

PART I

Overview of trends in achieving gender equality and women's advancement

1- Overview of trends in implementing the Platform for Action

I. Introduction

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing has laid a milestone in improving various countries' attitudes and actions towards women's rights, equality and advancement economically, politically and socially. All countries attending this Conference unanimously approved Beijing Platform for Action to accelerate the equality and advancement for women all over the World. At this Conference, the Government of Vietnam submitted its National Development Strategies for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam to the Year 2000 with the 10 objectives.

II. Vietnam Government's Policies with regard to achieving the goal of gender equality and women's advancement.

1. *Vietnam Government's perspective on gender equality and women's advancement.*

In the Renovation undertaken by the Vietnam Communist Party and the State, people are the center, the ultimate objective and the driving force in this process. This alluded renovation has responded people's aspirations and received active responses from all strata in society, certainly including women. The Government Strategies for Stability and Socio-Economic Development to the Year 2000 have enabled us to promote gender equality and women's advancement. Nowadays, women of Vietnam have been making significant contributions to the industrialization and modernization process in Vietnam. Accounting for 51,20% of the total population and 50,61 of the labor force, Vietnamese women have obtained many achievements on various fields politically, economically, culturally and socially, thus remarkably contributing to the overall achievement from the national construction and defense and from the renovation for achieving prosperous people, strong country, equitable and civilized country's Objective. Since 1995, thanks to the Government specific policies, the gender equality and women's advancement have obtained the promising outcomes.

2. *The National Plan of Action for Advancement of Women By the Year 2000*

Right after the Beijing conference, the National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam (NCFAW) under the Government appointment initiated to formulate the National Plan of Action. This Plan of Action was developed in line with the Beijing Platform for Action and National Strategic objectives. On 4th October 1997, the Government endorsed this Plan of Action with 11 objectives and 139 specific actions to be taken. This plan is the follow-up to a range of Vietnam policies and laws aiming at uplifting women's emancipation and advancement. The major objectives of the

Plan aim to improve the material and spiritual life of women, to enhance and bring into full play their qualification, capacity and role; to ensure the performance by women of their functions and their full and equal participation in all sorts of activities, especially in political, economic, cultural and social fields, in the cause of industrialization and modernization of the country towards the goal of "wealthy people, a powerful country, a just and civilized society"

The approval of this Plan of Action by Vietnam Government reflects the perspective of our Party and the State in recognizing women's significant roles in the cause of national development. This Plan not only focuses on improving the living standards for women, but also on uplifting the emancipation and advancement for women and gender equality as the direct and long-term objectives in the sustainable development in Vietnam.

3. *The achievements obtained from the implementation of the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam by the Year 2000.*

- **Laws and policies :**

Women's issues have been considered significantly in policy and law-making and revising process such as the Civil Law in 1995, the Penal Code in 1997, the Laws on Election to the National Assembly in 1997 and to the National Council in 1999, Law on Nationality in 1998.....The Ministry of Labor - War Invalids & Social Affairs has assisted the Government to develop various by-laws in the enforcement of the Labor Code for women such as in reduction of taxes or in loan support to employers who employ a number of women workers in their enterprises. Women's right to work is developed in the principle of equality with men in key areas such as in recruiting, employing, salary payment, promotion, labor protection and social insurance with the specific and reasonable measures for protecting female workers, mothers and children in conformity with the specific conditions of Vietnam, thus enabling women to participate in the productive work for their incomes and for their families.

This is the first time after many years the State redefines and strengthens the exercise of people's rights including women - in Housing ownership the right to change, to lease the house, to mortgage and to inherit as defined in the Land Law.

The National Assembly has decided to increase penalty frame to prostitution procurers and sex abusers on girl child and adolescents. Other policies have been applied to the aged women, lonely elderly and the revolutionary devotees.

