

***WOMEN, GENDER RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT.
THREE CASE STUDIES IN VIETNAM***

**edited by
Huguette Dagenais and Dawn Currie**

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The English version of these research reports has been edited by Dr. Huguette Dagenais, retired Professor, Département d'anthropologie, Université Laval, Québec, and Dr. Dawn Currie, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

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Women, Gender Relations and Development.
Three Case Studies in Vietnam
Edited by Huguette Dagenais and Dawn Currie

PRESENTATION

This CD brings together the English versions of three original research reports stemming from the second phase (2002-2005) of “Enhancing Capacity to Engender Research”, a Canada-Vietnam cooperation project between the Université Laval, Québec, and the Institute of Anthropology, Hanoi, conducted in Vietnam since 1999 with the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. Professor Huguette Dagenais, Département d’anthropologie, Université Laval, and Dr. Do Thi Binh, Senior Researcher, Institute for Family and Gender Studies, acted respectively as Director and Co-director of the project, with the collaboration of Dr. Dawn Currie, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia.

The reports on this CD present the results of case studies carried out by the project’s Vietnamese participants working in three interdisciplinary and multi-institutional teams. For both their research and report writing, the participants have benefited from the collaboration of the project’s team of senior researchers and tutors composed of Professor Huguette Dagenais, Dr. Do Thi Binh, and Professor Dawn Currie.

Conducted in three different regions, each bearing on different aspects of Vietnam’s development and analysing these realities from the standpoint of women and gender relations, the case studies illustrate the rapid social and economic changes happening in this country since the beginning of *Doi Moi* in the middle of the 1980s and the profound impact, both positive and negative, these changes have had on the daily lives of Vietnamese people. As the reports show, the impact of *Doi Moi* is complex and at times contradictory; the extent and the pace of change are not uniform either. While creating new and often welcomed opportunities, notably for women through a massive increase in their income generating activities, by far the process has not eliminated inequalities between men and women, nor between regions and ethnic groups.

In Nhu Quynh Town in Van Lam District, Hung Yen Province, Nguyen Phuong Thao, Ha Thi Thanh Van, and Pham Thi Ly studied a case of rapid industrialization and urbanization occurring in a rural area situated 20 kilometers outside Hanoi. Using qualitative methods and concentrating on married women, the research team investigated changes in income-generating activities among three categories of rural women – factory workers, farmers and businesswomen – and the impact these occupational changes have had on these women’s income and social role and position, particularly in their families. Their study documents the Vietnamese practice of land-rights transfer to factories in exchange for commitment papers procuring industrial employment to local people – in this case study, women – who thus have shifted from farming to employment in the new large factories. The study also documents the less eventful, but nonetheless considerable, transformations occurring through this process among those who have remained farmers. Notably, these women have shifted from rice as their main crop to large-scale subsidiary crops and animal husbandry in response to, as the authors write, “the increasing need for food products as a result of a soar in the number of workers and immigrants to the town and the emergence of more and more shops and restaurants”. This report shows as well how and why the group of self-employed women entrepreneurs has benefited economically the most from this economic surge. In spite of the limitations of the study underlined by the research team, this small-scale qualitative research permits readers to clearly see and better understand the contrasts, complexities and paradoxes that characterize the rapid urbanization of rural areas in Vietnam occurring over the last two decades and its pronounced impact on women’s lives.

In contrast to the above case study, Tran Thi Kim Xuyen and Nguen Thi Hoa conducted their research in Ho Chi Minh City as a large commercial and industrial metropolis. In District 8, the pace of urbanization has accelerated noticeably over the last 15 years, with the establishment of many State-run and private production units that attract poor migrants from rural areas all over Vietnam. Realizing how little research on migration within Vietnam has taken gender into consideration, and that even less has focused on female teenage migrants – apart from their involvement in trafficking and prostitution – the two researchers decided to address that knowledge gap. In District 8, they concentrated on female teenage migrants working in Ward 3, a typical ward in terms of experiencing rapid urbanization. Given the large number and variety of production and commercial units in its informal sector, as well as the availability of low-cost

rooms for rent, Ward 3 is particularly attractive to young women from poor rural families unable to find work in their home villages and lacking professional training. These young women move to the City to look for non-agricultural low-skill jobs “suitable” to them, as they say, and permitting them to send money home to their families in the countryside. The two researchers interviewed in-depth 22 girls aged from 14 to 18 years. They also observed some of their participants’ workplaces and lodging facilities, in order to analyse the living and working conditions in which these rural girls try to adapt to their new urban environment. Together, these qualitative methods allowed study participants to express their own points of view and aspirations. As a result, this case study sheds light on the economic (and sometimes sexual) exploitation of many young female migrants, as well as their difficult material and psychological situations. At the same time, despite these difficulties, this research shows the vital financial contribution migrant girls make to impoverished families and communities in rural areas, and thus to Vietnam society as a whole.

The third report documents the unique situation of ethnic minorities living in highland regions of Vietnam, which are isolated from the fast economic growth and effervescent city life of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The research site for this case study is Hong Ha commune, one of the 21 mountainous communes of A Luoi District, Thua Thien-Hue province, situated 50 km from Hue in Central Vietnam. Here Hoang Thi Sen, Nguyen Thi My Trinh and Le Van An studied the Ktu, who form the largest ethnic minority of the Hong Ha commune and of several provinces in Central Vietnam. Previous research in Hong Ha has shown that women have limited access to land, credit and technical information. The three researchers decided to provide an in-depth look at this situation in order to identify factors that account for the situation of Ktu women. Their case study explores how changes in productive activities and livelihoods among the Ktu, brought about by Liberation in 1975 as well as national policies adopted over the last decades, have impacted on Ktu women’s access to land. Regarding land-use rights, data generated with Ktu women and men through focus-group discussions and personal interviews show that traditional practices favouring sons over daughters in land inheritance, and men over women as heads of households remain important factors in Ktu women’s disadvantageous position. Both practices give men priority access to and control over land and credit. Single, separated and divorced women in particular are negatively affected by these practices, which are restricting access to

credit for these women who need to develop their own productive activities to survive, but cannot borrow from conventional credit institutions under their own name as they are neither financially solvent nor recognized officially as heads of households. The authors examined how the micro-credit schemes designed for precisely these women work in reality. Their research shows the empowering effects of these credit schemes for women in the eyes of their community and in men-women relationships in households. However, the report also demonstrates structural links between women's access to land and credit and their lower level of schooling, lack of knowledge of the national language and, as a consequence, limited access to the technology and information that women so desperately need. This report ends with concrete recommendations to the Vietnamese government, local authorities and development staff on policies and practices to improve Ktu women's access to basic development resources in terms of land, funds and education – resources that are necessary to survive in face of the rapid economic changes currently taking place in Vietnam.

Huguette Dagenais

Université Laval, November 2008

**UNDERSTANDING THE INCOME-GENERATING
ACTIVITIES OF VIETNAMESE RURAL WOMEN
IN THE PERIOD OF URBANIZATION
A Case Study of Nhu Quynh Town
in Van Lam District, Hung Yen Province**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Vietnam is experiencing rapid industrialization and modernization. There are now more than 600 urban areas of different categories in Vietnam. Urbanization took place rapidly in the 1990s, along with socio-economic changes during the same phase. In 1989, the proportion of urban dwellers was 19.7% of the total population; by 1999 the number of people living in urban areas accounted for 23.5% (Trinh Duy Luan *et al.*, 2002). Through urbanization, the labor force has changed and part of the population has been relocated; urban-patterned living styles emerge along with modernization of the infrastructure (Le Du Phong *et al.*, 2002). These changes include the establishment of new urban sites, resulting in new districts and wards in urban areas in Vietnam. Through extended urbanization, in which population and urban size rapidly increase, industrial and economic zones have become established as many joint-venture export-processing industrial zones have been built across the country.

The policy of urbanization in the “Socio-Economic Strategy for 2001-2010” (published in the *Report of the Central Party Executive Board*, 2001) stipulates guidelines for modernization as follows: Strongly promote industries and services in rural areas; establish industrial zones and sites in rural areas where villages with traditional occupations could have close links with domestic and export markets; relocate enterprises involving exportation in the sectors of garment production, leather work, shoe making, etc. and agricultural product processing from urban to rural areas; launch policies to lure investment from all sectors for the development of industries and services in rural areas; as agricultural labor shifts into other occupations, increase cultivatable land fund for remaining farmers.

Extended urbanization in Vietnam presently creates inevitable consequences, including urban land expansion while agricultural land decreases as a result of new building projects, population growth, and the emergence of employment-related issues for farmers. These tendencies result in

changes in land-use practices. Large-scale development rapidly narrows agricultural land because land is partly recollected and turned into construction sites by the Government (including joint-venture industrial areas, with export-processing factories). Some land is sold by people who migrate to other places and used to build houses or open businesses. In fact, through this change in land use, agricultural land is turned into industrial, trading, service and housing land. In general, the efficiency of land-use is increased through this process, but some farmers may be disadvantaged as they lose their farmland and as a consequence have to change their livelihood.

Urbanization thus brings both positive and negative impacts on employment and income. On the positive side, urbanization helps laborers to change their income-generating activities from agricultural work with a low income to new work with more security and a higher income. However, in order to receive these benefits laborers must have some training so that they have the qualifications and skills appropriate to their new work in this new environment. Urbanization can also have a negative impact on employment and income for some of the population due to their loss of agricultural land. Importantly, urbanization also results in changes in labor division by sex. Women are likely to be vulnerable during urbanization as they are constrained in terms of opportunities to choose alternative income-generating activities. Although national renovation towards a socialist-oriented market economy has brought a lot of opportunities and advantages to the general population, it remains to be seen whether female farmers living in newly urbanized areas benefit from the establishment of industrial zones and joint-venture enterprises. Moreover, will changes in their economic activities lead to changes in gender relations? Do these changes empower women? How do they transform women's family roles? These types of questions shape the current study.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Women's Empowerment

In Vietnam, as in other countries in the world, men and women are not socially equal. To achieve the goal of gender equality, empowerment for Vietnamese women is necessary. "Empowerment" begins when people are conscious of their needs and interests, but also aware of constraints on their capacities and the means to manage their lives. To become empowered, people must be able to overcome these constraints in order to take control over their lives. In achieving such a goal,

women and men – whether representing individuals, groups or organizations – will not only demand formal gender equality and gender equity, but also the capacity building in terms of the perceptions, attitudes and activities that are needed in order to exercise those rights. “Women’s empowerment” as the grounding for gender-sensitive research thus brings with it recommendations to ensure gender equity and to improve the status of women in society (Le Ngoc Hung, 2005).

1.2.2. Relevant Studies

With regard to the employment of female workers in export-processing factories, Linda Lim (1990) notes that many studies on employment of women in joint ventures have applied an erroneous methodology by viewing women as a homogeneous group with static experiences. On the basis of few available data, the stereotype of poverty-stricken “Third World women” suffering low wages and enduring wretched working conditions through ruthless exploitation by multinational companies has been created and maintained. In reality, however, the experiences of women vary and their working conditions have changed over the years. Empirical studies show that women export factory workers typically do not come from the poorest segments of society usually found in the rural areas, but from families located in relatively prosperous urban areas or families with sufficient resources to educate women and/or to finance their migration to cities from rural locations. These women are motivated by social and cultural as well as economic factors, and they typically are accorded more respect and decision-making power in their households because of their contribution to the family income. They are more likely to be better off than their counterparts lacking this employment.

Studying the relationship between women’s paid work and their empowerment, Christine Koggel (2003) argues that women’s empowerment, when considered in terms of voice, social position, and independence, depends on many factors other than employment. Amongst those factors is the location of the workplace. She asks whether women are working inside or outside their families, in informal or formal sectors. Are they still responsible for housework while engaging in income-generating activities? Do other family members take control over their income? According to Koggel, how women’s paid work impacts on their empowerment also depends on local gender norms. She uses as an example Maria Mies’ analysis of women lace-makers in Narsapur, India.

For lace-making workers, caste and gender operate to sustain beliefs about women's work that undermine their status and power in the private sphere. Specifically, women's work in the production of lace is seen as a "leisure activity" with low earnings. Remarkably, the products as well as earnings from women's labor fall under men's control. The gendered division of household labor, together with the conception that lace making is a "leisure activity" rather than a job, means that women lack control over their time, working conditions and even their earnings. In reality, the women devote six to eight hours per day for lace making in confined spaces with poor lighting and little pay. Moreover, this "leisure activity" is considered suitable for women's position in a caste system that encourages women's seclusion in the family as a status symbol. These women are perceived by others, and perceive themselves, as being in a higher position compared to poor peasants or agricultural laborers. These local beliefs about gender and caste, together with women's isolation, hinder improvement in the working conditions for lace-makers. They also encourage the women themselves to cling to symbols of their higher position, "even though women agricultural laborers of lower castes earn 'considerably more in the course of a year than the lace workers'" (Mies, 1982, p. 15 in Koggel, 2003, p. 170). From this research questions are raised whether changes in the economic contribution of women necessarily lead to improvements in gender relations. More specifically, what kinds of conditions are associated with what kinds of improvements for women?

In their exploration of earning activities and women's empowerment, Tahire Erman, Sibel Kalaycioglu and Helga Rittersberger-Tilic (2002) presume that participation in economic activities is a basic element in the process of women's empowerment. Paid employment makes women's voices more important in their families and renders women, to some extent, economically independent from men. This independence, in turn, helps women become more self-confident. It gives them more rights in decision-making in their families and promotes the sharing of housework. It also facilitates "class consciousness" and collective activities for women (Gordon, 1996 cited in Erman *et al.*, 2002). Empirical studies in parts of the South (Afshar, 1998; Das and Gupta, 1995; Gordon, 1996 quoted in Erman *et al.*, 2002), however, show that women's participation in income-generating activities does not necessarily help empower women. Here culture, as a middle factor, plays a significant role. In many patriarchal cultures, income-generating activities by women can be seen as an extension of their traditional responsibilities.

