



Solutions to enhance the effectiveness of gender equality implementation in Vietnam currently

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Abstract

In the present era, gender equality has become one of the global development issues. Referring to gender equality is basically mentioning equality in status, opportunities and rights of women with men. According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), by the end of the 20th century, countries had obtained important achievements in human development, but there had still been differences in development indicators between men and women. Specifically, women's capacity development in all countries has been lower than that of men, especially in underdeveloped countries. The paper analyzes the current situation of gender equality implementation in Vietnam, thereby proposing some solutions to contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of gender equality implementation in Vietnam now.

Keywords: Solutions, effectiveness, gender equality, Vietnam

Introduction

Gender equality (GE) is an important goal that needs to be aimed for not only in Vietnam, but also in countries around the world. It is one of the criteria for assessing the development of a society. According to the United Nations, gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same conditions to fully exercise their human rights, have the opportunity to contribute and enjoy the fruits of national development in the political, economic, social and cultural aspects. Over the years, governments of many countries around the world have made efforts to bring about gender equality for humans, so that humans can truly live in a civilized, sustainable, and humane society. Vietnam is one of the countries with many recognized achievements in implementing gender equality, such as: Developing and promulgating legal documents which reflect the principles of gender equality; being one of the countries that eliminated the gender gap fastest in the past 20 years; completing ahead of schedule the goal of gender equality and enhancing the status of women (this is one of the Millennium Goals that we strive to achieve); Vietnam, among the countries with a high proportion of female National Assembly deputies in the region and the world (ranked 43rd out of 143 countries in the world and 2nd in ASEAN), is the leading country in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of gender equality indicators through the provision of health and education services to girls, boys, women and men; the illiteracy rate of women compared to men is decreasing...

Contents

1. Concept of gender equality

Gender equality is a category approached on the basis of gender issues - referring to the characteristics, positions, and roles of men and women in all social relationships (Clause 1, Article 5 of the 2006 Law on Gender Equality), which defines: "Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally considered, valued and supported. Gender equality does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are male or female".

Accordingly, gender equality includes: Equality of rights; equality of access to and control over resources; equality of participation and decision-making; equality of enjoyment of achievements and benefits^[1].

Gender equality is the goal to eliminate gender discrimination, create equal opportunities for men and women in socio-economic development and human resource development, move towards real gender equality between men and women, and establish, strengthen cooperative and supportive relationships between men and women in all areas of social and family life. Measures to maintain gender equality are issued by competent state agencies in cases there is a large difference between men and women in terms of position, role, conditions, and opportunities to develop capacity and enjoy the fruits of development when the application of the same regulations between men and women does not reduce this difference. Expanding the scope of gender equality assurance in legal policies can be approached from both the perspective of implementing and monitoring the implementation of those policies and laws in practice.

2. The Vietnamese State's viewpoint on gender equality

Since its establishment, the Communist Party of Vietnam has clearly stated: "Gender equality" is one of the ten essential tasks of the Vietnamese revolution. Ho Chi Minh's ideology and the Communist Party of Vietnam's viewpoint on gender equality are expressed and recorded in Article 9 of our country's first Constitution in 1946: "Women are equal to men in every aspect."

During the fierce years of the resistance war against the American to save the country, on January 10, 1967, the Central Party Secretariat issued Resolution No. 152-NQ/TW on a number of issues of organizing and leading women's work. Resolution No. 152-NQ/TW clearly states: Feudal ideology towards women still exists quite deeply among some cadres, party members, including leaders. It most clearly shows narrow-mindedness, "male superiority, female inferiority", lack of faith in women's leadership and economic management abilities, and failure to see all the difficulties and obstacles of women.

After the country was completely liberated and entered a new period, further promoting the position and role of women of all classes in the revolutionary cause of the Party and the people was a great requirement and demand. Directive No. 44-CT/TW dated June 7, 1984 of the Secretariat on a number of urgent issues in female cadre work clearly states: "Many party committees and leaders of sectors have neglected in directing the implementation of Party resolutions on training and fostering female cadres..., and have still had feudalistic ideology, looked down on women, and treated them unfairly....".