- **Social and economic areas:**

Employment: this is an important objective in the National programs. The State, on the one hand, encourages the local and international investment on productive development for absorbing labour, on the other hand sets up the National Fund for Employment with soft loans to self - employment. Accordingly, during 1991 - 1997, employment opportunities have been provided to more than 1 million workers each year, contributing to slow down the unemployment for population at working age in urban areas from 8 - 9% in 1990 to 6,02% in 1997 including 5,5% of women.

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- **Poverty alleviation:**

Women have become the focus target in poverty alleviation programs. The Government of Vietnam has set up the National program on poverty alleviation, the Bank for the poor and integrated poverty alleviation objectives with other National programs. Therefore the poor households have reduced from 23,3% in 1994 to 17,7 in 1997 and about 17,4% in 1998.

- **Education:**

Education is the one of the primary National policies. In the recent years, Vietnam has achieved good outcomes in this area. 42 provinces out of 61 provinces and cities throughout the country have accomplished the elimination of illiteracy and Universerlization of primary education. The general education system with a broad school network of have seen everywhere, primary schools are established in all communes. The progress in general education, is reflected through the rate of female teachers. Women account for 76,1% of the total teachers in Education system, girls account for 50 % in Kindergarten, 47% in elementary, 47, 02% in junior secondary and 46,5% in Senior secondary education, respectively.

- **Public healthcare:**

Fund allocation for public healthcare has been increased about 15 - 20% annually. 95,6% children in 1997 received injections from the Enlarged Program. Maternity mortality decline from 1,1 % in 1996 to 1% in 1997. Average life expectancy is 68,6 years old for women and 63,3 for men.

- **Politics:**

Female representation in decision - making positions at various levels are promoted particularly, women at National Assembly are on increase of 7,5%, accounting for 26,22% in its Xth Legislature (1997 - 2002).

In general, the situation of women and girl child have been scated - up compared to the year 1995, even in some areas that the National plan of Action doesn't deal with. The gains obtained so far stem from continuous efforts of the Party and Government of Vietnam in renewing its political system, completing its law and policy systems as the comprehensive and sustainable political and legal basis in the exercise of women's rights as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action.

4. *The goals of gender equality and women's advancement being pursued as a priority in relation to other public policies*

With the Overall objectives "prosperous people; Strong country, equitable and civilized country", Vietnam has incorporated gender perspective in all fields politically, economically, culturally and socially such as the Policies on labor, Employment and Education...

The integration of the National plan of Action's objectives with other National programs undertaken by various Ministries and Institutions is another indication, thus reflecting Vietnam's efforts in achieving gender equality and women's advancement as in the dispensable components in overall Development Strategy of Vietnam.

Vietnam is one among 154 countries signing and endorsing CEDAW Convention, this indicates Vietnam Government's Commitment in ensuring equality between men and women and women's roles in society. In 1998, NCFAW under the Government appointment coordinated the preparation for the National Second Report on its implementation of CEDAW during 1983 - 1998 which has been submitted to the United Nations and will be defended at CEDAW Committee in June 2000. This is the opportunities for public awareness raising on gender equality and calling for the authorities to address the problems faced by women through viable ways and means.

5. Priority objectives in Vietnam National Plan of Action

The National Plan of Action is the official Commitment of the Vietnam Government in the implementation of the Beijing platform for Action. In light of this platform, the Government has specified it into 11 specific objectives in the National plan of Action, its first 4 priority objectives are focused on: Employment Opportunities, Income Generation, poverty alleviation and improvement of women's livelihood; women's equal access to education, training for upgrading their competencies on all aspects; Improvement of health services for women and girl child; Promotion of Women's roles and positions in leadership and other decision - making positions. These 4 objectives are imperative and Key to promote Women's advancement.

6. Vietnam's success in mainstreaming gender perspective to promote female representation in leadership and decision - making positions.

Vietnam Government fully recognizes always aware of Women's roles and status in the national construction and defense. Vietnamese's women are a great potential labour force, a strong driving force in the process of social - economic development for prosperous people, strong country, equitable and civilized society, for equality and development.