As a result, their economic contributions and achievements are not fully acknowledged (Erman, 2001; White, 1994, cited in Erman *et al.*, 2002). In brief, it is safe to say that the constraints of patriarchy may be too deeply rooted to be overcome (Gordon, 1996 cited in Erman *et al.*, 2002) by the single economic factor of women's participation in income-generating activities.

Regarding the impact of market economies on gender issues, Lourdes Beneria (2003) affirms the relationship between economic changes and modifications in gender relations. She claims that the period of economic transition has transformed the relationship between women and markets, in turn influencing both gender relations and roles and therefore changing the meaning of gender. According to Beneria, the market may exert positive impacts on both women and men, through for example the collapse of the patriarchal tradition supporting arranged marriages. It may also emancipate women from a gendered division of labor that places a larger burden on women's shoulders. At the same time, she notes that the market also fuels gender-based discrimination and constrains individual freedom and collective security.

As described above, urbanization and industrialization have been taking place in Vietnam in the context of the new market economy and open-door policies, resulting in the establishment of many export-processing and open economic zones. This context is a common path to industrialization in many countries in the region. During the past 10 years, many studies on the employment and working conditions of women, who form the major workforce in joint-ventures, have been conducted by the General Labor Federation of Vietnam, the Research Center on Female Labor, and the Center for Family and Women Studies. However, there are very few studies touching upon employment of rural women who are now living in new urbanized areas in association with the establishment of industrial zones and the building of joint-venture enterprises. Luu Phuong Thao (1996) draws attention to a variety of obstacles on the job-hunting path of women who have lost land to the establishment of export-processing zones and industrial parks. These obstacles include lack of qualifications and skills, low education, being deemed "over-aged" for labor recruitment into export-processing zones, and the lack of capital for vocational training. Luu notes that:

Rural women enter the industrial-urban society, while lacking all three capitals: economic capital (e.g. property and revenue), social capital (social relation networks) and cultural capital (diplomas, certificates, educational attainment).

They are peasants who no longer have land to do farming. They are laborers who have very little education. Their social space is limited within their community, village or commune. They lack social relations for better employment. Their only property is their labor strength, but they have no job to do (Luu, 1996: 56).

According to an assessment by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), “If someone has labor strength as their only property, but is unemployed, or if someone lives in a rural area but has no land to carry out cultivation, that person is considered poor” (Sai Gon Giai Phong Newspaper, 25 May 1992).

Tran Dan Tam (1997) argues that, in vigorously urbanized areas like Ho Chi Minh City, the employment rate of male laborers is lower than that for female, and the unemployment rate of men is higher than that for women. According to Nguyen Thi Hoa (1997), there are many employment opportunities for rural women in vigorously urbanized areas because of newly built industrial zones and export-processing enterprises. However, in order to take advantage of the new opportunities that accompany economic development, rural women face many challenges including their low education, lack of skills, and lack of social relations for business and job development. Women often end up in unstable jobs with low wages in the informal sector, since they are forced to accept low paid jobs in order to survive.

A socio-economic survey in Phu Thuong Ward (Trinh Duy Luan, 1997) points out difficulties faced by many households in changing their livelihood and/or employment, including low educational attainment and skills, lack of capital for business and service expansion, underdeveloped infrastructure in the ward that discourages investment, and lack of self-motivation in business development. Do Minh Khue *et al.* (1998) found that, despite these problems, 33.8% of the households in their study had at least one member who had changed their job. People in these households had shifted mainly from agricultural work to services, small businesses or handicraft production work. Some households did not want to abandon their farmland, considering agricultural production to be a sustainable economic base and a necessary ground for the preservation of traditional cultural values. Some households that held their agricultural land did farm work perfunctorily or hired others to do it in order to keep the land, hoping to get some compensation in the future. However, households who did only farm work

fell into difficulties because, although they had labor power, they did not know how to do other jobs to earn a living.

Comparing the opportunity and possibility for occupational change between women and men in Phu Thuong, Nguyen Phuong Thao (2001) found that women change their income-generating activities more often than men, considering both full-time and part-time jobs. Most women change from agricultural work to employment in the service and trade sectors in one of two patterns: they either develop new occupations on the basis of local traditional occupations or create completely new occupations. The occupational shifts in Phu Thuong were influenced by many socio-economic and individual factors. However, there are differences in the opportunity and the possibility to change jobs between different groups of women, as well as between women and men. Age and education are two factors that affect the occupational shift of women and men equally. Higher age (36 to 50 years-of-age compared to 25 to 35 years-of-age) and higher education (graduating with at least secondary school) are positive factors for changes in employment of both women and men but family situation (such as marital status and the number of children) does not have the same impact on women and men. A woman with a husband and fewer children is more advantaged than a widow or a separated woman with children.

Concerning the issue of occupational shift of farmers who loose their land (Nguyen Huu Minh *et al.*, 2003), research shows that it is generally not easy for these people to move into other income-generating activities. Changes in land-use purposes have transformed the traditional function of communes in the outskirts of Hanoi. While once acting as the main source of food supply for Hanoi, these communes have become a place for high-tech industrial production and urban services. These activities require a certain level of education and laborers must be trained in order to meet recruiting requirements. Due to the fast pace of urbanization, however, many residents in the outskirts did not have enough time to prepare for such dramatic socio-economic change; thus, many cannot meet recruiting requirements set by the enterprises and institutions located in their area, resulting in high rates of unemployment, particularly among laborers over 40 years-of-age.

In Vietnam, most studies on occupational shifts have been conducted at the level of the household rather than of women individually. However, to our knowledge, up to the present no study has focused on the interaction between changes in economic activities and changes in gender relations. Thus our research aimed to not only investigate changes in income-generating activities of women in the process of urbanization, but also to examine the impact of these changes on the roles and position of the women in the family. Data collection was conducted in Nhu Quynh town, Van Lam district, Hung Yen province, during September and October 2003.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHOD

2.1. Research Objectives

Our research objectives were to investigate changes in income-generating activities of rural women living in areas of rapid urbanization and the impact these changes have on women's role and position in the family. In particular, the study explores the process of women's empowerment. It intends to answer the following specific questions: what are the categories of income-generating activities of women as Vietnam experiences rapid urbanization? What are the advantages and disadvantages for women while participating in these activities? What are the causes for changes in income-generating activities? What are the implications of those changes in the women's lives?

2.2. Research Site

Twenty kilometers away from Hanoi to the Southeast, Nhu Quynh town was established in 1997. Covering an area of 650 hectares of natural land, 321.8 hectares of Nhu Quynh's territory are reserved for farming. The town is composed of five villages and one administrative and commercial center with a total of 3,000 households. Rice is the major cultivation. The average production is 12 tons per hectare or 570 kilograms per capita. In 2002, the value of agricultural production reached 14,749 million VND; handicraft and small industry, 18,668 million VND; and services 9,147 million VND. The average annual income is above six million VND per capita. Wealthy, upper-middle-class, middle-class and poor households account for 17.5, 33.0, 45.6 and 3.9 per cent of the population respectively. There are no households living in hunger. The majority of the villages are classified as "cultural villages" (i.e. villages having good/humane

life-styles and organization). As the most developed town of the Van Lam district today, Nhu Quynh experienced a complex expansion in terms of occupations.

During the early years of building a socialist society in the 1960s, Nhu Quynh was an agricultural commune consisting of five villages, where farming was the only occupation, and one business center, whose residents engaged in trading. The business center, born under French colonialism, was well known for its busy economic activities with the presence of Ghenh market. This rural market is located in the area of Highway No. 5, near bus and railway stations, making it very convenient for the trading of household commodities amongst villages in the district. At the end of 1990, the Ghenh market was expanded and renamed the Nhu Quynh market. In the mid-1990s, Nhu Quynh market was once again renamed as the Trade and Service Center of Nhu Quynh, offering various kinds of commodities.

In Minh Khai village, farming was the only occupation of the villagers during the time of cooperatives from the 1960s until 1986. Today, the villagers engage in various handicrafts, industries and services. During the 1970s, some households in Minh Khai village invested in the collection of plastic waste from other provinces and cities, sorting it and selling it to producers in other places. During the 1980s, the heads of this waste-collecting industry cooperated with each other to buy the necessary equipment to establish a waste-recycling group. In Minh Khai village at the time of our research there are 102 plastic processing machines, together with a labor force of 700-800 workers, out of which 300 are local people with the remainder coming from other villages in the district. There is a labor-selling market in the village gathering place in the morning to supply laborers to plastic-processing establishments and households in need of farming employees. The job of plastic collection and processing attracts the participation of about two thirds of the households in the village. The other third is sustained through farming work.

During the time of government subsidies, other villages of the town developed occupations such as tailoring, embroidering, knitting, etc. so that farmers could have some extra income. However, those occupations could not be maintained due to the vanishing of the Eastern Europe market at the beginning of 1980s. At present, Ngo Xuyen is the only village whose inhabitants engage solely in farming because it has no land for industrial zone establishment and lacks favorable

conditions for the development of other occupations. Meanwhile, people in other villages do not only farm, but also engage in manufacture, small-scale trade and services.

The year 1998 is a landmark of Nhu Quynh town due to the establishment of an industrial zone. At present, 26 domestic and alien joint-venture projects are carried out in this zone, employing from 300 to 500 local laborers each year as well as workers from other areas. The total number of local workers employed in enterprises of leather and shoe export, cattle-feed processing, instant noodle production, and garment manufacture since 1998 is about 2,500 people. Of these, about 95 per cent is female. The area of farmland that the Nhu Quynh population transferred to the industrial zone is 50 out of the total of 322 hectares. Ngoc Quynh and Minh Khai are two villages that have transferred the most land. For each transferred land portion, in addition to compensation fixed according to a government tariff (for example, 9-12 million VND per *sao* or 300m²), the land owner got a commitment to be recruited for work in the factories located on the transferred land. Given the compensation money, many households have “led a new life”. Many were able to build a house, buy valuable articles such as motorbikes, televisions, wooden furniture, etc. while other households had the capital to enter into business. Some households also benefited from selling their commitment papers ensuring factory recruitment preference. Given these benefits, some local people favored the transfer of their farmland to the industrial zone.

Overall, the birth of Nhu Quynh industrial zone has had a great impact on local economic growth and everyday life. The local infrastructure has been improved; traffic routes have been upgraded; markets, *crèches* and kindergardens now exist in every village. Remarkably, no one is unemployed in Nhu Quynh town. Land transfer is assumed to have been a motivation for local people to develop new occupations, with the result that they have been able to increase their income and improve their living standards.

2.3. Data Collection

The current study employed qualitative methods. Most of the previous research on occupational shifts among women during urbanization has been conducted using quantitative methods of data collection, limiting the identification of new issues and the ability to explain the causes of changes. By using qualitative methods, researchers can be flexible in collecting data to unearth

new issues and identify changes in a detailed manner. Qualitative methods are especially effective in differentiating full time and part time jobs (i.e. those creating major and extra income); measuring the extent of changes and degree of satisfaction in income and employment; and exploring the implications of changes in economic activities in women's everyday lives. It also needs to be remarked that although the subjects of this study are women as members of households, the study's objective was aimed at understanding the perception of women themselves, rather than of their households.

Accordingly, this study collected data through the five following methods:

1. Examination of local documents and official texts: The research team collected statistics and operation reports of the local People's Committee and Women's Union in order to have specific data on the socio-economic situation of Nhu Quynh town.
2. Interviews with key informants of the locality: The research team held discussions with representatives of the local Communist Party's Committee, Peoples' Council, Fatherland's Front, Cooperatives, and Women's Union aimed at understanding Nhu Quynh's specific urbanization context. These interviews provided general information about the town's socio-economic situation and income-generating activities of the local population, particularly of women, during different periods of the town's development. As well, these informants were able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of employment and income-generating activities for women during urbanization.
3. On-site observation: The research team observed four out of the five villages of the town and the administrative and commercial center. This observation provided information about production activities, different kinds of occupations in the village, and women's role in economic activities. Villages where observation was carried out were also those selected as sites for in-depth interviews and group discussions.
4. Interviews with local women: The research team carried out 30 in-depth interviews with local women in order to identify income-generating activities of rural women during urbanization and explore the relationship between economic changes and women's family lives.

5. Group discussions with local women: The research team held four group discussions during two different phases of the study. Participants in the group discussions were married women between 30 and 50 years-of-age engaged in various jobs and having different economic situations. Two group discussions were held to initiate the research, with each group composed of six or seven women, and conducted after the interviews with town leaders in order to identify issues relevant to the investigation. Questions raised in these discussions included: What are income-generating activities of women for the time being? Which activities have appeared after the establishment of the town and the industrial zone? What are the advantages and disadvantages for women of participating in various economic activities? Why are there changes in women's income-generating activities? How do these changes influence women's everyday lives? The two other group discussions, with each group composed of seven women, were held following the in-depth interviews of local women. The purpose of the latter group discussions was to clarify and elaborate information collected from individual interviews. These discussions helped differentiate between important income-generating activities and full time jobs, identify advantages and disadvantages of different occupations, explore the subjective and objective conditions that act as an impetus for change, and understand changes in women's role and position in both their economic activities and their families. All group discussions were recorded, a process that did not appear to have an adverse impact on the discussion atmosphere: discussion took place in an exciting and open manner, thanks to the friendly, women-only environment.

