the State may be evolving differently in the current period. Men discuss corruption in Government and the transmission of national moral and political values. They reconnect with the veteran's association. Women express interest in information and the transfer of new forms of knowledge for specific community and

household needs. With limited time, they report meeting informally rather than through the clubs and formal mass organizations of an earlier era. As shown earlier, their political participation at a national level is decreasing even as their participation at the community level and in more informal organizations appears to be increasing.

## 7. Summary of Major Findings

Since the inception of the *Doi Moi* reforms in 1986, gender has emerged as a major category by which to judge the distributive effects of the reform process. Gender not only measures how social and economic reforms have lessened or increased inequality between men and women but also how gender relations in turn produce different outcomes for individuals in terms of access to social services, employment, education, and political representation. It is not surprising that in studies of transitional economies, the question of gender should emerge (e.g., Ong 1998; Verdery 1996). In the context of market reforms, people are concerned about equality of opportunity as a basic requirement for fair competition. Further, there is concern about how the transformation to a market-oriented economy affects intra-household relations. Given these concerns, gender becomes part of a critical analysis of social differentiation.

Although this study treats the post *Doi Moi* era as a particular period in time, the social economic transition is evolving and continues to the present. During the post *Doi Moi* period, several new reforms have been launched, as well as measures to counter or mitigate the perceived negative impact of these reforms. The regional Asian currency crisis also affected the extent to which the reforms were or could be fully implemented.<sup>3</sup> Likewise the gender effects of the reform and concepts of gender as a meaningful category in this context are evolving. Similar to the “fence-breaking” strategies preceding *Doi Moi*, transformations in gender relations may begin by transgressing expectations or norms followed by cultural and social reactions to “normalize” or “stabilize” the status quo along familiar patriarchal lines. Thus, contemporary gender relations, much as the reform process itself, are being transformed in the daily experiences and discussions of men and women.

While the concept of gender has emerged as a relatively new construct in contrast to the “Women’s Question” of earlier times, the processes affecting men and women are usually considered to

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<sup>3</sup> If the reform process had proceeded further, the effects of the Asian Currency crisis on open markets might have been more profound for Vietnam.

reflect long term structural and historical trends. From this perspective, the pervasiveness of Confucian traditions at the household level may explain structural gender inequality. In Vietnam, gender analysis has also been reconfigured as a critique of Confucian ideology. Such a gender analysis is a way of nationalizing what may be otherwise seen as an exogenous construct from western development literature.

The trend of individual households becoming more prominent may reinforce Confucian beliefs and practices around the rightful place of men and women in the household and in society. As the community based surveys suggest, men and women's time is becoming more compressed and households are increasingly dependent on wages of all their adult members. Both women and men appear to work longer hours and take on more kinds of productive activities than in the past. Even though women on average work even longer than men and at more tasks simultaneously, women themselves report greater household equality than their mothers had in the past. In addition, with smaller families and increasingly nuclear households, there has been a shift in women's filial obligations from in-laws to their children. These shifts suggest some profound intra-household changes. However, as shown in the ethnographic interviews, men and women also articulate these changes in different ways.

One aspect reinforcing Confucian ideology of male and female roles is that women control the domestic sphere while men predominate in the public sphere. Recent gender studies and empirical evidence of women's exercise of power and authority in various domains challenge this dichotomy. There is increasing recognition of the different forms of power and authority in kinship systems, households, communities, and organizations. Vietnamese women traditionally manage household finances. On the one hand, this responsibility reinforces their domestic role. Yet, as households become sites of both production and consumption in the market economy, women exercise increasing power and authority over investment and savings decisions. Given this role, it is not surprising that the community

survey found women's savings' rate was lower and their borrowing rates higher than men's. In effect, they are potentially taking on more risks and investing more in their children's future.

Another aspect of how traditional beliefs about male and female roles may be appropriated in response to some of the recent reforms is in the domain of reproductive health. Over the past decade Vietnam has undergone a demographic transition and the total fertility rate has declined from over 4.0 to 2.7. Desired family size is even less. Nevertheless, several studies find that women often obey their husband or partner's decisions regarding contraceptive method (if any) and family size. Men's right to make these decisions is often rationalized by both men and women as a concern for women's health and family welfare. Yet, family planning messages place the responsibility for meeting population targets on women but offer a limited range of modern methods (primarily the IUD and sterilization). Son preference is still quite strong even though most men and women report that they would prefer to have only two children regardless of sex. Given these constraints, the high rates of abortion coupled with increased rates of natural family planning suggest a gender hierarchy of male control over women's bodies even as women themselves are freer to have fewer children.