Owing to renovation, the socio - economic conditions in Vietnam have been improved significantly. Women's roles and status in society as well as at home have been advanced. In achieving the 4th objective of the Plan of Action, we have obtained the promising outcomes. With the Government guidelines and provision of professional and managerial training given to women by various Ministries and Institutions as well as with the effective communication for the election to the National Assembly Xth Legislation (in 1997), women deputies make up 26,22%. In this context, NCFAW provided leadership training to more than 1,000 female leaders at various levels, and now they are active in preparation for incoming election to the people's councils at all levels in November, 1999, with the target 20 - 30% of female members. Gender equality and women's advancement have grabbed the public attention:

- Gender equality and women's advancement has attracted more attentions from public

As described above, gender perspective has been incorporated in other programs undertaken by other Institutions and authorities. The Research on Women and gender has been further strengthened, provision of loans to women have been conducted assessment of negative impact on women by the existing policies. The information, education and communication (IEC) on gender equality and women's advancement has been widely diffused. In 1998 - 1999, 1,500 rounds of cadres received training on gender and policy - making from gender perspective run by NCFAW. Two communication campaigns for public awareness raising on gender equality and women's advancement were conducted by NCFAW and Mass Media in 1997 and 1998. Notably that, since 1998, the IEC is further emphasized as one of the major activities in facilitating the effective accomplishment of the National plan of Action.

7. The impact on women by Economic and Financial Crisis in Asia

Vietnam, although is not falling in the regional financial Crisis, but this crisis has strongly influenced to its economies. In 1997, economic growth seems to standstill. The Socio - economic objectives for 1998 has been reduced considerably including GDP. In this context, Vietnamese people and women are the subjects to suffer. Like other Asian countries, Women of Vietnam make up a large of labour force in garment, shoe - making, electronic assembling and agro - aquaculture processing... The Government has identified a number of measures to provide women employment opportunities, but in reality women's efficiency and competitiveness in the labour market are low, this makes jobs unstable economic growth and export low.

III. CONCLUSION:

Over the last 4 years in the implementation of Beijing platform for Action and Vietnam Development Strategy for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000, the attitudes on women by various Institutions at all levels have been improved through the above - described performances and outcomes. The first time, the strategic policies on women are widely disseminated to various institutions, mass organizations and public. Many Ministries, Institutions and provinces/ cities have developed and implemented their Plan of Action in line with their own socio - economic development plans. The implementation of the Platform for Action and the National Strategy have empowered the coordination mechanism between the Government and mass organizations who have made many successes as above - mentioned.

PART II

Financial and institutional measures

2- National budget allocated for gender equality and women's advancement

Vietnam Government's Commitment not only reflects in its policies, but also in its annual budget allocation for women's advancement activities. The integration model is effective in our context. Government policies on gender equality and women's advancement have been effectively incorporated in other national programs and projects undertaken by the functional Ministries and Institutions.

As described above, the "National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women by the year 2000" being endorsed in 1997 is an indication of Government funding investment for gender equality. Part IV in this plan defines the specific budget allocation for the implementation of the plan. The NCFAW performances receive annual budgets from the Government. Committees for the Advancement of Women (CFAWs) in 48 Ministries/, Institutions and in 61 provinces/ cities have been in operation. The Ministry of Financial has released a guideline on the allocation of some funds for this kind of activity - which has been enforced. This is very essential for the implementation.

However, the success in achieving women's advancement in Vietnam could not exclude the technical and financial assistance from various International Organizations based in Vietnam and abroad. We receive their support through projects which are requested integration of gender/ women. Now, the NCFAW is implementing the 3- year (1997 - 2000) project on "Capacity building for the implementation of the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of women" at a value of more than 1,5 million American dollars funded by UNDP and the Netherlands Government.