2.4. Research Samples

The research team conducted in-depth interviews with 30 married women in three villages, namely Ngoc Quynh, Ngo Xuyen, Minh Khai and the center of Nhu Quynh. These villages and center were selected because each represent distinct features of different situations, that is: having transferred land, having farming as the basic occupation, or having developed new handicraft and trading establishments. Selected women were working in one of three different occupational groups: factory workers, farmers and small business entrepreneurs (i.e. those working in manufacture, trading and services). These are the major occupational groups that women in Nhu Quynh occupy. Married women were selected because the research aims to study the relationship between changes in economic activities and gender relations between wives and husbands.

The research samples thus comprise three groups:

1. Factory workers: There are only three women in this group because the research targeted married women, while most of the local factory workers are from 18 to 25 years-of-age and unmarried.
2. Farmers: This group includes 10 women from either a farming village or other villages that have no or only a small amount of farmland transferred for industrial development.
3. Small business entrepreneurs: This group includes 17 women. Some were working in manufacture, such as producing nylon bags, recycling plastic waste; others were trading, such as selling groceries, flowers, foodstuff, and motorbikes; and the remaining were involved in services, such as hairdressing, tailoring, and hotel or restaurant work. The number of women in this group is higher than in the two other groups, reflecting the fact that, at present, these jobs constitute the major income-generating activities for women in Nhu Quynh.

All respondents are above 31 years-of-age except one factory worker who is 28. Most of the participants have attained upper-primary or secondary education. They have two or three children. The three women who have primary education only belong to the trading subgroup. Those who are above 40 years-of-age are mainly in the group of farmers and among traders.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1. Women Factory Workers

The group of female workers employed in factories includes three women: a service worker who carries out odd jobs; an electrical component fitter; and a garment maker. All three live in Nhu Quynh, and range from 28 to 38 years-of-age. Two of the women each have two children of school age. The other woman has one child who is one year old. One of the women has finished the 8th grade, while the other two have completed secondary education. All three husbands work outside the agricultural sector: one is a driver, one is engaged in electrical accessory trading, and the third is a *xe om* (motorbike taxi) driver.

The three women became factory workers by different means. Mrs. A., who is 38 years-of-age with two children, does factory housekeeping. She bought a commitment paper to be recruited into the factory, given that her family was not able to sell land. Due to her age, Mrs. A. may do only odd jobs like preparing drinking water or cleaning the floor rather than working on the assembly line. Mrs. B., 28 years old with one child, is an electrical component fitter. She also bought a commitment paper to be recruited by the factory. Thanks to her younger age, Mrs. B. works on the assembly line. Mrs. C., 31 years-of-age with two children, is a garment worker. Because Mrs. C.'s family had land to sell to the factory, she had preference during recruitment.

3.1.1. Employment, Income and Living Standards

It is noteworthy that all three women claimed to feel happy with their present work when considering work intensity and income. They each emphasized the convenience of their present job. For example, they mentioned that their workplace is not far from their home; that their job is not hard and is suitable for their health status and ability; working hours are scheduled; the work itself is officially regulated; their income corresponds to their labor efforts; and regular wages eliminate worry about the weather, as when they were doing farming. As stated by Mrs. C., who transferred all her cultivable land to the factory:

The income I get from working for the company is not much higher, but our work is more comfortable than working at home. We have work to do everyday. We just have to work regularly and we then get our wage without worrying about the weather as before, when we were doing small business or doing farming. I like my work now, because it is suitable to my health status. The work is not hard and the income is secure.

One problem, however, is that these factory workers who were once farmers do not seem to be accustomed to working by shifts, as required in factories. All three agree that they are no longer free to organize their own working schedule. It is not easy for them to request a day-off, even when their family needs them. In the factory, women work eight to nine hours per day depending on the workload, six days per week.

These women are satisfied with their wages, which range from 500 to 600 thousand VND a month and can be increased by 200 thousand VND if they work overtime (two hours a day). In

addition, workers receive a daily free-of-charge lunch that ordinarily costs 4,000 VND. On holidays they are given a bonus of 200 to 500 thousand VND. On the negative side, these factory workers have not been able to enjoy the rights and protections guaranteed by Labor Law, such as annual vacations, social and health insurance, periodical medical examinations and sick leave. The reason given to them by managers is that, because the enterprises are newly established, they do not yet have the ability to implement those policies.

Comparing income from their previous farming work to their present factory wages, Mrs. A. comments:

While doing farming, especially in growing vegetable or fruit, an experienced farmer who knows when is the most favorable time to start the cultivation and how to take care of it will be able to earn a higher income as compared to working for the factory. For example, if she grows one *sao* of melon, after 3 months she can get 3 million VND. Meanwhile, if she works for the factory, she gets only 500 or 600 thousand VND a month. However, many farmers cannot do that well.

In addition to their full time work in the factory, most female workers have to take on extra work at home to generate additional income. The additional income-generating activity can be the same as what they did before, such as farming, animal husbandry or alcohol brewing. Some workers also generate money from lending their farmland to others, since they no longer have time for farming. For those factory workers who carry out additional paid work at home, the extra money they earn is often higher than their wage. In fact, their households are comparatively rich. At the same time, households that no longer have agricultural land or contain young children that require their mother's constant care have a living standard that is similar to other households in the town. In either case, however, like other households in Nhu Quynh, the living standard of our three factory workers' households is much better than in the past. They have rebuilt their houses and bought basic household equipment such as TV sets, refrigerators, fans, electric cookers, motorbikes, etc. Their meals are better than before. The workers' families enjoy meat, fish, eggs and fruit for dessert. The female workers themselves have more time to take care of their family, as well as themselves. Mrs. B. says:

We have such a secure job now, so I have more time to take care of my family and myself as well. My health is also better and I feel more comfortable. Before, although I was sick or I had a stomachache, I still had to accomplish my work, because I was afraid I could not do it, if it rained the next day. Thus, I did not have favorable conditions to have medical examination as now.

Overall, the factory workers' families seem to be adopting a new lifestyle. Workers, particularly the younger ones, buy breakfast to eat before going to work. They have lunch at the factory so that dinner in the evening is the only time of family gathering. Also, the spiritual life of female workers has improved considerably when compared with when they were farming. Women no longer worry about farming and finding the time to go to the market to sell or buy things. They now have time to relax and participate in collective activities. They feel happier and more satisfied with their life, as expressed by Mrs. A.:

My spiritual life has been obviously improved. I have more free time and everything has become more comfortable. In the evening, I have time to watch TV, talk with my husband and children or visit my neighbors. I also have time to participate in activities of the Women's Union. And simply put, I can go to bed earlier.

3.1.2. Impacts of Changes in Income-generating Activities on Women Factory Workers' Role and Position in the Family

As mentioned above, as well as their factory jobs, female workers usually have extra income-generating work at home that brings even higher income than their factory wage. Since they often do this extra work together with their spouses or other members in the family, it is difficult to distinguish who earns more, the husband or the wife. If the husband is also a paid laborer, when making comparisons on income, only a wage-based comparison is made. Otherwise, even though women are in charge of economic activities at home such as cultivation and raising livestock, those contributions are typically not taken into account. One result is that the women themselves do not consider their work at home as an important achievement or as extra effort. As stated by Mrs. C.: "In terms of earnings, my husband gets more than me, but I have to look after the children so we do not distinguish who earns more. I am mainly responsible for animal husbandry, but the capital for that economic activity is from the savings of my husband's electric equipment trading; it is, thus, his contribution."

When the wife can earn money by working outside the household, there is "a new atmosphere in the family". Women's economic contributions are more visible and easier to recognize. Women's wages are now seen as "their own" and this money is spent on specific expenses, such as daily food or school fees for children. These contributions are not as ambiguous as the income earned from extra work at home. However, despite their full time work at the factory and part time work

at home, women still shoulder the burden of all domestic affairs, a burden that consumes a great deal of their time and energy. In general, the participants think domestic work is their responsibility and, if the men sometimes do it, women see men's work as "kind help". As told by Mrs. A.: "I usually do it [the housework]. Only when I am busy does my husband give me a hand. Women still work much harder at home. Anyway, in my opinion, it is more reasonable for women to do housework".

Yet, the factory workers in our research claim that compared to previously, when engaged in farming, their husbands are now more helpful with housework. Mrs. A.: "As going out working for the factory, women today may be more relaxed. For example, in the morning, while I go to the market, my husband may help cook the rice, do the cleaning or washing". The major reason for such changes in domestic routines is that because women must be at work at a fixed time, their working time is no longer flexible and the husband *must* help his wife prepare the breakfast for the family before both husband and wife go to work and the children go to school.

One of the most important indices of women's position in the family is their participation in domestic decisions. There is no evidence that paid employment entitles the three factory workers in our research to a greater voice at home. However, since these women have been factory workers for only one or two years, it may be that there has not been sufficient time to bring such an important change. And yet, findings from our study show that in the families where wives work in factories, there are discussions between the husband and the wife over crucial issues. In the final analysis, whether decisions are made jointly or by husbands and wives independently depends upon the nature of the decisions. As stated by Mrs. B.: "We both discuss with each other big domestic affairs and my husband is the final decision maker. Yet, in case of raising livestock and housework affairs, I am the decision maker because I am in full charge of those things. For example, to buy a refrigerator, I am the one who makes that decision." In the case of Mrs. A.:

Both of us discuss the issues to reach an agreement. We only take the decision when both of us agree. If one feels uneasy or reluctant, we will not make it. For example, it was my idea to go to work for the factory after my husband worked there. It was my husband who encouraged me to take a job in the factory, believing that factory work is easier than working at home. At first, I was reluctant [...], yet my husband encouraged me to go to work and worry about the housework later. He said it would take him a little time to get used to the change, but that after that

everything would be all right. At last, we came to the decision that I would go to work for the factory.

It is not clear whether it is the husband or the wife's responsibility to participate in community activities such as funerals, weddings, parents' meetings at school regarding the children's study records, as well as social gatherings in the village. In general it seems to depend on who has free time. Yet, in the case of public meetings it is more likely that husbands will attend because invitations are issued to the heads of households, who are generally assumed to be the husbands. Therefore, in comparison with men, women have less opportunity to raise their voices in the community.

In short, it is safe to conclude that these female factory workers are taking up a new life with many positive changes in their daily routines and in their awareness of gender inequality as well. They are pleased with their present work and income. They not only have a better material life but also a more harmonious spiritual one. Gender relations in the family have been improved in the spirit of equality. The women participate in decision-making concerning important family matters. Husbands also share some of the household tasks that in the past were believed to be women's responsibilities. It is still impossible, however, to conclude that the improvements in decision-making are the direct result of women's occupational shift to paid employment.

3.2. Women Farmers

The group of women farmers includes 10 women from three different villages: six from Ngo Xuyen, which concentrates on agricultural production and did not transfer land for industrial development; two from Ngoc Quynh, which transferred the most land to the new industrial zone; and two from Minh Khai, which transferred part of its land for industrial development but now relies heavily on small businesses such as recycling waste materials which is mainly done by women. The women in this group are between 27 and 49 years-of-age, but most of them are from 40 to 49 years old. They have on average from two to three children. Their educational qualifications range from lower secondary education (four women) to upper secondary education (six women).

3.2.1. Work Conditions, Income and Living Standards

Most of these women farmers do not do only agricultural work, but also nonagricultural work such as operating rice-mills, making soya curd, brewing alcohol, petty trading, and recycling waste materials. In addition to rice, farmers also grow flowers and different varieties of herbs, two products with high economic value that bring stable cash income although they are much harder to grow than rice. Farming households also breed cows, fowl and pigs. Some have very large-scale breeding, raising as many as 70 to 80 pigs. Mrs. D., for example, is a 34 year-old farmer with two children. She leases farmland and raises pigs. In order to do so, Mrs. D. hires farm help, paying them 300,000 VND per month and free meals. Waste from pig breeding is converted into biogas, providing needed fuel for the family and keeping the environment clean.

In the past, farmers grew only rice, different kinds of melon and grapefruit, and concentrated on small-scale pig breeding combined with wine brewing and small businesses at the market or with wasted material. Thus their income-generating activities have changed in terms of both production scale and methods. There have been changes in farming and breeding practices, expansion in production, and the introduction of new crop varieties so that farmers not only meet the needs of their family but have excess for the market as well. Some hire help or lease more land to carry out farming. Women have turned to growing vegetables instead of rice because this practice has higher economic effectiveness and fewer difficulties. However, not all farmers can grow vegetables because this practice depends on the location of their farmland. As explained by Mrs. E., who leases land for farming and raising livestock: “To grow vegetables we need high-located fields, a low-lying field is just suitable for rice-growing”. She also goes on to explain that vegetable growing is not completely for income but that “it is necessary for farmers to grow vegetables; in case there is shortage of food, we have something to eat”.

Women take on extra farming activities mainly because they have available time and want to have more money. However, they do not do the same work throughout their life. The kind of work they undertake changes according to women’s age and health, as well as the needs of the market. Most of the women who do extra work think that it is relatively hard for them, but accept it because, as Mrs. E. claims, “Only by working hard, do you have money, if not you cannot have it”. Similarly, Mrs. F who is 44 years-of-age with three children explains: “We do hard work to

have some more money, which enables us to attend parties when invited without worrying”. Mrs. F.’s household did not transfer land for factories. Her current farming activities include livestock breeding and alcohol making.