During the renovation period, our Party has concretized the gender equality viewpoint through resolutions and directives on women's work. Specifically, Resolution No. 04-NQ/TW dated July 12, 1993 of the Politburo on innovation and strengthening of women's mobilization in the new situation, aiming to strongly promote the role of women in the country's innovation, creating conditions for the women's movement to make new progress and increase the quantity and quality of female cadres in the Party, State, unions and socio-economic organizations. In Directive No. 37-CT/TW dated May 16, 1994 of the Central Party Secretariat on a number of issues of female cadre work in the new situation, our Party clearly identified: "Increasing the proportion of female cadres participating in state management and socio-economic management is an important requirement to realize women's rights to equality and democracy...is a condition to promote women's talents, intelligence and improve their social status. Opposing the expression of deviation and contempt for women, strictness and narrow-mindedness in evaluating female cadres".

Next, Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW dated April 27, 2007 of the Politburo on women's work in the period of promoting industrialization and modernization of the country was issued after more than 10 years of implementing Directive No. 37-CT/TW on female cadre work and in the context of Vietnam comprehensively promoting the innovation process, implementing industrialization, modernization of the country and integrating into the world economy. The objectives set forth in Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW were: "Striving to make our country one of the countries with the most progressive gender equality achievements in the region".

Announcement No. 196-TB/TW dated March 16, 2015 on the conclusion of the Secretariat on the Project of "Strengthening the Party's leadership in gender equality work and for the advancement of women in the new situation" continued to demonstrate the concern of the Party and State of Vietnam for women's work and gender equality. The project adopted a number of solutions to ensure the implementation of gender equality, contributing to enhancing the position of women and reducing the gender gap in a number of fields, sectors, regions and localities with gender inequality or high risk of gender inequality.

Directive No. 21-CT/TW dated January 20, 2018 of the Secretariat on continuing to promote women's work in the new situation continues to effectively and sustainably implement the viewpoints, goals, tasks and solutions on women's work stated in Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW of the Politburo (10th session). At the same time, focusing on solving the root causes of existing problems and limitations in implementing Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW, concretizing them by orienting the appropriate, feasible and practical policies for women's groups; paying more attention to specific mechanisms and solutions.

The 13th National Party Congress documents emphasized: "Promoting the traditions, potentials, strengths, and spirit of ownership and aspirations of women of all classes. Building Vietnamese women of the new era. Improving the quality of female human resources to meet the requirements of sustainable development and international integration. Strengthening development programs, support updating knowledge and skills for women in difficult circumstances, ethnic minority and mountainous areas. Completing and effectively implementing laws and policies related to women, children and gender equality. Resolutely and strictly handling social evils, acts of violence, trafficking, and abuse of women and children according to the law". At the same time, "synchronously and comprehensively implementing solutions for youth development, gender equality and women's advancement. Gradually reducing gender gaps in the political, economic, cultural, social and family fields"... [2].

3. Current situation of gender equality implementation in Vietnam

Over the past decades, the fight for gender equality in the world as well as in Vietnam has achieved much progress. Vietnamese women have many opportunities to assert themselves, participate in many leadership positions, and make great contributions to politics, economics, society, family and community. To perfect the legal system on gender equality, in addition to the Law on Gender Equality, in recent times, Vietnam has continuously supplemented and perfected the legal framework as a basis for solving gender equality issues such as: The National Assembly promulgated the 2013 Constitution, 7 codes, and 161 laws; the National Assembly Standing Committee promulgated 15 ordinances, including about 45 codes and laws related to gender equality issues; The Government issued 1,413 decrees; considered mainstreaming gender equality issues according to the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents; approved the National Strategy on gender equality for the 2021-2030 period issued together with Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP; Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Program for the 2021-2025 period; Communication Program on Gender Equality to 2030; National Program on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence in The New Situation to 2025... In particular, the Law on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence (amended) was passed, effective from July 1, 2023, making an important contribution to perfecting the legal system, creating a legal corridor for the prevention and control of domestic violence and supporting victims, ensuring human rights and promoting gender equality. With these policies, Vietnam has created a favorable environment and conditions for women to increasingly affirm their position, role, importance and have many opportunities to contribute to their families, communities and society.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report in 2023, Vietnam has jumped 11 places in terms of gender equality compared to 2022, from 83rd place to 72nd one out of 146 countries participating in the ranking, with 0.711 points on a scale of 0 to 1 on the gender gap index. For each specific index: Vietnam ranked 31st (74.9%) in the economic field, 89th in the education field (98.5%), 144th in the health field (94.6%) and 89th in the political field (16.6%). This is one of the results demonstrating Vietnam's

efforts to improve the status of women in all fields, contributing to promoting gender equality [3].