3- Structures and mechanisms for institutionalization and Implementation of the Platform for Action

a) The National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam (NCFAW):

The NCFAW was established in 1993 by the decision N° 72/ TTg of the Prime Minister, based on the renaming from the National Committee for Women's Decade. Right after the Beijing Conference, the NCFAW has been strengthened with 16 members (before 13 members). NCFAW is responsible to monitor the implementation of the Beijing platform for Action in Vietnam. The NCFAW's functions are to disseminate, cooperate, implement, coordinate and monitor the activities for Women's advancement undertaken by various Ministries, branches, provinces/ cities; and provide Government and the concerned authorities the consultancy on mainstreaming gender in the policies and National development programs; and prepare the National Report on the implementation of CEDAW.

The strengthening of NCFAW and the establishment of its network in various Ministries and provinces/ cities have indicated the great effort of Vietnam State in promotion of gender equality and women's advancement. Up to now, there are 48 CFAWs in Ministries and branches and 61/61 CFAWs in provinces/ cities.

The NCFAW has played an important role in developing, in encouraging and in monitoring the implementation of the National Plan of Action. Annually, NCFAW in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning and Investment convenes the National Review Conference on the implementation of the plan to define the follow - up activities.

b) To initiate the spirits of the World Conference, such as the world Summit for Social Development or the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the Government has appointed the concerned agencies to coordinate and monitor the implementation with the specific tasks as follows: The Ministry of labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs and the National Committee for Population and Family planning are the focal points for the implementation of the Recommendations made by the Summits on Social Development, on Population Development.

Other institutions including the NCFAW are responsible for specific actions depending on their functions.

c) In Vietnam, NGOs play a significant role in implementation of the Beijing Follow-up activities. The NCFAW in addition to its cooperation with Government agencies, received many comments from various NGOs to develop a such viable and feasible National Plan of Action. Moreover, the leaders of the Vietnam Women's Union, Vietnam Labor Confederation, Farmers' Union and Youth Union are the members of the NCFAW which enables them to plan and implement directly some specific activities and especially to monitor process of Vietnam activities regarding to the Beijing Conference.

PART III

The implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing platform for Action.

A. Innovative policies, programs, projects and good practices

4- Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

1) Women and poverty:

The Government of Vietnam has the policy our employment opportunities, income generation activities, poverty alleviation and improvement of quality of life for women. To accomplish this policy, Vietnam has focused to address the 3 following issues:

- Create jobs and ensure employment for women as priority;
- Facilitate women's equal access to economic resources;
- Invest into research and policy - making activities which promotes women's participation in economic development and alleviation of poverty among women. Strive to reduce the number of poor households classified by existing standards to 10% by the year 2000 and eradicate chronically hunger poor households.

These two objectives are included in the National programs on Employment and Poverty Alleviation.

Employment: The State has set up the National program on support to employment, National Fund for employment, preferential credit policy for Farmers... along with local

investment policy in programs and projects for production development. This provides women access to employment.

Regarding policy on employment Creation: in 1998, more than 1 million persons were provided jobs. In the National Fund from Resolution 120, 38 billion Vietnam Dong plus 414 billion Vietnam Dong for small projects have been used as a revolving loan fund. 11,000 small projects funded by the Government have provided employment's to 250,000 workers, of which female workers make up 60 %, thus helping to reduce unemployment in urban areas.

To provide women access to economic resource, the State Bank has drafted "the plan to provide women access to economic resource, credit and Fund for Women", this is on going to set the comments and feed-backs from the concerned Institutions before its finalization.

Vietnam Women's Union is an organization representing all strata of Women in Vietnam. The Union has involved in the credit scheme of the National Fund on Employment through various small projects at the value of 25 billion Dong as a revolving loan fund. The Union is dynamic creative in providing employment's to their members through its nation-wide campaigns on mutual assistance among women for household economic development and the formation of women's saving groups, loans for production, self-employment and Income generation for poor women.

This campaign has been implemented effectively throughout Vietnam, for example, Hai Phong province has absorbed and managed more than 60 billion Vietnam Dong as a loan fund for 58,970 women. In 1998, they have explored 5,61 billion Dong for another 10,961 women. In 1997 the Vietnam Women's Union launched the campaign "Saving Day for the poor" which receive active public responses.