The women farmers in this study recite many advantages in doing agricultural work in Ngoc Quynh today. They note that there are ample opportunities to secure loans. They also claim that the food sources needed for raising livestock are abundant and of good quality. Product consumption in the new market economy is high, as mentioned by Mrs. G. who is 35 years-of-age with two children: “There are many workers so we can sell a lot of vegetables and earn more money”. As well, there are training classes about farming and breeding techniques. Traffic has become more convenient with improvements to the infrastructure of the district so that purchasing materials is easier. Women themselves have experience and knowledge about farming and breeding after many years of doing this work. Farmers who transferred land received enough money to lease other families’ land or invest in larger-scale production. The most important advantage according to the women farmers we interviewed, however, is that all family members are responsible for the work, especially the husband.

At the same time, women experience difficulties in farming due to weather conditions, epidemics, damage caused by insects or animals, inadequate irrigation, canals that are not regularly dredged, and unstable prices for their products. Overall they believe that the establishment of industrial zones and trade villages has also had a negative impact on agricultural production through environment and water pollution caused by smoke and water draining from factories, as well as from workshops in the area recycling wasted material. “There have been more rats since more factories were located here. This area used to be very tidy, and there were few rats. Now rats dig into the dike and badly damage it. Sewage from factories spoils farmland and makes it impossible to grow vegetables or rice”, says Mrs. G. The women have to find solutions to these problems, such as buying water pumps, drilling wells in their field, covering vegetables with pieces of plastic, making fences to prevent rats, and looking for new markets. All these solutions entail extra work.

Most of these women reported that growing flowers and vegetables provides them with a relatively stable income, which is considered their main income, while growing rice provides only needed food. Breeding does not bring farmers a daily income in the way that growing flowers and vegetables does, but yields a bigger return after four to six months. This helps farming households to accumulate capital to be used for production. “Growing rice gives a significantly higher income than growing vegetables. If the crop is good, we can harvest three quintals per crop on a two-*sao* field, while growing flowers, we will get 3-4 million a year and we will get one million a month from breeding because pigs quickly gain weight”, says Mrs. F. In general, women in agricultural work are pleased with their livelihoods. However, they indicate that they would change their jobs if they had an opportunity to have better ones. As noted by Mrs. H., who is 34 years-of-age with three children, “If there is lighter work with a higher income, I will take it, but I have not found any so I continue doing my work and develop it”. At the moment, Mrs. H., who did not transfer land for industrial development, raises livestock.

Overall, improvements in working activities have resulted in increases in women farmers’ income, which now varies from 1.5 million to 5 million VND a year. In rural areas, this income is relatively high. In fact, some farmers claim that their income is higher and more stable compared with that of factory workers. However, although women visibly contribute more to family income compared with their husbands, when asked, some of them modestly say that their contribution is the same as that of their husbands.

Women farmers’ lives have changed a lot compared with previous times. Their families not only have enough food, but they are able to build houses as well. Most families have built their own houses; some live in two-story houses. No woman farmer lives in a house made of leaves. Farming families in this study have better living standards than in the past, so that the majority of them enjoy relatively good living conditions. Households with an income considered average can buy modern equipment such as electric rice-cookers, fans, televisions, and some have motorbikes. Although their current lives present many difficulties, the women are overall satisfied with the results of their new living conditions. As told by Mrs. F.: “I have never dreamed of this before. I was wondering when my life would be better. I did not feel assured until I had my own house. Now I am much pleased with my present life”. As well, Mrs. I., who is 38

years-of-age with two children, tells us, “that’s enough for me, I feel so much satisfied and happy with my life”.

As life becomes stable and relatively satisfying in terms of material conditions, women farmers invest more in their children’s education. As noted by Mrs. F., education plays a very important role in life:

I work hard in order to build a better life for my children, so they do not have to work hard like their parents [...]. Despite difficulties, they must go to school, even when we are poor, we must borrow money to support their studies. I usually remind them that technology is very necessary, even for farming, without it we cannot do anything, so they must learn.

3.2.2. Impacts of Changes in Income-generating Activities on Women Farmers’ Role and Position in the Family

Findings from this research show that most women make decisions concerning agricultural work because they are involved in these activities. However, although female farmers are decision makers, they show their respect for their husbands’ authority. The women report that they discuss all decisions with their husbands, often asking for their suggestions “just to come to an agreement, however. I will decide at last because I directly do the work and I am responsible for my decision”, says Mrs. J. who is 49 years-of-age and has three children. Without land to transfer, she makes her livelihood through planting vegetables and flowers. Similarly, Mrs. E., who raises livestock and grows bean sprouts, explains: “I make decisions but I still discuss them with my husband. It is necessary to have discussion between husband and wife because you are not able to do the work alone”. Mrs. E. is 47 years-of-age and has two children. In cases where husbands are not involved in agricultural work (because they are officers, soldiers or work in other places), women decide on all aspects of the work. However, for some women in our study, deciding on all their own economic activities came only after a long period of suffering the domination of their husbands. As they now can show the ability to earn money, they have gained “genuine respect” from them.

In the past, when we had difficulties in finance, he decided what to do. Sometimes I learnt that his ideas were wrong but my opinions were not accepted. He said that I could not get involved, as I knew nothing about it. This remained for a long time, thus my family was so poor that we did not have anything but rice and vegetables for our meals. Then I decided to do small business at the market, from which I earn my own money, so my husband cannot treat me as before. When I was busy with

small children, he refused whatever I suggested, complaining that I was not able to do it,

remembers Mrs. K., 47 years-of-age, engaged in farming and breeding.

All decisions concerning other important family activities, such as education for the children, funeral or marriage arrangements, costly purchases, house repairs or construction, are discussed and agreed on by both the husband and wife. As mentioned above, there are some particular situations when the wife is capable of making decisions on her own but still asks for her husband's opinion to avoid being seen as looking down on him. This strategy reflects women's desire to nurture family harmony. Mrs. D., for example, cites a proverb: "A harmonious couple can dry up even the East Sea". She adds: "Sometimes, we don't have the same ideas as our husbands, but we still follow their decisions". However, in some families, the purchase of valuable assets is entirely in the hands of the husband. The household of Mrs. L., who is 39 years-of-age with two children, exchanged small fields to build a farmhouse for livestock-raising. She talks about the decision-making to buy the land to set up a farm: "It was my husband who decided. I wasn't involved in it. I'm supposed to agree with everything he decides, because he never discusses things with me. He buys things at his own will, and once he was cheated." As illustrated by her story, many rural women are still affected by male chauvinism and regard men to be the mainstay and thus to have the greatest say in the family. These women therefore tend not to get directly involved in decision-making. This cultural feature has impeded the achievement of equality between many rural men and women.

Women farmers in our study did not seem interested in community activities such as attending parents' meetings at school, public meetings, wedding or funerals, which they consider to be the responsibilities of their husbands. For the large part, women could spare no time for these activities that would take them away from their farm work or housework. Mrs. M., 27 years-of-age with two children, explains: "My husband goes to all village meetings if he's not away, and my mother goes to women's meetings for me, as I've always had my hands full".

Overall, the female farmers in our study have gained positive changes in their role and position in the family. They not only constitute one of the major income sources for their families, but most also play a major role in decision-making about their own income-generating activities. Their

material and spiritual lives have been significantly improved. It can be easily noticed that they are pleased with their present life and enthusiastic about their production activities, having in mind the thought that they are working hard for the benefits of their families.

3.3. Women Entrepreneurs in Small Trade, Production and Service Enterprises

We studied the lives of 17 women entrepreneurs operating small enterprises. Most of these women have finished high school, while a few are primary school graduates. The oldest is 56 years-of-age and the youngest 27. Each of the women's families has on average between four and five members. Their major income-generating activities vary, from operating small productive businesses such as making nylon parcels and bags or making things from wasted materials; engaging in petty trading, selling products such as groceries, flowers and foodstuff; operating service businesses with inns and motorbikes or working as hairdressers, tailors or food shop keepers. Two women are executive managers in their company.

3.3.1. Working Conditions, Income and Living Standards

Income-generation for this group of women is complex to study, because these women typically carry out at least two income-generating activities at the same time. As well, most of them have made significant changes during the past few years. For example, while some women used to be migrant laborers or worked in the state-run economic sector, restaurant services or wasted material collection, they are now self-employed in production, trading or service businesses. Other women in this group are continuing their previous work, but their products and services have been greatly diversified. In general, most of these women's enterprises are very small-scale. None, including managers and executives of their family companies, has ever had practical training even though their jobs require management knowledge, skills and capacity. Although they are doing many income-generating jobs and their income is high, some women in this group still own agricultural land that is often rented to others. Like Mrs. N., they do not want to do farm work anymore; she explains that they "cannot earn much from farm work because of rats and insects' destruction". Mrs. N., who is 44 years-of-age, has four children. Without land to transfer, she works in plastic waste processing and animal husbandry.

It is interesting that, although several women who continue farming earn their primary income from their new business, they believe that production, trading and service activities are just ‘extra’ work. One of the necessities for engaging in production, trading or service business is capital. The amount needed depends on the different occupations, with women in production requiring the most. According to Mrs. O., owner of a nylon bag production company, “a nylon bag making machine costs about 100 to 300 million VND”. Each woman has her own way to raise funds. Most of these women borrow money from relatives, friends or banks while a few accumulate money on their own since they do not want to put themselves into debt.

Most women entrepreneurs play two roles in their work: they are bosses and workers at the same time. Their working conditions have changed considerably. This is most obvious when looking at their methods of running their business (related to both input and output). In the past, most of them had to work very hard and faced risks all the time, yet their profits were not high. At present, those working in service usually make direct contact with their customers. Women in other subgroups typically make indirect contact via telephone, and transfer their goods through public transportation. The difference between women in the production subgroup and women in the other two subgroups is that most of the former used to travel around to buy wasted materials to sell to owners of production units in their local area. They have now become owners of their own production units, where they have two to four employees working for them. “Before, I also used to go all around to buy wasted materials in order to sell them to owners of production units here. Now, we [herself and her husband] hire four employees to work for us”, says Mrs. P., who runs a plastic waste recycler and also has farm land leased out.

As mentioned above, some women play two roles at the same time because they try to save money and to avoid risks: “I also take part in packing, delivering and selling bread”, explained Mrs. Q., a bakery owner and bakery worker with two children. Many women in these three subgroups thus have children and relatives or others working for them, paying wages from 300,000 to 800,000 VND per month. In contrast, women in the service subgroup rarely hire others because “it is a luxury”. Mrs. R., 42 years-of-age with four children, indicates: “what I earn is just enough to cover expenses of my household, I don’t want to waste money on hiring others”. Mrs. R. transferred land for industrial development and now runs a steam-rolled rice

pancake business. Furthermore, service work requires specialized skills so that hiring others is the last resort. “My customers want me myself to serve them, I may lose them if I hire others”, explains Mrs. S., a 35-year-old hairdresser and make-up worker as well as grocer with one child.

Women in the production subgroup have a number of advantages in the new market economy. For example, materials are abundant and easy to buy; as a result of better living standards, market demand is increasingly greater; it is easier to secure loans than in the past; and these workers can use machines in their production. Thanks to these favorable conditions, the competition between people engaged in the same production is not high, and there seems to be a certain social “order” even though there are many people making the same products. As Mrs. Q. asserts: “Every household has invested in machines. While doing packing, each person packs her own products. Each household has its own regular customers. If they come late, or if the price is not reasonable, we may sell our products to others”. According to Mrs. N., “There is no competition. In order to exist in the market, we have to make sure that our products are delicious, cheap and beautiful or else we cannot make profits. Only with the same amount of flour yet better quality could we gain the market”.

While enjoying the above-mentioned conveniences, women also face many difficulties, such as: receiving very little help from their husbands and children, bad health, limited time and skills, high working intensity, low income, insecure markets, costumers’ failures to pay debts, lack of experience in business accounting, unfavorable business locations, and the frequent drop-out of employees. With little variation, these problems are experienced by women in all three subgroups. Women try to solve them by borrowing money from their friends, gaining prestige in the eyes of their customers, being kind to hired laborers, buying more equipment, and even by “struggling” with customers when necessary. In a nutshell, these women are very persistent in overcoming all kinds of challenges. One characteristic that accounts for the sustainable development of their undertakings is their reliability. Many recognize the virtue in doing their work well: “While doing business, we should be honest”, says Mrs. T., a 47-year-old hired seller with five children. Mrs. T. had land transferred for industrial development. Along these lines, Mrs. U., a 46-year-old food shop owner with two children, maintained: “The price should be

competitive and we should make no discrimination in serving”. As well as operating her shop, Mrs. U. owns land that is leased out.

The majority of women entrepreneurs in our study are satisfied with their income-generating activities: “I feel very comfortable and satisfied with my current situation. Everyday we make products, which bring us some money. This certainly makes us happy and comfortable”, says Mrs. P. They are confident in the stability of their work and in the continued demand for their products and services. This confidence is higher for female small producers than for women in the other two subgroups because of the need for their products. Consequently, almost every woman in this subgroup expressed an intention to expand production by increasing investment and improving their present products. “Only when we cannot sell our products will we change our job”, says Mrs. V., a 30-year-old nylon bag maker with two children. Similarly, Mrs. W. who is a nylon bag washer claims: “when too tired, I will stop this work”. Mrs. W., who is 47-years-of-age with three children, did not transfer land and also raises livestock to support her family. Overall, these women are completely satisfied with their current job and they want to invest in their children’s education.