A review of the literature indicated the formation of new social hierarchies, particularly around age, class and geographical location. These different hierarchies raise the question whether gender alone is an adequate analytical construct for understanding the effects of social and economic changes on the daily lives of men and women. In contemporary Vietnam, as both the national trends and community level data demonstrate, analyses of gender differentiation must account for urban/rural, class, age, and geographic differences. These differences intersect and reinforce gender hierarchies, particularly in terms of educational attainment and employment opportunities. For example, rural women tend to marry earlier and have lower levels of educational attainment than their urban counterparts.

As this study shows, however, Confucian traditions alone do not explain the variant forms of gender inequality today in a country as complex and diverse as Vietnam. The Confucian patriarchal

lineage and hierarchies of age, gender, and education may account for some of the familial and social traditions that differentially structure men and women's social and economic interactions and access. However, the critique of traditional values does not consider some of the major political and economic changes arising from the reform process (e.g., the effects of monetization on household economies and patriarchal lineages). The reassertion of traditional Confucian hierarchies may also be an attempt to mitigate some of the more adverse effects of radical reform. Thus, it is important to study the gender effects of the reform process itself and how the reforms themselves may restructure gender relations.

In the summary below, the major findings from preceding chapters of this report are presented. These findings are organized around three themes. The first presents findings related to new household relations and changing patterns of consumption and investment in households. As the findings show, there is a tension between the increased need for women's work outside the home and women's greater responsibility for household welfare. The second theme considers mobility and social differentiation in the market economy. As this theme suggests there is a tension between the freer movement of labor and capital and the potential for increased exploitation of women, greater income inequalities, and increased financial insecurity. Finally, the third theme considers political participation and access to new forms of knowledge. As this theme suggests, there is a tension between preserving national civic and moral values and new forms of local political participation, which reflect changes in information and knowledge.

#### **A. Changing Intra-Household Relations**

- The national mean age at marriage has fallen from 23.3 years as reported in the 1989 Census to 21 years in 1997. In the urban areas the mean age is 22 years while in the rural areas, the mean age is 20.1 years. (national trend data)

- In the post *Doi Moi* period (1992–1999), the percentage of men and women marrying has been increasing. The rate of divorce has also increased slightly. In the community studies, 91 percent of the respondents (ranging from 17–72 years) were currently married and two percent were separated or divorced. Overall, the rates of unmarried respondents in the urban areas were higher than in rural areas. This increase in marriage reflects the earlier age of marriage. It also suggests the formation of smaller households as units of production. (national trend data and community survey)
- The total fertility rate in the past decade decreased from over 4.0 to 2.7, although given population momentum, the average annual growth of 2.1 percent remained the same (GSO 1998, World Bank 1996). In the two communities surveyed, the average number of living children is 2.47; half of the couples have one or two children (55.3 percent); 31.4 percent have three or four; 13.3 percent have five or more. This suggests the demographic transition that has taken place over the past decade. (national trend data)
- Men and women report more leisure time, but both men and women are working very long hours. Women get less sleep than men because of household activities such as meal preparation, housework, and childcare. The amount of time spent by men for these activities is 75 percent of the time spent by women but men are also involved in more wage labor both in and outside the household. More men than women spend at least two hours or more for resting or entertainment each day. Women are also involved in more multiple tasks. (time allocation study)
- Women are more likely than men to provide childcare, but of those who report providing childcare, both women and men spend the same amount of time (more than two hours). While only three



percent of the respondents reported taking care of parents, women report spending twice as much time as men. (time allocation study)

- In the rural and urban areas, the percentage of households owning a bicycle is the same, but in the urban areas, 78 percent of households own a motorbike while only 10 percent of the rural households do. While more women than men reported owning bicycles, there is no difference for motorbikes. (community survey)
- Most households own television sets and people spend much of their leisure time watching TV. Men and women enjoy watching international soccer matches, while women also learn new skills in household production and family planning from programs. Television reportedly transmits new social values and forms of knowledge to youth and parents are concerned about monitoring what youth watch. (time allocation study, community survey and in depth interviews)
- While women's reported income is 82 percent of men's, the total household income reported by women is much higher than that reported by men, as is the average monthly living expenditure for a household. (community survey)
- The monthly expenditure by household in Dang Cuong, a rural community, is less than that in Go Vap, an urban community (493.2 thousand VND versus 1511.7 thousand), but the household savings however are nearly 50 percent that of Go Vap. This indicates that rates of consumption in urban areas are higher than in rural areas. However, in the rural study, more respondents reported debt (42.5 versus 15.9 percent). (community survey)