In 1998, unemployment rate in Vietnam was 6,85% including 6,55% among the women - higher than in 1997, 0,84%, according to the statistics from Labor Investigation Committee.

Poverty alleviation: The Government has set up the National Program on Poverty Alleviation. This is the economic and social inter-agencies program which requires the concerted actions from various agencies.

In 1998, 3,158 billion Dong was allocated for poverty alleviation activities. 260 thousands of hungry households in the 8 areas have stepped out of hunger (source from Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs).

However, severe drought in the Central and High Land areas leads to crop failures and poverty by many households. Poverty rate in 1998 was 17,45% while in 1997 was 17,7%.

2) Education and training of women: Education development is one of the important measures of investment on human resource. The targets are:

- Eradicate illiteracy among female workers aged between 15-35;

- Improve education and vocational training for women;
- Increase female enrollment at all levels.

* Eradicate illiteracy:

- The Ministry of Education and Training (MET) has developed their own Plan of action for the advancement of women, with concrete actions to be taken aiming at to complete the universalisation of primary education, increase female enrollment in schools and universities.

- Education and Training Services at the local levels in collaboration with the concerned branches continues to implement the Law on Universalisation of Primary Education. This program has been carried out in all areas throughout country, particularly in mountainous and remote areas. According to the report of the National Committee for Illiteracy Eradication, up to 1998, there were 42/61 provinces were recognized as having met the national standards on universalisation of primary education (in 1997, there were only 27/61 provinces).

- In public education system, gender equality has been improved remarkably the rate of female enrollment account for about 48% at the primary level; 47.3% at the junior secondary and 46.5% at the senior secondary.

For example, Lao Cai province is a mountainous border area with 27 ethnic groups with very strong traditional practices and customs. The rate of illiterate women and uneducated girl school are still high being aware of necessary and urgent education and training for women. In the first 6 months of 1998, Lao Cai organized 11 class rooms and provide literacy to 259 ethnic women.

* Vocational training for women: The system of vocational training Centers and employment services in provinces/ cities have been created jobs for hundreds of thousands of labourers of which women account for 30%. Many women are interested in tailoring. The system of vocational training Centers run by Women's Union at various levels has got good outcomes.

3) Women and health:

Priorities:

- Improve health care for women and children;
- Enhance the reproductive health;
- Minimize occupational diseases for women.

Public health care (including more than 50% of women) is always paid attention by the Party and the State. The annual budget for health care is from 15 to 20% in addition to the international assistance, this activity has been improving. More than 90% of the population are provided medical services at commune and ward levels.

According to the reports from various branches and localities, women's reproductive health has grabbed attention from the concerned institutions. Women are provided regularly medical check-ups, medical insurance, home visits when they are sick, clean working environment, health protection.

For example, in Ha Tay Province, the Committee for the Advancement of Women (CFAW) in collaboration with the concerned agencies conducted communication, training and signing the sub-contracts to implement effectively the maternal and child health care program. As a result, the number of pregnant women who receive tetanus injection has increased from 70% to 90%; the number of women who suffer gynecological disease has been decreased from 50% to 32%; the number of children who receive immunization from the enlarged program has been increased from 90% to 100%.

In population and family planning: A great change on the awareness of population issue with the further investment in human and physical resources, population and family planning has become a national program. The Vietnam Women's Union is very active in providing advocacy women to implement this program. They have set up a range of activities such as Club for those who don't have third child", "Club for new weds", "Club for population and family planning" "Club for good child care"... As a result, the crude birth rate has been decreased from 22.1‰ in 1997 to 21.5‰ in 1998.

4) Violence against women:

The Party and the State are always pay attention to Vietnamese women's equality and development. The right to equality between men and women has been clearly stated in the first Vietnamese Constitution (1946). The amended Constitution in 1980 and 1992 once again re-affirmed "female and male citizens have equal rights in all fields of economic, social politic and in the family". All acts of discrimination against women and damaging women's dignity are strictly forbidden. Women's and men's right to equality are is stated clearly in the Law on Marriage and Family (supplemented in 1986 and 1998).