Most of the women entrepreneurs cannot separate the income they earn from each specific activity. However, their total income generally ranges from an amount that simply covers monthly expenditures to nearly 5 million VND per month. Those in the production subgroup have a relatively high income. According to Mrs. P., “The monthly income of some women is 10 million VND per month on average. Every year they can save about VND 70 million, after covering all the household expenses”. As petty traders, some women can get a profit of “about 50,000 VND every day”, says Mrs. X., a 27-year-old florist. The income of women in the service group is difficult to assess because it depends on the season: “During the wedding season, I can earn 2 million VND per month from hairdressing in average. For the remaining months, I earn just 1 million VND per month. I also earn from 3 to 5 million VND from selling false flowers on the occasion of Têt holiday”, declares Mrs. S. While talking about their income, however, the women did not seem to be totally open, in part because they do not keep business accounts (and likely also because they do not want to discuss such a topic with strangers). As explained by Mrs. W., “I just make a rough estimation while counting the total without paying attention to how

much the profit is. When I see that the total of the money I get is more than the amount I have paid, it means that I have some profit. I do not keep detail records.” Similarly, Mrs. U. maintains: “I don’t count how much the profit is. I don’t know how much my daily income is, because there are still goods in stock and in debt. I don’t know exactly how much it is. I buy goods when I have money, I don’t make a profit and loss account.” In short, while it is relatively easy for women in the production and trading subgroups to calculate their income, it is very difficult for women in the service subgroup. They cite rough estimates without any records.

Despite difficulties in calculating exactly how much they earn from their activities, women confirm that their living standard is better, which means that their present income is higher than that in the past, especially for those who used to do agricultural work. “My present income is 7 or 8 million VND a month, but in the past I just earned several hundreds thousand VND and I also had to receive goods instead of cash”, says Mrs. N. According to the evaluation of the women interviewed, over two thirds of them think their household living standard is “average” and report that their income is “just enough”. Only two consider their household to be comparatively “rich”. Notably, the women who consider their living standard to be just average are, in reality, rich compared with households in other areas. According to leaders of Nhu Quynh town, a household is considered poor when the average monthly income per capita is less than 300 thousands VND/month/person. They are poor because their conditions are difficult; they have a lot of children; they are widows or separated; or their children are too small and so on.

Almost every household of the women in this group has all kinds of modern facilities and furniture such as TV sets, refrigerators, electric rice-cookers, motorbikes, telephones and septic toilets. Some households have modern washing machines that cost about 8 or 9 million VND, and air-conditioners. Women’s domestic lives have seen fundamental changes. “In the past, I had to use coal for cooking. I now have all necessary facilities such as a gas-cooker, a septic toilet, etc. I have been using a gas-stove for four or five years. I have also bought a TV set. In general, I sold all things I used to use to people in remote mountainous areas and bought modern ones instead.” Now that their income-generating activities are sustainable, women have a better chance to take care of their own health. Shifting jobs also made them feel more comfortable and self-confident. However, some women claim that their health has gotten worse due to the hard work

to make ends meet, the high working intensity and the amount of concentration required in their current job. That is why Mrs. Q. concludes: “We have to change the way to do business and we have to find out a better way to make our living conditions more secure”. Varying income-generating activities also has a negative impact on how women take care of their children. Many of the children of these women are neglected simply because the women are too busy with their work. Understandably, they seek assistance from their parents, relatives, domestic helpers or tutors. The only compensation that they feel they can make in return is to spend more on their children’s education with the hope that their offspring will find a better job than their own in future.

3.3.2. Determinants of Changes in Income-generating Activities of Women

Unlike female farmers and factory workers, women entrepreneurs often vary their working output to meet market demand. Simply making and selling what they can is not adequate. What is essential is that women meet the demand and the taste of their customers. That is why the determinants for changes in income-generating activities in this group are different than for other groups. Energy, boldness, creativity, self-confidence and the ability to adjust to various situations are common characteristics found among self-employed women in the production, trade and service subgroups. Factors that relate to changes in their income-generating activities are varied. First of all, work choice sometimes depends on individual ability and specific conditions. Mrs. Y., for example, a 45-year-old grocer with three children, told us: “I used to work for a tailor’s shop before doing small business at market. But it is too hard for me at this age because I cannot compete with young people. Thus it is better to have self-employment, which is suitable for my health and provides me with a stable income.”

Second, through regular contact with the market, women become knowledgeable in terms of market needs and as a consequence change their work. Mrs. P. changed her job after making an income comparison:

I used to collect waste materials. It was sold at 1,500 dongs per kilogram after being cleaned and at 5,000 dongs per kilogram after being drilled. Noticing the difference in price, I decided to invest in a drilling machine. Selling drilled materials to recycling workshops, I once more realized that the price was still extremely different and I thought I could earn even more benefits so I bought their machines to do the work.

Mrs. R. started her business from her own experience and boldness: “We do business based on observations on demand and price. Now one job only cannot support us. And we need to take risks. If we think we can do it, we can. If we want to succeed, we should try and continue to try after the first and second failure.” Mrs. Z., 56 years-of-age with two children is another example. She was director of a motorbike company. Her job change was initiated by her friends’ ideas. “I think the market will be saturated with motorbikes. We must follow social trends. For me, operating inns is not bad at all. My friends say that 70% of Thailand’s income is from tourism so we need to learn from them. I thus decided to build inns.”

The third reason given for changes in income-generating activities is the necessity to do business with different kinds of goods because each good provides a different income, meaning that low and high incomes will balance one another. This strategy allows women to meet customers’ needs all the time. “In this tough time, you must sell from the biggest things to the smallest ones in case people ask you, or else you cannot survive in this hard life. If I just sell one kind of goods, I get very low income, so I have to do business with various kinds of goods, from which I can earn more or less money when people buy”, says Mrs. T. This factor indicates that meeting customers’ needs is very important for a successful business venture. It is a requirement for not only producers but also for those distributing products and those providing services.

As a fourth reason, awareness of differences in the roles of employer and employee led to changes in some women’s employment: “Working in factories is not a secure occupation; we have to work under strict control. When we have self-employment, we can decide the time and work for ourselves. The rules in factories are very strict, if we cannot obey them all, we may lose our job and then fall into difficulties”, compared Mrs. Q. For this reason Mrs. Q. refused to work for the factory and continued the traditional occupation of her in-law’s family despite receiving a commitment paper.

As well, there are other reasons for the changes in income-generating activities among this group of women. For example, doing extra work provides a higher income compared with working in factories. Alternatively, when a husband has an extra job, the wife may believe that she should do the same. Once women have an extra job, they get more money to invest in their business. The

more they invest, the more their business develops, and the more they earn. Finally, some women claim that they simply followed the example set by their friends.

Along with the above-mentioned reasons for changes in income-generating activities, external factors also influenced women's choices. First, the transfer of farmland to enterprises as a result of the establishment of industrial zones helped women to have capital to invest in their income-generating activities. Farmers were paid 19,300 VND/m² to 35,000 VND/m² for transferred land. At the same time, they were discouraged from growing rice because rice farmers suffered monetary losses.

Second, the diversion of the national Highway No. 5 by the government had a strong impact on a number of women. Mrs. AA, 45 years-of-age with two children, says: "Highway 5 used to run through this area. Now that it is diverted, my house is close to a school and a factory so it is more convenient for me to open a food shop to serve school children and workers than to do other business".

Third, community trends affect women's work selection. "This is traditional work in the village. My family was the first one to buy a machine, then other families in the village followed", remarks Mrs. D. "We do the work based on market demand and price, which is different from time to time. Every family in the village used to make bags and my family, too. We are now still doing the work", says Mrs. T., a 33-year-old owner of a nylon bag production joint stock company. This situation is common in other localities where everyone does the same work. With an endless source of materials and consumption, women can make a profit despite the competition, or they can at least cover all expenditures and enjoy a better life.

Fourth, support from friends is also an important factor for women to change their income-generating activities. "At first, we had to borrow machines from friends, then we saved money to buy one. Recently, we have bought some more to expand the production", says Mrs. W. Other people in the family often encouraged women as well.

When I was working at a kindergarten, my brother asked me to leave the job and buy machines to start production. He offered me work training and asked me to borrow money to be invested in the work, explaining that once our financial

situation is better we can support the children's education, and at that time my husband was not healthy to work,

remembers Mrs. N. In contrast, Mrs. X., a florist, says that her present work is "the work my family has been doing for many years".

Fifth, after the geographical division of the district, Nhu Quinh became a town, lying along Highway No. 5 close to Hanoi. This is an important factor that many women in the three entrepreneur subgroups mention. "Life in Nhu Quinh is easier and better than in other places because it is situated between urban and rural areas. Also, it is an intermediate place, where people gather food from Hanoi and then distribute it to other places and they collect food from villages to bring back to Hanoi as well", asserts Mrs. BB., a tailor. "There are more factories and more people settling in the town, so the demand is higher", says Mrs. T., a hired seller in the market.

Sixth, reforms in government policies are an important factor leading to changes in income-generating activities of women because an increased market demand motivates women to work more. They have to work harder but they get a higher income, which encourages them to overcome all difficulties. As Mrs. U. explains,

The open-market economy creates good conditions for us to do business so we have a better life. Now we are allowed to sell wine, in the past we had to cover wine with clothes when we brought it to the city to sell. We can do business with all kinds of goods except for drugs. We can do food business with other places in the country and we do not have to worry about anything. Thus the business is very good and we become wealthy. Farmers' lives also change a lot because they can sell more vegetables at higher price.

3.3.3. Impacts of Changes in Income-generating Activities on Women Entrepreneurs' Role and Position in the Family

Income does not appear as the most important factor in determining who makes decisions in the family for this group of women because the husband and wife usually decide everything together. "My husband and I are very equal. If our incomes are not the same, we are still happy with that or else problems will arise", claims Mrs. CC. Agreement between husband and wife is very important: "After discussing, if my husband agrees, I will do the work but if he does not agree, I cannot do it alone", continues Mrs. CC. As far as other activities in the family are concerned,

decisions are made jointly by both husband and wife. In cases where women are the main decision makers, they still discuss issues with their husbands before any decision is made. A few discuss issues with their husbands as a way to keep them informed because their husbands work in other places or are unable to work. Thus the relation of income to changes in women's decision making in this group cannot be clearly seen. In fact, many women have had their own income since the first days of their marriage. Generally, women claim that men play an important role in the family so they respect their husbands, and consider themselves to be both inferior and dependent. Surprisingly, many women consider this situation to be one of equality.

Although women do income-generating work, they are still responsible for housework and other domestic tasks. Some women get help from family members. "Thanks to my parents' help, I do not have to worry about the housework so I can put aside some savings", says Mrs. Q., a baker. In a few cases, husbands share domestic work while some women hire housemaids because they are too busy for domestic work. "I have no time to take care of the family because I have to spend much time on work. So I try to find a good housemaid to do the housework", explains Mrs. CC. In some cases women do not want their husbands to do the housework, as Mrs. AA., a shopkeeper with two children, declares: "it is not suitable for men to do the cooking because it is women's work. Men should be responsible for big things".

4. CONCLUSIONS

This is a qualitative study with a small sample of married women working in three fields (factory workers, farmers, and businesswomen in small production, trading and services), in a locality that is experiencing high-paced urbanization. Our objective was to explore changes in women's lives that are connected with urbanization, especially changes in women's income-generating activities and the effects of these activities on women's empowerment. This study is among the first on such a topic in Vietnam. However, since the research sites embody particular characteristics, the study is not representative for either the whole area or the country.

It can be said that the urbanization process in Nhu Quynh, and particularly the setting up of Nhu Quynh Industrial Zone in 1998, has had a great impact on women's income-generating activities.

The extent of the impact, however, varies for different occupational groups. With regard to the female factory workers, changes in their occupational activities are marked. From self-employed farmers working on their own land, these women have been recruited to work in large enterprises. Their labor has become a commodity. Due to the particular features of Nhu Quynh-based factories, recruited workers are mostly women, giving the local female labor force an advantage. To become workers, these women either transferred their land-user's rights to the factories or bought labor commitment papers from other farmers. However, most of the women working in these factories are unskilled workers, who may not earn more than women who farm or work at small businesses. It is a paradox that many families now hold labor commitment papers but refuse to work at the factories, while many farmers have to buy these papers at high prices to be eligible for recruitment.

This paradox can be explained by the fact that those who come from families having stable businesses and high earnings, especially in Minh Khai, do not want to become factory workers since their present earnings are at least as high as those of factory workers while they are not subject to time pressure and feel much freer. Those who want to become workers are mainly young people who are not interested in farming activities, and people with no land-user's rights. A number of older women, however, want to work for the factories in order to benefit from a stable income while being able to do extra work at home like animal husbandry and alcohol brewing. Yet, it is recognized that in the long term the factory workers' interests are not guaranteed since, in Nhu Quynh, most of these workers are unskilled. Once advanced technology is applied in production, only skilled labor is needed and these workers will face challenges.

The group of female farmers is also subject to considerable changes in their occupational activities, although these changes seem to take place in a more uneventful manner compared to factory workers and those working in the small manufacture, trading and service businesses. This group includes those who did not transfer land or have transferred land but then rent the land of others to do farming because they either are not eligible to become workers in the factories or find farming activities more suitable. While rice was their main crop in the past, they now shift into large-scale subsidiary crops and animal husbandry in response to the increasing need for food products as a result of a soar in the number of workers and immigrants to the town and the

emergence of more and more shops and restaurants. The income of farmers has doubled, or even tripled, from that in the past. However, the concept of “pure farmers” has a relative meaning only; apart from their main activities of cropping and animal husbandry, almost every female farmer practices some side jobs such as a small trade or alcohol brewing.

It seems that the group containing the self-employed women who engage in small manufacture, trading and service businesses receives the most benefits from the establishment of Nhu Quynh Industrial Zone. Most of the women in this group are dynamic and make good use of newly available opportunities. They dare to do new things, and know how to bring the potential of themselves and their families into full use in order to develop new enterprises or expand old ones. Those who transferred land-use rights make up only one third of the people working in small manufacture, trading and service businesses. Some people of this group have labor commitment papers for working in the factories yet turn to small businesses which can be harder but yield better earnings.