- One effect of the pattern of reported income and household expenditures is that men appear to save more than women (the difference between reported income and expenditure). Women tend to report higher rates of borrowing (34.4 percent for women versus 26.6 percent for men) and have a greater variety of sources of capital. (community survey)
- Households are responsible for meeting rising expenditures not only for health care and education, but also social relations, particularly social functions such as birthday parties. (in depth interviews)
- Women report a change in filial obligations from having to care for in-laws to a greater focus on meeting children's needs. Both men and women have rising expectations for their children. In the past, poverty created more violence in households whereas in the present, marital discord and the rising divorce rate reflect the increased financial insecurity in the market economy. (in depth interviews)
- In both rural and urban areas, the majority of people have built their homes since the reforms. However, in rural areas, people are more likely to inherit (22 percent) their homes while in urban areas people are more likely to buy (20.8 percent). Land certificates are predominantly in the name of men followed by parents and to a lesser extent, women. These certificates are being exchanged or transferred at a much faster rate in the urban than the rural community. (community survey)

## **B. Mobility and Social Differentiation in the Market Economy**

- Women tend to predominate for all types of migration with the exception of the urban-rural flow. While women tend to migrate for both family and employment, men tend to migrate for

employment. In the period 1992–1997, the rate of women’s migration has decreased with the exception of the rural-urban flow indicating that women are increasingly migrating to urban areas to work in petty trade, services, textiles and other manufacturing industries. (national trend data)

- Women tend to have lower rates of participation in the formal economy, which suggests that women may be disadvantaged as labor becomes increasingly monetized. In terms of time allocation, men spent two hours more than women on income jobs. Furthermore, 15.1 percent of men have full-time jobs at home versus 4.9 percent of women. (community survey and time allocation study)
- In Dang Cuong, farmers earn much less than urban workers (194.7 thousand VND versus 923.1 thousand) and the reported household income is much lower (493.2 thousand VND versus 1691.3 thousand VND). (community survey)
- In the period from 1992–1997, the percentage of females working in non-farming occupations increased from 17 to 39 percent, which coincided with a reduction in the proportion of agricultural female workers over the same period from 68 to 56 percent. (national trend data)
- While men are less likely to be unemployed, the unemployment rate for men and women in the age cohort 18–24 years is nearly the same. (national trend data)
- Both men and women report the increased need for dual incomes and for women to work outside the home. Some women appreciate working outside the home, while others are worried about not having enough time for their families. Both women and men suggest that women’s work outside the home is creating greater equality in relations between men and women. (in depth interviews)

- Vietnam's economy and society are still undergoing a process of transition and because the market is still developing (and markets are inherently imperfect), traditions of patriarchy often prevail in who gets access to labor markets and the advantages and social connections that men often have in public spheres. (all studies)

### **C. Political Participation and Access to New Forms of Knowledge**

- In urban areas, the rates of illiteracy for males and females are about the same, but the gender gap becomes larger in rural areas where two out of three illiterate persons are women. However, when illiteracy is measured across age cohorts, the gap narrows suggesting that the younger women and men in general have better access to primary education. However, overall educational attainment may be decreasing. (national trend data)
- There was no gender difference in the amount of time dedicated for studies (even though women have less leisure time than men for such activities). 7.5 percent of the respondents engaged in learning activities and spent approximately two hours a day. (time allocation study)
- Community studies suggest increasing equality between men and women in decision-making within the household in the domains of children's education, investments, reproductive decision making, and the need for both men and women to earn income outside the household. (community survey and in depth interviews)

- The reported abortion rate of women in the community studies is higher than the national trends (22.2 percent versus the 1997 DHS rate of 15 percent). On average a Vietnamese woman undergoes 2.5 abortions in her lifetime (UN 1998:73). (community survey)
- During the period of 1992–1997, women’s participation in higher education dropped from 5.3 to 1.7 percent suggesting that opportunities for women have become increasingly limited. However, the rates for lower secondary and higher secondary have increased. Parents report making investments in girls’ education based on the changing demands of the labor market and marriage selection. (national trend data and in depth interviews)
- While the percentage of women representatives in the National Assembly fell from 32 percent in 1975 to 10 percent in 1997, women’s participation on local People’s Councils has been increasing since the mid-1980’s. (national trend data)
- Vietnamese men and women in their 40’s and 50’s are worried about the creation of wealth and increased social differentiation. This concern reflects their previous experiences of sacrificing to achieve a more just society. Their contemporary fears about the accumulation of wealth are expressed in two narratives: the first around “social evils” and the other (for men) around the “corruption of Government officials”. (in-depth interviews)
- Women report a greater interest in informal organizations and social encounters than in the past. They are also interested in gaining new forms of knowledge and information directly related to improving the economic and social welfare of their families. Men, in contrast, articulate concerns

about corruption at the national level and about ensuring the transmission of moral and political values to youth. (in depth interviews)