Thank to "DOI MOI" policy of Vietnam, and the institutionalization of human rights through laws and policies as mentioned above and actions taken so far, Vietnam has obtained many progresses in ensuring women's and children's rights. However, the situation of divorce, domestic violence against children and women seem to be increased in rural and urban area. This problem strongly condemned and it is requested timely and strict punishment. In 1997, the Penal Code was supplemented with further punishment to the sexual abusers.

The prevention and punishment of all violence and discrimination acts against women under any forms have to coincide with education, administration and legal measures. Educating should focus on increasing men's and women's awareness on equal rights between men and women in society and at home. Besides, legal education should be promoted to make public awareness of their responsibilities in protecting women's and girl child's rights. Vietnam step by step institutionalizes the legal documents on women's and children's rights and proposes strict punishments to any violence.

5) Women and armed-conflicts: Since 1975, Vietnamese people have been living in peace, independence without armed-conflicts. The Government has the policy to solve the aftermath left by the war. The specific policies on women and children as the war victims; veterans, orange dioxide victims...

Vietnamese Government has provided women access to integrate in the regional and international organizations. The NCFAW has become a member of ASEAN Sub-committee

on Women (ASW) and the focal point for women in APEC. The Vietnam Women's Union becomes a member of ASEAN Confederation of Women's organization (ACWO), thus indicating Vietnamese women's good will in strengthening the friendship and Peace.

6) Women and economy: Vietnamese women account for 50.1% of the labour force in the society. Under the Vietnamese Law, women and men above 15 years of age have the right to join the labour force. They have the right to create jobs for themselves or choose jobs in the State, collective or private sectors. In fact, they have made significant contributions to the national economic development. The State's direction is to increase the women's participation in economic development through structural adjustment, development of small and medium enterprises, development of agriculture with structural and crop plants and animal husbandry in rural areas...

(see more details in Part I: job creating)

7) Decision - making: Vietnamese Government has focused on increasing the women's role and status in leadership and decision making positions with the following priorities:

- Streamlining female cadres at all levels;
- Strengthen women cadres' competencies at all levels.

The objective by the year 2000 is to increase the capacity, promote equal rights of women in leadership and management to meet the requirement of national industrialization and modernization, contributing to enhancing women's role and positions in the society; build the contingent of qualified women cadres.

In order to fulfill the task mentioned above, the Governmental Personnel -Organizational Department has collaborated with the concerned agencies to provide guidelines implementation.

The authorities at all levels, at ministries and localities have implemented the promotion of women cadres. 01 woman in political, 01 Vice President of the State, 01 Vice Chairwoman of the National Assembly and 5 women ministers or equivalent.

In the Ministry of Finance, there are 2 women Vice Ministers (accounting for 28.6% in the total ministerial leaders), 9/47 directors and deputy directors (accounting for 19.1%).

As mentioned above, female representation in the National Assembly has increased by 26.22% thanks to great efforts of the NCFAW and other concerned institutions. The NCFAW is more preparing for the People's Council Election at three levels which will be held in November, 1999.

However, the proportion of female representation in public management is still low, inappropriate to women's labour force and capacity.

8) Institutional mechanism for the advancement of women: Mentioned in Part III, item 3.

9) **Human rights of women:** The main objective is to protect, enhance the women's rights and create conditions for women to participate in social activities.

- Protect women's rights, interests and dignity
- Create condition for women to participate in social activities.

For recent years, CEDAW has been disseminated widely through meetings, workshops and mass media by ministries, branches and local authorities. In 1998, the NCFAW in collaboration with some concerned branches prepared the second national report on the implementation of the CEDAW. Seminars on women's basic rights had been organized by some ministries and institutions to provide specific data for the preparation of the report.

The dissemination and enforcement of the Party's and State's directions, laws and policies concerning women's rights in Land Law, Law on Marriage and Family, Law on child Protection and care, Law on health protection, Labour code ...

Mass organizations have organized a range of activities to improve public knowledge on women's rights, interests through women's clubs, contexts, seminars and meetings... which have involved women's broad participation of more.