All in all, it could be remarked that urbanization, particularly the establishment of Nhu Quynh Industrial Zone, has had a positive impact on the income-generating activities of the local women, regardless of their occupations as factory workers, farmers or small businesswomen. The income-generating activities of local women have been diversified and their incomes have been considerably improved. Nevertheless, there remains a group of women who have not benefited from the local industrial zone. These women are 45 to 55 years old and come from the households that have transferred all or most of their land-use rights to the factories, yet are not eligible for worker recruitment due to their advanced age. They end up with no land to cultivate and no ability to shift into other jobs. For the time being, they live on the compensation from the transferred land or the money they received from selling labor commitment papers; they will sooner or later become dependent on family members.

In sum, changes in income-generating activities have led to significant positive changes in terms of income and material life for the women in Nhu Quynh in particular, and their households in general. Yet, the question remains whether these changes have contributed to an improvement in women’s role and position in the family, hence their empowerment. The right to decision-making

on all domestic issues is one of the basic criteria for assessing the position of women in the family. The dominant trend in the families of Nhu Quynh is that both husband and wife share opinions, discuss and make joint decisions on crucial domestic matters in daily life as well as financial activities. This trend should be considered as distinct progress compared to 10 or 15 years ago. Vietnamese society, particularly in rural communities, has been greatly influenced by Confucianism, which supports male chauvinism. Most Vietnamese people, regardless of their sex, believe that men should be the head of the household and the most powerful person in the family. Accordingly, there are many women in Nhu Quynh who contribute the main source of income for their families and are capable of deciding on their own income-generating activities, yet are reluctant to admit publicly that they play a greater role than their husbands. Nevertheless, women's efforts and economic contributions are now being more fairly acknowledged by their communities. It is being recognized that women have a greater voice in the family than before as a consequence of their more visible economic inputs to their households. This is most evident in the group of women entrepreneurs engaged in small-scale manufacture, trading and services because, unlike farm work, these new activities are the responsibility of mainly the women and yield cash. However, it should be noted that, as with the group of factory workers who are paid for their labor, there is no clear difference in their right to decision-making before and after they become workers. This apparent lack of effect may result from the fact that there is not much difference between their present income as workers and that from their previous farm work. Moreover, in some cases, side occupations like cropping and animal husbandry or alcohol brewing, have made considerable contributions to the workers' income, apart from their wages.

In conclusion, our study, aimed at understanding income-generating activities of rural women during the urbanization process, has helped identify some changes in the income-generating activities of women in an area of Vietnam experiencing rapid urbanization. It also illustrates, to some degree, the connection between changes in income-generating activities and women's role and position in the family. Although the study was small in scale and specific in terms of the characteristics of the research site, it has yielded interesting findings and helps answer some questions raised in the literature review about women's empowerment.

First, our study supports Lim's (1996) finding that work in factories and export-processing zones does not have only negative effects for women. On the contrary, with regard to those farmers with few formal qualifications, no capital and little or no land for farming, factory work brings about positive effects: it provides a job with adequate income for a living; factory work is less hard than farm work; and women can gain social status connected with factory employment. Second, the realities in Vietnam show that women's financial activities should be regarded as a necessary but not sufficient factor for women's empowerment. As well as women's ability to provide a source of family income from their paid work or self-employment, local cultural norms play an important part in determining women's role and position in the family. Third, according to Beneria's (2003) view, changes in income-generating activities will inevitably lead to changes in marital relationships. This study reveals changes in the following aspects: wives now have more right to be involved in discussions with their husbands about important matters concerning family life; they can make decisions on the economic activities which they mainly take charge of; and the burden of housework is being shared to some extent by some husbands. In addition to these findings, our study also shows the importance of considering age in discussions of women's empowerment. As noted above, the women who have gained the least benefit from transferring land are older women. These are important factors in the context of any woman's situation that complicate the notion of "empowerment".

The study has some limitations, however. First, the groups of participants are not very well proportioned (the factory workers group is very small). Second, the time markers that are used to compare changes in income-generating activities are not clearly defined; for example, the expression "in the past" in this study means a long period of time from far back in the past, not just from 1997 when the town was set up or from 1998 when the Industrial Zone was established. This expression thus complicates measures of change in the income-generating activities by local women. Third, no systematic comparison has been made between women who transferred land and those who did not. Accordingly, these limitations call for further research on the impact of urbanization on women in rural areas, particularly in the areas with newly established industrial and export-processing zones, in order to fill in gaps about these specific issues.

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**FEMALE TEENAGE MIGRANTS IN THE CONTEXT
OF URBANIZATION IN WARD 3, DISTRICT 8,
HO CHI MINH CITY**

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**Ho Chi Minh City, Quebec City and Vancouver
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FEMALE TEENAGE MIGRANTS IN THE CONTEXT OF URBANIZATION IN WARD 3, DISTRICT 8, HO CHI MINH CITY

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration is a common yet complicated phenomenon. In Asian countries, including Vietnam, internal migration – one type of which is rural-urban migration – has been taking place with an increasingly higher proportion of young migrants, a considerable proportion of which is female. Compared with other cities in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City is attractive to different migration flows. Since its establishment, the City (once called Saigon) has been expanded through waves of migrants from across the country. With *Doi Moi*, the Renovation process in Vietnam, the new market economy has been favorable to the development of businesses in different economic sectors. This development created many new employment opportunities for laborers, many of whom came from other provinces. Within these migrant flows to Ho Chi Minh City, the proportion of young migrants, as well as the proportion of female migrant laborers, has been increasing. According to the 1999 census, 52% of migrants to Ho Chi Minh City are under the age of 25, among which 50% are female. Only a small portion of these female migrants has secondary school or higher levels of education, or working skills. These migrants tend to be employed in industrial and export-processing zones. The majority, who have a lower educational level or lack working skills, are forced to work in private small-size production or service units, carry on petty trading, or work as domestic servants. This group of migrants contains a large proportion of teenagers whose families experience such economic difficulties that they cannot continue their children's schooling. As a result, many of these young people leave their families early to earn a living. This particular group of migrants has not been thoroughly considered in research on migration in Vietnam, especially in terms of their living and working conditions in big cities.

The current study was conducted between July 2003 and February 2004. It is our hope to contribute to the growing literature on migration, especially the migration of teenagers who are required to enter the labor force at a young age without the assistance or control of their families. Our research, carried out in Ward 3, District 8 of Ho Chi Minh City, is focused on employment and living conditions of female teenage migrants working in the informal economic sector. Our

goal was to document positive as well as negative factors impacting on the lives and futures of this particular social group. Our research questions about young female migrants were geared toward learning about their motives for leaving their homeland and their reasons for moving to Ho Chi Minh City rather than another location. How did those who were not accompanied by their parents to Ho Chi Minh City get their current jobs? How do these young women survive in their new and complicated urban environment? What are their living conditions, both materially and spiritually? In what kinds of conditions are they working in the urban environment? What are their material and spiritual needs? What difficulties do they face in adapting and integrating to urban life?

In order to answer these questions, our report is organized into four sections. Part 1 presents a review of previous research related to our topic; Part 2 describes activities conducted in our research project; Part 3 presents main findings of our research; Part 4 summarizes our study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on migration is essential for designing macro-level policies. For women, migration not only impacts on their living conditions, but also results in changes in their social role and position. For a long time, however, the migration of women was ignored by researchers. It was not considered as a distinct phenomenon in its own right, until the 1990s.

2.1. International Research

In terms of research on migration conducted by international scholars, we were interested in several reports presented at the United Nations Expert Meeting on Feminization of Internal Migration (1993) held in Aguascalientes, Mexico, in 1991. In these reports, as well as during the meeting, issues surrounding the migration of women were analyzed at a macro-level with specific cases in 32 countries, including China, India, Egypt, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Thailand. The experts agreed upon basic concepts related to migration. They also raised questions, such as: why do women take part in migration? Why has the migration of women been ignored in research on migration? The experts came to the common conclusion that female migrants are often young

women, who are relatively highly educated and single; most of them are working in the service sector for low wages. One gender-related issue, discussed very intensively, concerned decision-making about the migration of women. The results of a number of studies show that the position of migrant women tends to be improved when the decision to migrate was made by the woman herself. Other issues were also discussed and analyzed during the meeting, such as the consequences of migration on women, policies related to the internal migration of women, and the role that women's migration plays in development. Suggestions for improvements in the status of female migrants were also made. In terms of methodology, a multi-level approach (at the individual level, the household level and the community level, including cultural norms and social policy) was also discussed, providing a novel solution to the problem of collecting unilateral information.

Several case studies analyze different aspirations and attitudes of teenage female migrants in Thailand. On the one hand, migration makes it possible for them to fulfill their obligation to help their families of origin through remittances. To send the remittances to their family, these teenagers have to save almost their entire income, expressing themselves as "responsible daughters." On the other hand, they also want to satisfy their own desires for clothes, cosmetics, and audio-visual equipment as "modern girls." The problem is that they cannot meet both aspirations at the same time (Mills, 1996).

Other research focuses on marriage-related migration between Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Taiwanese citizens (for example, see Wang and Chang, 2002). Trafficking in women is also explored in several studies on migration and urbanization in Southeast-Asia and China (Guest, 2004; Huang Ping, 2004).

Research on migration of women not only mentions issues involved with employment of migrants generally, but also draws our attention to prostitute-girls, showing the consequences of contracting diseases such as HIV/AIDS, including their isolation from relatives after they return to their homeland (Tep and Ek, 2000; Dasgupta, 2003). Tep and Ek (2000) provide valuable information on the present life and miserable situations of 25,000 Vietnamese girls who came to Cambodia to look for a job. Most of these girls were very young. They accompanied mediators

who promised that they would have an attractive job and good income in Cambodia. In fact, they were sold to massage parlors, karaoke bars and brothels where they were required to work as sex-workers in Phnom-Penh. Upon returning to their homeland, family members and relatives typically scorned these girls, despite the fact that they had sent money to help their families when they were working in Cambodia.

2.2. Vietnamese Research

Research on internal migration, both theoretical and empirical studies, has been conducted in Vietnam during the past years. Among the most noteworthy are the research by Nguyen Thanh Tam (2003) and the research on rural-urban migration of women to Ho Chi Minh City by Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc (2000). These studies were conducted at the national level and focused on female migrants 18 to 55 years of age. For the most part, they concern the economic lives of migrant laborers.

Empirical research on migration in Vietnam typically analyzes issues at the macro-level. Studies therefore have made an important contribution to the State's policy-making in terms of residence settlement and distribution. The issues that have received the most attention include characteristics of migrants, causes of movement and the impact of migration. Analyses are related to age, sex, reasons for migration, types of migration, opportunities to get a job, income, and the impact of migration on both place of origin and migration destination. In general, these studies analyze issues from an economic perspective and look at the behaviors of migrants, their living conditions, and issues related to their emotional and spiritual life. There have been very few, if any, analyses of issues concerning female migrants.

Research on migration conducted in Vietnam usually differentiates between State-planned migration and spontaneous migration. The most notable research on State-planned migration has been conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Agricultural Economic Institute, the Ministry of Labor, and the Injured Soldiers and Social Welfare Unit (Department of Migration) in 1996, 1997 and 1998. These studies show that over six million people have migrated since 1960. The largest State-planned migration waves took place between 1976 and 1990, following the establishment of new economic zones, while spontaneous

migration began to increase after the 1990s (National Conference on Capacity Building 1997 a, b). Much of this research shows that migration is not only propelled directly by policies on migration, but also by socio-economic policies in the Renovation (Dang Nguyen Anh and Nguyen Binh Minh, 1998; National Conference on Capacity Building 1997 a, b); Agricultural Economy Institute, 1997; Doan Mau Diep and Trinh Khac Tham, 1998).

Economic growth and urban expansion are reasons for flows of rural-urban migration. To do research on this situation and issues involved with migration, some Vietnamese research institutions have collaborated with international organizations in conducting macro-scale research projects on spontaneous migration to Hanoi (Agricultural Economic Institute, 1997) and Ho Chi Minh City (HCM City Institute of Economics, 1997). In addition, many in-depth studies on specific communities of migrants have been published. In such work, authors pay much attention to the impact of migration on the communities of origin and the migration destination. Specific matters related to migration have been taken into consideration; for example, survival strategies and changing patterns (Nguyen Van Chinh, 2002); socio-economic causes of migration (Massey, 1994; Nguyen Thi Hoa, 1999); migration and health (Vanlandingham, 2004); and the role of social networks in migration (Dang Nguyen Anh, 1998).

Vietnamese researchers also pay attention to out-migration from Vietnam. Marriage with Taiwanese men, for example, is considered as a type of transnational migration in Mekong Delta. Consequences drawn from such research show some of the negative aspects of globalization and international integration in Vietnam (Phan An, 2003; Tran Thi Kim Xuyen, 2004).

The number of studies on female migrants, particularly teenage female migrants, is relatively small. Some non-government organizations have been interested in children, but they have tended to focus on child-healthcare (Save the Children, Australia) or on handicapped and poor children (Save the Children, UK). There has been some work on teenage migrants in Vietnam, including the research project “Teenage and social changes in Vietnam”, conducted by the Institute of Sociology (Hanoi) in cooperation with the Policy Research Department and the Population Council of New York. This research has provided basic information on the living situations of teenagers during the socio-economic transition in Vietnam. However, it did not

make separate analyses of different teenage groups, including local and migrant ones. Moreover, gender-related information was not collected (Mensch, Dang Nguyen Anh, and Clark, 2000).