Along with that, by the end of 2022, out of the total 20 targets of the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2021 - 2030 period, there are 7/20 targets achieved or estimated to be able to be achieved, compared to the targets of the Strategy by 2025; there are 12/20 targets achieving better results than in 2020, and our country strive to reach the target by 2025.

The proportion of female leaders and managers in state administrative agencies has been improved in both quantity and quality. As of December 2022, ministries, ministerial-level agencies, and government agencies with key female leaders accounted for 14/30, reaching 46.6%. Of which, 12/22 ministries and ministerial-level agencies had female key leaders, reaching 54.5%; 2/8 government agencies had female key leaders (accounting for 25%); there were 4 female ministers, heads of ministerial-level agencies, government agencies; 12 female deputy ministers and equivalent. Vietnam ranks 63rd in the world and first in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in terms of the proportion of women participating in elected bodies.

The proportion of female People's Council delegates at all levels for the 2016-2021 term increased, compared to the 2010-2015 term at all three levels: province, district and commune. In the 2010 - 2015 term, the proportion of female People's Council delegates at the provincial level was 25.17%, that at the district level was 24.62%, and that at the commune level was 21.71%; this proportion was raised in the 2016 - 2021 term to 26.54%, 27.85%, and 26.59%, respectively [4].

According to the 2021 MasterCard Women Entrepreneurs Index Report, the percentage of Vietnamese businesses owned by women reached 26.5%, ranking 9th out of 58 countries and economies studied; many female entrepreneurs were prestigious and highly ranked in the region and the world. Many women have achieved academic titles and degrees such as professor, associate professor, and doctorate. Currently, Vietnam has 49 outstanding female scientists in various areas. They have been awarded the Kovalevsky Prize, and thousands of female intellectuals have achieved many successes domestically and internationally in scientific research, bringing high economic value and profound humanity.

The living standards of female workers are also increasingly improved. The average monthly income of female workers in 2022 was 5.6 million VND, an increase of 914 thousand VND compared to the previous year. The average income gap between male and female workers has narrowed from 1.4 times to 1.3 times.

At the same time, the gender gap in education and training continues to narrow, especially for ethnic minorities. In 2022, the rate of ethnic minority boys and girls completing primary education was 94.1%, figures for lower secondary education was 82.3%, while the target set for 2025 will be over 90% for primary education and 85% for lower secondary education. The rate of newly recruited female students in the vocational education system reached 34.5%, an increase of 8.2% compared to 2019.

In addition to perfecting the legal system on gender equality and empowering women and girls, in recent years, Vietnam has made efforts to promote international cooperation to enhance the role of women in the field of peace and security. Vietnam has participated in the Global Summit of

Women in Thailand; the 66th Online Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women; the APEC Forum on Women and the Economy; has successfully fulfilled its responsibilities as a member of the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)... as well as multilateral and bilateral cooperation forums on gender equality of the United Nations. Currently, Vietnam is one of the few countries sending female soldiers to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Not only did female soldiers participate as combat staff officers, trainers and military observers, or female doctors and nurses in the Field Hospital team, but most recently, Vietnam sent 21 female soldiers to join the Engineering Team. In October 2022, among the three People's Public Security officers assigned to join the United Nations peacekeeping force, there was also a female officer [5].

The above results show strong determination of the Party and State with a clear, consistent and national-relevant strategy. The status of Vietnamese women has been raised to a new level; confidently asserting themselves and integrating internationally.