In 1997, the Government directed the concerned branches to carry out the preventive measures against prostitution and trafficking in women and children.

The Central Vietnam Women's Union has developed a plan of action against trafficking in women and children with the specific contents. A project at 700,000 USD on IEC and support to trafficking women with IOM technical assistance will be soon implemented.

10) **Women and media:**

At present, women in media account for 25.30% but a few of them in leadership position. The Ministry of Culture and Information and Vietnam News have no top women leaders. There are two women Vice - General Directors in the Vietnam Television and the Voice of Vietnam Radio - 2 Vietnamese important media organizations have.

Strengthen information IEC activities for public awareness on gender equality, the NCFAW has collaborated with the concerned agencies to organize the training courses for more than 100 correspondence on gender equality, CEDAW, the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women by the Year 2000 and disseminated widely through mass media. Besides, under the project VIE/96/011, the NCFAW has launched a media campaign on improvement of gender awareness from March to September 1999. Through this campaign, it is hoped that women's image will be portrayed properly and gender bias against women will be eradicated.

11) **Women and environment:** Women's roles in environment management and natural resources, contribution to sustainable development and living environment improvement.

This is the objective of the national program on clean water and environment (CWEH), of which the main beneficiaries are women and children.

Water supply: according to the report by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in 1998 the Ministry concentrated to provide drinking water for 1.2 million people (2% of the rural population with 1% investment from the Government and 1% from the people); communication, advocacy and training have been promoted; the development of environment sanitation model... The total budget in 1998 for such activities was 74,400 million Dong. As a result, 7,600 water supplying places in 116 target districts in 61 provinces, cities, including 520 water supplying places for schools have been constructed.

Thank to the above activities, in 1998, 32% of population in rural area have accessed to clean water, the increase of 2% in comparison with 1997.

Environment, information education, and communication training: 37 communes in 32 provinces/ cities have accessed to these services focusing clean villages; hygienic animal sheds, plant protection guidelines and management of solid wastes...

Hanoi Women's Union has launched a movement "Keeping the city green, clean and beautiful". Many women are very active in this movement.

As a member of the National Steering Committee on CWEH, the Vietnam Women's Union is active in advocacy for environment protection, hygiene practices, improvement of stove system and living conditions. "A fact for life" book is widely disseminated.

12) The girl child:

The main activities: protect girl child's rights and interests based on the Law on child Protection and Care, Law on universalization of primary education has conducted a range of activities on IEC and on protection of Children's rights, especially girl children. They has collaborated with the Ministry of Culture and Information, Ministry of Education and Training, the central Youth Union, Vietnam Television and other 30 mass media to organize communication campaign. In 1998, they launched "A month for children" from 15/5-15/6 annually... and in collaboration with UNICEF, Women's Union, Kindergarten education launched a writing context on "family and children".

The Ministry of Labour-Invalids and Social Affairs is preparing a project on preventing and solving the situation of street children, child labour abuse; studying to revise the social relief system including disadvantaged children. Scholarships for poor children, free health check-ups, "smiling operation" ... have contributed to the care of disadvantaged children.

cultural house for children has been built up in many provinces and cities where the children can receive entertainment senesces, increasing their awareness of children on all fields.

However, the incidence of children at school age without attending schools and school drop out at the later year in primary and junior secondary school in remote and mountainous areas are still high. Sexual violence trafficking in girl children and girl child seems to be increased.