Migration to big cities has been studied by a number of researchers. In general, these researchers are interested in the causes of migration to cities and have focused on the advantages and disadvantages that migrants and local residents experience as a result of migration (Nguyen Van Tai *et al.*, 1998; Nguyen Van Nam, 2002). Their studies answer questions such as: Why did people migrate to this city but not another one? How can the State control migration waves into big cities like Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City? How can these cities deal with employment problem?

Most researchers consider migrants to be a homogenous group or consider a household as the unit for analyses without taking into account differences in sex, age, psychological and other social characteristics (Nguyen Van Tai *et al.*, 1998; Nguyen Khac Tham, 1999; Tran Thi Hong Van, 1999). Several researchers separate female migrants from the population in order to focus on characteristics of this particular group, but they do not separate teenage female migrants from adult female migrants (Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc, 2000). While there has been some work on children, the focus is typically street children and analyses are often made from the perspective of social work (Nguyen Thi Phuong, 1999; Do Thi Ngoc Phuong, 2000). Much of the work on teenagers conducted in Vietnam focuses on children's awareness of fertility health, HIV transmission, drug abuse etc. The living situations of teenage migrant laborers, particularly girls, have not been studied (Dang Nguyen Anh, 2000).

Based on our review of literature on migration in Vietnam, we concluded that most of the previous research focuses on economic aspects of migration. Gender analyses are vaguely mentioned in some studies but information related specifically to men or women was not fully collected. In particular, issues pertaining to female migrants such as causes of migration, their contributions to the place of origin and destination, their integration into their new urban environment, and their expectations as well as changes in their role and position in the family have not been studied. Regarding research methodology, almost all research on migration in Vietnam uses only quantitative methods to generate and analyze information. The number of

studies in which qualitative methods are used remains limited (Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc, 2000).

In summary, research on migration in Vietnam to date has not focused on female teenage migrants. In particular, issues related to their living and working conditions, their desires and expectations, the challenges and difficulties they face in adapting to a new urban environment have not been sufficiently studied. Some research on teenage trafficking, as well as prostitution, led us to some questions: How do difficult living conditions and the pressure caused by the desire and expectation to help their families influence the way female teenage migrants earn a living? Do these conditions propel girls into prostitution? Although this is not the focus of our research, our data might help answer these questions.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Our study of female teenage migrants in Ward 3, District 8 of HCHC was conducted from a gendered perspective in order to understand not simply the living and working conditions of girl migrants, but also the social impact of migration on this particular social group in the contemporary context of urbanization in Vietnam. We therefore used qualitative methods for data generation. Data collection occurred through in-depth interviews, group discussions and observations. In-depth interviews and group discussions were made with the permission of informants. In-depth interviews in particular allowed us to collect detailed stories by informants. For this Report, we do not use our informants' real names but pseudonyms. In addition to qualitative methods, we also analyzed relevant secondary data.

A guide for in-depth interviews and group discussions, including instructions and questions for the gathering of selective information, was carefully designed according to the research objectives. Information collected from tape-recorded transcripts and observation notes was analyzed through classification matrixes.

To ensure data of high quality, we held training sessions for research assistants in order that they could be fully aware of research objectives, activities and the nature of information to be

collected. Senior members of the research project took part in in-depth interviews and group discussions. Students who participated in our research as assistants undertook the tasks of recording interviews, writing field notes, preserving and classifying information according to our instructions.

After surveying several sites, we selected Ward 3, District 8 for our research because of the following conditions:

- District 8 is a district in Ho Chi Minh City where urbanization has been taking place rapidly, especially for the past 10 years. The many State-run and private production units established in the area, together with the availability of private low-cost rooms for rent, attract migrant laborers.
- Ward 3 is a typical ward during this process of urbanization. There are many production units of different types, including small industrial garment-making, shoe-making, food-processing, and small commercial units. These types of work do not require high levels of working skills. Because application for a job is simple, these occupations attract migrant laborers. At the time of our fieldwork in July 2003, there were 4,949 households in Ward 3, 132 of which were migrant households. Between December 1994 and December 2003, the number of migrants to Ward 3 increased 2.5 times (see Table I).

Table I. Changes in the Population of Ward 3, District 8 in Ho Chi Minh City

	1994	1999	2003
Total number of households	3,711	4,713	4,949
<i>Including</i>			
Permanent local households	2,839	2,746	2,817
Migrant households	872	1,967	2,132
Total number of residents	18,108	20,869	24,569
<i>Including</i>			
Permanent local residents	16,195	16,111	16,519
Migrant residents	1,913	4,758	8,050

Source: Report of the People's Committee of Ward 3, District 8 (2003).

Most of the residents in the Ward are Kinh people. Sino-Vietnamese and Cham people make up a very small proportion of the population. In terms of religious affiliation, 1,674 households are Buddhist (accounting for 34.5% of the total number of the Ward's households); 91 households

are Christian (1.9%); 14 households are Protestant (0.3%); and the remaining 3,067 households are non-religious (63.3%). The religious activities of residents in Ward 3 are relatively diversified with six Buddhist Temples, four shrines, one communal house and one Christian Church.

Although the Ward's infrastructure and facilities are not as comfortable and modern as those in other wards in the City, they meet most of the criteria for an urban environment. For example, 100% of the Ward's households are using electricity from the National Electricity Network for living and production. All the Ward's roads, including small alleys, are covered with pebbles, cement or concrete.

To make our research on female teenage migrants in Ward 3 scientifically effective and easy for gender analyses, we developed a sampling strategy that resulted in the following:

- Girl migrants: 22 female teenage migrants aged from 14 to 18 years, who have been in Ho Chi Minh City for over 3 months (19 came to Ho Chi Minh City without their families; 3 came with their families). These participants are doing different jobs such as sewing, lottery-ticket selling, working in a *café*. Most of them are renting rooms in Ward 3. All agreed to take part in our in-depth interviews.
- Expert informants: five local officials (one vice-chairman of the Ward People's Committee, one policeman, three heads of residence quarters) and three owners of houses/rooms for rent were interviewed about their experiences with teenage migrants.
- On-site observations: two non-participatory observations were made at the rooms for rent of two female teenage migrants, one of which worked at a *café* and the other as a street lottery-ticket seller; observations were made over a three-day period that included both working and nonworking days. As well, other observations were made at the workplace of three female teenage migrants: one undertaking sewing work, one making shoe-soles, and the third peddling fruit in the street.

In total, our research team contacted 31 informants and conducted five on-site observations. Basic information on the 22 girls who participated in interviews is summarized in Table II.

Table II. Information on the Female Teenage Migrants Interviewed

N		Age	<i>Educatio n</i> (Grade)	Place of origin	Type of migration	Occupation
1	An	17	6/12	An Giang	With family	Shirt button-hole maker
2	Binh	18	9/12	Nghe An	With family	Lottery-ticket seller
3	Chien	17	8/12	Nam Dinh	Without family	Seamstress
4	Dân	17	7/12	Nam Dinh	Without family	Seamstress
6	Dô	14	6/12	Bac Giang	Without family	Seamstress
6	En	14	6/12	Ben Tre	With family	Fruit vendor on a boat
7	Phuc	14	8/12	Bac Ninh	Without family	Lottery-ticket seller
8	Giang	16	6/12	Can Tho	Without family	Plaster-toy maker
9	Hoa	18	11/12	Gia Lai	Without family	Seamstress
10	Inh	17	5/12	Thanh Hoa	Without family	Book peddler
11	Khôi	17	5/12	Quang Tri	Without family	Seamstress
12	Lan	15	8/12	Ben Tre	Without family	Fruit vendor
13	Minh	15	6/12	Ben Tre	Without family	Thread cutter
14	Na	15	5/12	Thanh Hoa	Without family	Seamstress
15	Oanh	18	12/12	Tien Giang	Without family	Going to vocational school
16	Phuong	18	8/12	Ha Nam	Without family	Seamstress
17	Quên	18	6/12	Tra Vinh	Without family	Cook/maid (used to be a seamstress)
18	Rong	18	5/12	Bac Giang	Without family	Seamstress (plastic handbags)
19	Sen	18	9/12	Ben Tre	Without family	Seamstress
20	Trang	15	8/12	Binh Duong	Without family	Clothes wrapper
21	Uyên	18	12/12	Phu Yen	Without family	Working in a <i>café</i>
22	Vinh	19	3/12	Soc Trang	Without family	Working in a <i>café</i>

Source: Research Sample in Ward 3, District 8 (2003-2004).

Migrant girls in our sample came from many different provinces in the country. The highest proportion is made up of teenage migrants coming from Ben Tre. The places of origin of the girls are rural areas where economic growth is low, the socio-economic transition is slow in pace, and there are many employment redundancies. Most of these migrants moved to Ho Chi Minh City without their family. Regarding educational levels, the highest level is Grade 12 and the lowest is Grade 3. About half of the girls are working in the informal economic sector sewing clothes and making shoes, bags or plaster-toys. The remainders are vendors of fruit, books, lottery tickets, or work in *cafés*. As they are working for private production units that do not have formal

production licenses, none of the female teenage migrants in our research has a labor contract or insurance. Rather, their time of work and wages are guaranteed only by oral agreement with employers.

4. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

In this section we look at reasons why these female teenage migrants moved from their rural homeland to Ho Chi Minh City and factors involved with their employment. Following this we explore the girls' material and spiritual lives and their integration into the social environment of Ho Chi Minh City.

4.1. Reasons for Migration

Most of the girls in our study come of from families experiencing economic difficulties. Their parents do mainly agricultural work, although some of them also work as hired laborers. This situation motivated our participants to move to a big city in the hope of getting a job that would enable them to help their families. This motivation is repeatedly mentioned by female teenage migrants when they are asked why they came to Ho Chi Minh City (See Table III).

Table III: Reasons for Migration to Ho Chi Minh City

Reasons for migration	Number of respondents
Family's economic difficulties; wish to get a job	15
Lack of land for cultivation	1
Lack of job	1
Want to be self-reliant	2
Want to know new places	6
To accompany friends	1
Total	26

Source: Results of the 22 qualitative in-depth interviews. Some respondents provided more than one reason.

This finding is similar to that of other research on reasons for rural-urban migration. It suggests that the migration of rural people usually stems from differences between rural and urban life in Vietnam. Specifically, rural people face deprivation, with migration promising opportunities to get jobs and access to education, healthcare and other social services. Thus, economic difficulties

play the most important role in migration and represent the greatest personal motive for migration. Because of low income and poverty, a lot of rural people cannot raise enough money to cover the expenses for their household's minimum needs; their access to education, healthcare and socio-cultural services is limited. This also explains why many rural children quit school early in order to engage in income-generating activities. If they remain in agriculture, their income will be insecure and very low. To improve the situation, it is necessary to hold a secure job and earn a stable income. Local socio-economic conditions cannot satisfy this need for employment.

Much research on living standards conducted in Vietnam during the past 10 years (for example, a survey on living standards in 1992-1993; a survey on household living standards in 2002; a survey on poverty in 1993; and a survey on living standards in 1997-1998) shows a clear difference in living standards between rural and urban people. According to a survey on household living standards in 2002, the average monthly per capita income for rural households was considerably lower than that of urban households. Specifically, it was 275,130 VND for rural households compared to 622,050 VND for urban households. The average monthly income per capita of the urban group with the lowest income was 184,200 VND, while the figure for the rural group was 100,250 VND. The survey indicated that rural people who do agricultural work have very limited opportunities to be wealthy.

Another similarity between our research and the above-mentioned surveys is that rural families usually have more children but fewer income-generating laborers, as well as fewer skilled laborers, compared with urban households. This is also a factor for the difference in living standards between rural and urban households. At the same time, the number of redundancies in rural areas is increasingly higher, particularly during the time between the harvests of different crops. Rural people are finding it necessary to leave their home villages in order to earn additional income. In the meanwhile, the demand for laborers, particularly low-skilled and low-paid workers, in Ho Chi Minh City is very high: many migrants consequently move from rural areas to the City.

In our sample, many girls came from Northern provinces to Ho Chi Minh City to seek a job, because, as Dô, a 14-year-old migrant from Bac Giang doing sewing work, explains: "In my

home village, there are not companies or enterprises. There are not so many jobs to do as in this city. I thus had to come here to seek for a job in order to earn some income”. Another girl, Khôi, a 17-year-old from the Central province of Quang Tri, says: “I have been in this city for nearly two years. I came here alone. At present, I am doing outwork sewing [...] I came here, because I already grew up and I thus had to help my parents. In our home village, we could not do anything after the harvest”.

Female teenage migrants from the Mekong Delta report the same motivation: seeking a job to help their families. Giang, a 16-year old girl working as a plaster-toy maker, explains:

My home village is in Chau Thanh District, Can Tho Province. There are nine siblings in my family. I am the seventh daughter. In my home village, my parents are doing cultivation in the hills. As I saw my parents working too hard, I dropped out of school in order to help them in cultivating work. And then, my aunt made a phone call from Ho Chi Minh City to us, asking my mother to let me go to this city to work. After that, my mother no longer allowed me to work in our home village, because the work was too hard and miserable. We had to work all day in the field, since the morning till late evening. We had no time to rest. After I came here to work, I started to have time to rest. When feeling tired, we can ask for a rest or a day off. In fact, this work is not so hard as the work in our home village. My complexion has been whiter since I came here. When I was in our home village, I was very sun-burnt.

Given the importance of seeking employment, a question raised during our study was how these teenagers, who have low education and no marketable skills, could secure a job in a city where they have never been before. Our analysis of the information collected from in-depth interviews demonstrates that, in developing strategies to get a job, the girls do not usually rely on employment aid services or mediators. Rather, they tend to rely on kinship networks and relationships with their friends and neighbors. Thus social networking plays an important role in the increasing migration flows of teenagers to Ho Chi Minh City. If teenage girls in our study had had no relative or acquaintance in Ho Chi Minh City, it is unlikely that their parents would have allowed them to go to the city to earn a living.