Despite the achievements, gender gaps in Vietnam have still existed in some areas. In particular, the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the unemployment rate of female workers. It has been higher than that of male workers; women have still been the main force performing the unpaid care work in the family. On the other hand, gender prejudice still exists among a part of the population and even among cadres, civil servants and women themselves, especially in the appointment of key leadership positions and heads; the ideology of male superiority and female inferiority still remains; violence against women still occurs, and the gender imbalance at birth tends to increase... However, according to the National Review of Voluntary Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in 2023, there are still certain limitations in promoting gender equality such as: The sex imbalance at birth remains very high and is likely to increase, with the sex ratio at birth in 2022 being 111.5 boys per 100 girls born; the rate of child marriage and childbearing are quite high among ethnic minority women; violence against women and children still occurs. Despite improvements, women still have to take on the majority of unpaid care work. Limited infrastructure for caring for children, the sick, the disabled and the elderly has had a certain impact on women's ability to participate in the labor market... Besides, data to monitor and evaluate the implementation of gender equality is still limited. On the other hand, gender prejudice still exists among a part of the population and even among cadres, civil servants and women themselves, especially in the appointment of key leadership positions and heads. Although many localities have maintained and expanded models of promoting gender equality and preventing and responding to gender-based violence in the 2021-2030 period, many difficulties still arise due to limited resources. These shortcomings have partly increased the gender gap in employment and family, affecting the implementation of gender equality, for the advancement of women as well as the implementation of the goals of the National Strategy on Gender Equality.

There are many objective and subjective reasons for the gender inequality. First, the difference in birth rates between men and women has widened the gender gap in working

age, resulting in gender inequality in labor. The number of people working on gender equality remains low, combined with limited gender knowledge and gender integrating skills...so the popularization of gender equality is still limited. Moreover, the poverty and backwardness rate in some rural areas and ethnic minority areas makes female workers unable to go to school, and so they are illiterate. Consequently, they have not actively participated in social activities and social organizations to bring equality for themselves. Many old, backward concepts such as: male chauvinism, concepts of women only staying at home to cook, women having to take care of family matters, girls not needing to study much... still exist in many places, creating the risk of not completing the gender equality goals in Vietnam. It must also be affirmed that the awareness of some people, especially men, still lacks respect for women and the values that women bring to life. Meanwhile, women still have to take on more housework than men. It is worth mentioning that there have been still a large number of women who are not fully aware of their right to equality. They accept violence and discrimination almost naturally. Therefore, to improve the situation of gender inequality, in addition to action programs, government's support policies, protection from the legal system, popularization and education measures, it is more important that everyone, both men and women, voluntarily change their perceptions of discrimination. Women also need to improve their qualifications and understanding to both protect themselves and actively participate in social activities, thereby affirming their awareness of their right to equality.

4. Solutions to enhance the effectiveness of gender equality implementation in Vietnam now

First, It is necessary to focus on implementing Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP dated March 3, 2021 of the Government promulgating the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2021 - 2030 period, which emphasizes the general goal: "Continuing to narrow the gender gap, create conditions and opportunities for women and men to participate and enjoy equality in all areas of social life, contributing to the sustainable development of the country" and implement 6 specific goals: Goal 1: In the political field; Goal 2: In the economic and labor fields; Goal 3: In family life and preventing and responding to gender-based violence; Goal 4: In the health sector; Goal 5: In the education and training field; Goal 6: In the information and communication field. At the same time, strengthening the leadership and direction of Party committees at all levels and the management responsibility of authorities at all levels in raising awareness, implementing and perfecting institutions on gender equality. Particularly, promoting the role and responsibility of leaders in implementing regulations on gender equality.

Second, Perfecting the legal basis system to ensure the principles of gender equality in relevant fields. Integrating gender equality contents in building legal basis and programs, strategies, plans for socio-economic development, conditions for women to fully access and have gender equality in economic resources (such as cultivated land, credit sources, market information, information on laws and policies), and have equal opportunities to participate in production and business. Continuing to improve policies and expand the scope of participation in

social insurance, especially for new groups of workers; implementing measures to meet the needs of women and men participating in voluntary insurance and unemployment insurance; pay attention to vulnerable groups (such as migrant workers, poor workers in rural areas, and ethnic minority areas). There are policies to support vocational training facilities for rural workers, especially facilities that attract many female workers ^[6].

Third, Raising awareness of ethnic minority communities about gender equality. Authorities at all levels, especially in ethnic minority areas, need to strengthen the popularity, mastery, and direction of implementation of policies, laws, and regulations on promoting gender equality in the community. Diversifying forms of popularization and education to raise awareness of gender equality in the community; eliminating backward customs and practices that are gender-biased, belittling, and demeaning to women and exalting men, through radio, television, banners, slogans, books, newspapers, etc.; integrating gender equality issues into teaching contents at all levels, in community cultural activities and exchanges, etc.