B. Obstacles encountered:

5- Obstacles encountered and lesson learnt in implementing

a) Obstacles:

- The first obstacle in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action is the awareness: The limited awareness on gender equality, women's advancement and men preference than women attitude, hinder the implementation of the Platform
- Socio-economy difficulties: Vietnam is now in the transition from central planned economy to the market oriented under the socialist direction. We lack socio-economic conditions and are influenced by the negative impact of the economic crisis and natural disaster to achieve the targets worked out by the Platform.
- The Platform has set out very great, covered and general objectives of which some targets are rather higher than the implementation capacity within 5 years (1995-2000)

b) Lesson learnt:

1. The determination and commitment of the Government and high ranking leaders and the clear assignment of responsibility to governmental body in carrying out follow up activities and monitor.
2. The national machinery has the important role to ensure human resource and budget to carry out activities. At the national level, it is necessary to review every year to draw experience in time and make a concrete plan for the next year.
3. Integration of women in all fields is a essential element to implement the global Platform. So, it is need to enhance researches, gender training courses and mainstreaming into laws and policies making process.

C. Commitments to further action and initiatives:

6- At the Beijing Conference, Vietnamese Government committed 2 major matters:

- The commitment to implement the development strategy for the advancement of Vietnamese women to the year 2000 including 10 concrete objectives. This strategy was announced informally at the Conference and submitted to the UN General Secretary.
- The Commitment to the Global Platform.

Right after the Beijing Conference, the Government sent a direction to the NCFAW and concerned agencies to carry out these 2 commitments.

7- Commitment of the Government to the Beijing Platform for Action

In order to implement the Beijing Platform for action and the National Development Strategy, the Government on 4 October, 1997 adopted the National Plan of Action for the

Advancement of women by the year 2000 with 11 specific objectives reflecting the 12 critical areas contained in the Global Platform including:

- Objective 1: Create job opportunities, increase income, contribute to poverty alleviation and hunger eradication, and improve the quality of life for women.
- Objective 2: Create equal opportunities for women in education, training and in improving their educational level in all areas.
- Objective 3: Improve health care for and protection of women and children.
- Objective 4: Enhance the role and position of women in leadership mechanism and decision making.
- Objective 5: Protect and promote women's rights and facilitate women's participation in social activities.
- Objective 6: Enhance the role of the family.
- Objective 7: Develop the role of women in the management of the environment and natural resources, contributing to the sustainable development and to the improvement of the living environment.
- Objective 8: Intensify communication activities to enhance the awareness of equal rights among men and women.
- Objective 9: Contribute to the preserving and strengthening of peace.
- Objective 10: Enhance the capacity of the national machinery for the advancement of Vietnamese women.
- Objective 11: Protect girl children and facilitate their development in all fields.

In comparison with the national strategy, in this plan, we added the objective 11 on girl child and the objective 6 on the family's role to meet the Vietnam contexts (See the Part III)

To implement the National Plan of Action, the Government has assigned the Ministry of Planning-Investment to work out and arrange the plan; the Ministry of Finance to balance the budget; the NCFAW to monitor the implementation and branches, authorities at all levels to implement the POA.

- Each ministry and branch, province developed its own plan of action and establish the machinery for the advancement of women.

- Annually, the national review conference, drawing experience and making the follow-up plan is held every year.

- The National plan of action is disseminated widely and training courses on gender in policy making are organized.

- Law and policies are revised step by step, making the CEDAW applicable in the country and creating conditions for the implementation of the POA; specially, completing the laws and policies on labour, land, civil, panel, marriage and family.

8- Initiatives:

- We are going to prepare the content and send senior officials to the review conference on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for action within the Asian-Pacific held by ESCAP as well as to the Special Meeting of UN General Assembly in June, 2000.

- Organizing the review conference on the National Strategy and National Plan of Action.

- Conducting collection of statistics on gender and women (based on the general survey on population held on 1 April, 1999) to public a book of 2000 Vietnamese Statistic.

- Developing the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women after the Year 2000 based on the orientation of the Beijing Conference Plus 5.

9- Vision for women's advancement and equality for women

Our wish for the women's equality and advancement in the new millennium as follows:

- The poverty will be eradicated; women are ensured fully material conditions in their life.

- There won't be unemployed women and women have the same income as men.

- All girl- children will be able to go to school

- Women will be able to take position as equivalent as men.

- There won't be violence, prostitution and trafficking in women and children.

- Men prefer women attitude will be considered as illegal. Women will be respected and paid more attention by the family and society in all fields.