#### **D. Implications of the Findings**

These findings suggest how the market-oriented reforms in Vietnam have affected gender differentials in terms of access to markets (e.g., capital, labor, and information/education) and in conceptions of and relations to authority. Further, the reforms have had differential effects depending on one's age, residence, access to land, and social background. This finding suggests that gender analyses should take into account these other social characteristics in order to design effective interventions. No one intervention will improve the situation of all women or affect households in the same way.

Men and women articulate their experiences of the reform process in different ways. Men are very concerned about the preservation of preserving moral and civic values while women express an interest in having access to new forms of knowledge even as they fear the effects on youth. Men articulate their concerns in national terms while women tend more to speak about community and household concerns. Such narratives suggest that it is not sufficient to measure the gender effects of the reform process in material terms but there is also a need to understand how men and women understand issues such as poverty, sacrifice and wealth and how their expectations are changing over time. Thus, there is a need for more in depth investigation on these issues in local terms.

Women, particularly young, single women from the countryside, have new opportunities to earn wages. As women assume control over more income (both savings and expenditures), they may have more autonomy and thus, demand more equality in intra-household decision-making. However, since women appear to have lower participation rates in the formal economy but may be more involved in the informal activities than men, they may also face greater exploitation. These findings suggest that

current labor laws guaranteeing equal opportunity need to be enforced and strengthened (especially in those industries, which employ large numbers of women).

Because women may take more loans and have access to more sources of credit than men, they also have less savings and greater debt. Women also reportedly make more of the decisions and investments in children. Their investments at the household level are important to stimulating economic growth and to achieving future household welfare. These findings suggest the continuing importance of increasing women's access to credit and lending institutions and to making loans available on more favorable terms (e.g., through programs with the Women's Union and other local institutions).

Women and men are working harder to meet rising expectations for increased consumption. Households are both sites of production and consumption. Women's management of household finances and responsibility for children's welfare and education places additional burdens on them. The increased need for women and children's work outside the home (and wages) often results in a double burden on women. More demands are also placed on women's time than on men's. Therefore, it is important to protect public investments in free or minimal fee paying day care centers, schools and supervised recreational activities for children, which lessen this burden. Social safety nets are critical to household welfare.

Increased financial insecurity may be creating new marital and household tensions. The importance of childhood is changing and parents are expected to provide the financial means to ensure their children's success. With these changing expectations may come a lessening of parental authority and more pressure for women to provide for their children's needs. As women themselves suggest, new forms of information and social organization (such as informal meetings) are developing to respond to these changes. Mass organizations, the media, telephone hotlines, and counseling centers can and are playing a critical role in providing information and responding to concerns about child rearing, marital issues, and other tensions arising from the rapid pace of social and economic change.

Women's access to modern contraceptives continues to be limited to a few methods (the IUD and sterilization). Yet, women express their dissatisfactions with the method choice and complain of side effects. The use of natural family planning coupled with abortion is on the rise. Young women and couples in particular often use abortion to resolve an unwanted pregnancy. Men continue to be very involved in reproductive decision making and to some extent, control decisions over women. Yet, family planning programs and messages continue to focus on women and hold them responsible for meeting targets to achieve family happiness and desired family size. These findings suggest the continued need to expand the range of contraceptive methods and information available to both men and women through many different channels.

Gender relations have changed from the past in which women had filial obligations to in-laws and could not question their husband's authority. Women (and men) in their 40's and 50's today report being able to discuss differences of opinion even though men are often reported to be the final arbiters. They also believe that younger men and women have more egalitarian relationships and that young women are more likely to question male authority. These changes in part are attributed to an increased need and respect for women's wages and time both inside and outside the home. These findings suggest that the reform process is having and will continue to effect gender relations particularly at the household level. Likewise, gender along with other forms of social differentiation will continue to structure one's experiences with and access to the benefits of the reforms.



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