Fourth, Further promoting the role of Party committees, authorities and socio-political organizations. Party committees, authorities and socio-political organizations need to widely popularize and quickly, fully implement the Party's viewpoints and policies and the State's policies and laws on gender equality in ethnic minority areas. Strengthening coordination, solidarity and unity among organizations in implementing the goals of gender equality in accordance with the functions, tasks and roles of each organization. In particular, it is necessary to strongly promote the role of village and hamlet cadres, especially village elders, village chiefs, and prestigious people in ethnic minority communities, because their words and actions are often believed, listened to, and followed by ethnic minorities. Local party committees and authorities need to strengthen orientation, direction, encouragement and motivation for village and hamlet cadres, village elders and village chiefs to enhance their sense of responsibility and enthusiasm, thereby actively promoting their role in popularizing, mobilizing and persuading people to implement gender equality goals, not only to eliminate backward, discriminatory and contemptuous notions about women, but also to actively support, help and create conditions for women to study, work and contribute to the community and society like men. Additionally, there should be a policy to support finance for organizing activities and talks about gender equality in the community; condemning and criticizing, and handling acts of discrimination, violence, and abuse against ethnic minority women and girls as an example to the community. Besides, it is necessary to raise awareness and promote the exemplary role of village and hamlet cadres, village elders, and village chiefs in implementing gender equality for ethnic minorities to follow.

Fifth, Promoting the movement to enhance gender equality in the community and strengthen international cooperation. Promoting movements to accompany, support and help women, such as: the movement of men creating conditions to support and encourage women to study, improve their qualifications and participate in social work; the movement

of men taking the lead in preventing and combating violence against women and children; the movement to support women in economic activities; building models of “temporary shelters” and “safe houses” to prevent and combat violence, abuse and harassment against women; establishing the counseling centers on marriage, family, reproductive health, clubs to exchange and learn about gender equality...Depending on the conditions and characteristics of each locality and ethnic group, appropriate and effective movements and programs should be implemented to help ethnic minority women rise up to take control of their lives and demonstrate their capacity and role. Furthermore, due to limited budget, it is necessary to mobilize resources, programs and projects to support the promotion of gender equality from international organizations and associations, such as: projects of providing medical services, training programs to improve qualifications and capacity for women, programs to support job for women; investment projects to build roads, hospitals, schools; cultural and spiritual exchange programs in villages and hamlets...All aim for increasing opportunities for women in ethnic minority areas to study, receive health care, have jobs, and participate in social activities.

Conclusion

Nowadays, society is increasingly developing. Therefore, gender equality is an area of social and family life that needs to be protected by law. The goal of gender equality is to eliminate gender discrimination, create equal opportunities for men and women in socio-economic development and human resource development, move towards real gender equality between men and women, and establish and strengthen cooperative and supportive relationships between men and women. Along with gender equality, domestic violence is one of the prohibited acts of gender equality in the family to develop all areas of social life. Over the past time, Vietnam has continuously supplemented and improved the legal framework as a basis for resolving gender equality issues such as: The National Assembly promulgated the 2013 Constitution, 7 codes, and 161 laws; the National Assembly Standing Committee promulgated 15 ordinances, including about 45 codes and laws related to gender equality issues; the Government promulgated 1,413 decrees; and considered integrating gender equality issues according to the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents. Most recently, on March 3, 2021, the Government approved the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2021-2030 period, issued together with Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP. Vietnam's strategy to promote gender equality is reflected in many policies and guidelines of the Party and State. The Resolution of the 13th National Party Congress continues to affirm: “Promoting the traditions, potentials, strengths, and spirit of mastery and aspirations of women of all classes; building Vietnamese women of the new era; improving the quality of female human resources, meeting the requirements of sustainable development and international integration”. This consistent policy is concretized by the legal framework and policies of the State to create the most favorable conditions for Vietnamese women to promote their great potential in the new era, pioneering in contributing to the realization of the goal and aspiration of making Vietnam a modern industrialized country by 2045.

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