Among the 22 female teenage migrants we interviewed, 19 girls, including both some who migrated with their families and some who migrated without them, had acquaintances or relatives in Ho Chi Minh City. Girls who did not accompany their family went to the city alone or with their friends. Data collected during our in-depth interviews thus show the same result as other

research that has underlined the importance of social networks for unskilled migrants (Van Ngoc Lan and Tran Dan Tam, 2001). An available social network at the place of migration destination accounts for most teenage migration to Ho Chi Minh City.

Our in-depth interviews indicate that one of the ways urban people undertake obligations to relatives is to help them find a job. This strategy explains why very young laborers, who have very little living experience, can find jobs in a new and faraway environment that is very different from their rural homeland. Relying on this network, female teenage migrants receive both material and spiritual support. As soon as they come to the city, they are provided with support for accommodation and funding. They are helped to find a job. Starting with this support, they gradually build new social relationships in the city. As explained by Na, a 15-year-old seamstress from Thanh Hoa: “My uncle took me to this city. He at first made a phone call to my aunt in this city, asking her to find a job for me. And then, my parents agreed to let me come here to work”.

Only one of the teenage migrants in our sample found a job through an employment aid center; before that she had relied on an acquaintance, as did most of the others who did not rely on employment aid services to find a job. Quên, an 18-year-old girl from Tra Vinh who is working as a cook and housemaid in a garment unit, says:

My home village is in Chau Thanh district, Tra Vinh province. I finished grade 6 at secondary school. There are four siblings in my family. I saw many people coming to the city, so I decided to come here to see how it is. An acquaintance, which had come from the same home village with me, took me to this city and she let me stay in her house. At first, my parents did not agree, but then my mother agreed to let me go. At the beginning, I asked for help from the acquaintance when I had difficulties. One of my friends introduced me to a small restaurant, where I worked with a monthly wage of 300 thousand VND. Because the wage was too little, I then came to an employment aid center to look for a job. The center helped me to get a job as a cook in this garment unit. My monthly wage is 500 thousand VND a month now and I am also provided with meals and accommodation free-of-charge.

Other teenagers in our study did not have relatives in Ho Chi Minh City but came to the city because of acquaintances in their home village. Rong, a 18-year-old girl from Bac Giang, says: “An older cousin of my friend is the owner of a private bag-sewing unit in Ho Chi Minh City. When his brother came to our home village to recruit laborers for him, I and some other people in our village accompanied him to this city”.

Frame 1. Coming to Ho Chi Minh City

Phuong is 18 years old. She comes from Kim Binh Commune, Kim Bang District, Ha Nam. For a long time she would have liked to work as a tailor, but she would have had to pay at least one million VND to learn sewing skills in her homeland. Because of family difficulties, she had to quit school early. After that, she moved to Hanoi to help her aunt sell sweets and biscuits in order to earn some money to help her family. Last Tet holiday, when she was visiting her family, she met the mother of Ms. Dung, the owner of a private garment workshop, who was also visiting her home village. After learning that the woman would like to recruit seamstresses to work for her daughter in Ho Chi Minh City who would hire them without charging any money for teaching them how to sew, she and five other girls decided to go with the woman to HCMC. The girls were neighbors. Their houses were near to each other. Although they all liked sewing, they could not work for garment companies near their homes. According to recruitment requirements of those companies, recruits must have finished grade 9, they must have sewing skills, and they must pass the recruitment test. In contrast, work in Ms. Dung's garment workshop did not require a particular level of education and the girls did not need to take a sewing test. After Phuong and her friends came to HCMC, they learned sewing in this workshop and started to work. As Ms. Dung was responsible for their accommodation and meals, their parents agreed to let them come here. If not, none of them would have agreed.

Data from interviews with Phuong and five of her friends from Ha Nam
who are now seamstresses like her in Ho Chi Minh City

In summary, social networking plays a very important role in helping female teenage migrants look for jobs and in providing accommodation, especially at the beginning of their stay in Ho Chi Minh City. Most of the girls in our study are convinced that their parents would never have let them leave alone to look for a job, if they had not had relatives or acquaintances to sponsor them in the City. In turn, after settling into a new job and the new living environment in Ho Chi Minh City, these girls will help their relatives and friends to come to Ho Chi Minh City to work. This finding challenges the claim by some Western researchers that social relationships in modern urban areas are impersonal.

As shown in Table III above, in addition to economic reasons, female teenage migrants come to the city for personal reasons. In our study the girls claim that they wanted to assert themselves; they wanted to have an independent life; they wanted to challenge themselves; and they “wanted to go to see”.

Ho Chi Minh City is a big metropolis with a lot of job opportunities for laborers. It is also a place where spiritual and cultural activities are both abundant and diversified. The attractiveness of Ho Chi Minh City thus makes a lot of teenagers long for the excitement of city life. Chien, a seamstress from Nam Dinh province in the North, explains:

I am 17 years old. I quit school after I finished Grade 7. At that time, my parents sent me to learn sewing skills. I just finished the learning before Tet holiday. When I was in my homeland, I was dreaming about coming to the South. I don't know why. I wanted to come to see how it was different from my homeland. I came here, because I thought so. In fact, every time my aunt came from Ho Chi Minh City to our village, she told much about the City. Listening to her stories, I found Sai Gon very dreamlike. There is a beach; there are rows of coconut trees; all people are wearing beautiful clothes and living in very big houses. I therefore wanted to come to Sai Gon very much [...] And then, when one of my aunt's children came to visit our village, I asked my parents to let me come here. My parents said that I should go see the City, as people can learn much after a day of visit. My parents then told me to come to Ho Chi Minh City and stay here until the end of this year. I have been here for five months.

Another reason for migration to Ho Chi Minh City is that the girls were influenced by the opinions of their friends. According to Khôi, the 17-year-old girl from Quang Tri Province quoted above, if someone among her friends suggested the idea of migration, the others would respond and agree with her. She says:

I came to Ho Chi Minh City, because I had a lot of friends to go with me at that time. We were in the same class at school. I thus quit school in order to join them. I accompanied 10 others to this city. Moreover, there was no big company nearby our home village. Before that, many people, who came from our home village to the city to do sewing work, introduced us to the work, but we did not trust them. This man also came from the same home village as us. We knew him before. He knew one vocational training center sponsored by a charity fund, so he submitted our applications to the center. Before we left our home village for Ho Chi Minh City, a man from the center made a phone call to him, ensuring the jobs for us. That's why so many of us came here at that time. We found it joyful and we could earn more money additionally.

It is necessary to point out that, in comparison to the past, it is now easier for girls to leave their families due to the gradual change in social norms that has accompanied market liberalization. Yet this is still a new phenomenon in the rural context at present. Before the Renovation, rural parents would not have agreed to let their girls leave the family without an accompanying adult. In addition, as shown above, because the girls in our study received support and assistance from

their families' social network, their parents felt less worried. Through their social network they can supervise and keep indirect control over their faraway children.

Decisions about migration are generally influenced by motives of specific individuals. For adult migrants, decisions about migration to seek employment are made by themselves. In our study, by contrast, teenage girls' decisions to migrate were mostly influenced by their family's economic conditions. Some girls indicate explicitly that they moved to the city because of their family's economic difficulties; their parents made the final decision. Other girls, however, reveal that they found their family too poor. Lacking money to cover their living expenses, these girls themselves decided to migrate to the City in order to earn a living and to send money to help their family, as told by Khôi: "Because I am more mature, I have to work to help my parents. In my home village, after harvesting crops, I don't have anything to do". Inh, a 17-year-old from Thanh Hoa who is now selling books, says:

In my home village, I had nothing to do. I could not continue going to school, because my family had no money. Moreover, I did not want to continue going to school, because I could not be good at studying. I thus left my home village so that I could earn some hundreds of thousand VND to help my parents. If I stayed at home, my parents would have to pay for my meals.

According to Vietnamese traditions, teenage members of a family are viewed as dependent members. Dependence is considered higher when children are girls. Teenage girls, consequently, think that decisions should be made by adults. They sometimes cannot differentiate between decisions made on their own and decisions made by adult members in the family. In very few cases, girls in our study made decisions independently by themselves. However, even in such cases the girl had to harmonize her interests with those of her family. In the final analysis, all decisions had to be approved by adult family members, especially fathers. Phuong, the 18-year-old seamstress from Ha Nam quoted before, recalls:

When I learned that Mrs. Dung wanted to employ seamstresses for her garment unit in Ho Chi Minh City and workers would not have to pay money for learning sewing skills, I wanted to go to work for her. But when I asked my parents to let me go, they did not agree. After that, they found that I wanted it much, so they had no choice but to agree to let me go so that I could learn some skills for a job in the future. Yet, my parents seemed to be worried very much. They gave me a lot of advice before I left.

As shown in these cases, girls are expected to be dutiful to their parents; our interviewees were willing to do what their family expected from them. Analyses of girls' situations, as well as the expectation of remittances, reveal an inequality that is currently very common. Specifically, although working girls are considered as laborers, they are not regarded as those who deserve benefits from their work.

According to our research with 22 female teenage migrants in Ward 3, District 8, Ho Chi Minh City, the objective and obvious reason for migration is economic difficulties stemming from unemployment and low-income jobs in their provinces. However, the stated reasons for migration among these teenage migrants are often more complex. While the main reason usually originated in the economic difficulties experienced by the girls' families, they also sometimes stemmed from the wishes of the girls themselves. The girls often state that they wanted to increase their own income or travel to a new and exciting location far away from their homeland in order to widen their understandings. For example, Chien, the 17-year-old seamstress from Nam Din that we just quoted, says: "When I was in my home village, I always dreamt of going to the South. Yes, I always liked to go to the South. I just wanted to go to the South [...] I wanted to see whether it is much different from our home village. I left my home village for this city, because I thought so".

To sum up, regardless of which factors have more influence on the migration of teenagers – objective or subjective ones –, decisions about their migration were made for the most part by their parents. Under the pressures of family obligations and community opinions about "dutiful daughters", girls felt that they had to make decisions for the sake of their family. In the final analysis, economic difficulties on the part of the girls' families were the main reason for their migration to the city. The girls hoped to get jobs in order to help their families, as well as improve their own living conditions. Social networking played a very important role, no matter whether the girls accompanied their family to the city or not. Relying on their social network, individual girls received assistance and support after they arrived in the city, showing how social networks contribute to migration flows of rural laborers into urban centers.

4.2. Employment

In this section we describe the types of work that the female teenage migrants in our research carry out in Ho Chi Minh City. In this description we focus on the working environment, working hours and work intensity. We then discuss issues surrounding jobs. Previous research shows that, due to their young age, low education and limited employment skills, teenage migrants have very few opportunities to be employed by large companies or enterprises that are equipped with modern facilities and equipment. Thus they usually work for small production units or cooperatives that do not enforce strict requirements for education and work skills. One result is that their wages are not high and there are no written labor contracts. These workers also lack social/healthcare insurance and rights related to labor safety. Overall, working spaces tend to be small and narrow, the working environment hot and poorly lit, and equipment and machines old.

These findings are echoed in our research. Nearly half of the girls took up sewing as soon as they arrived in Ho Chi Minh City. Although the income earned is not high and is unstable, this job does not require high levels of skill. It is suitable to the domestic experience of female laborers, especially teenage girls, and their willingness to carry out the same work day after day. Many of the girls in our study consider their present job as an opportunity to improve their marketable skills and to gain experience, in the hope of getting a job in a large garment enterprise in the future.

According to what we observed when conducting interviews in sewing units located in Ward 3 (frame 2), working conditions are very poor. Laborers endure noisy and dusty environment, hot temperatures and poor lighting.

There are many similar small production units in Ward 3. Owners of these units do not invest in equipment, machinery or workshop space. The exploitation of teenage migrant laborers is expressed not only by their low wages (discussed in the following part), but also through the deprivation of their right to have their health protected during their working time. In the context of the current development of the private economic sector, without an effective mechanism to manage labor, teenage migrants in particular experience the disadvantages of rapid

industrialization. Yet, working conditions in the garment sewing units are better than those in other production units such as shoe-making and bag-making.

Frame 2. Working Conditions in a Sewing Unit

The sewing unit in an alley of Neighborhood 2 in Ward 3, District 8, is a room of 20 m² on the ground floor. There are two rows of sewing machines, one on each side of the room. Sewing machines are placed close to each other in each row. In the middle of the room, there are specialized machines: one is for over-sewing, one is for button-hole making and there is an iron with an ironing board. There are two 1.2 m-long lights and some fans on the surrounding walls.

We visited during working hours. Six girls were working intensively. The sewing machines were very noisy. Next to each sewing machine was a pile of ready-cut fabric pieces, which already had been over-sewn (it is each girl's daily norm). Although there were four fans on the walls, all the girls were soaked with sweat. Suggesting that there was not enough light, the girls were all bent down to see sewing lines.

The working environment in production units such as bag-making and plaster-toy-making is worse than for garment-making ones. Laborers in those units suffer not only from dust and noise, but also from air pollution. Giang, the 16-year-old girl from Can Tho province working in a unit that uses plaster to make toy animals, describes her working place:

The smell in this workshop is very terrible. I don't know exactly what smell it is. I just know that it is similar to the smell of lacquers people use to paint fingernails. In general, the working environment is very polluted. It is hot. We have to turn on fans to make it cooler. At first, I did not wear the mask. It is very dusty and the ventilators blow air to me, making me feel as if I am dying. I think I will have tuberculosis, if I continue to work here.

Working in such an environment day after day will likely have a negative impact on these girls' future health.

Several teenage migrants in our research are operating a small business such as peddling lottery tickets, books and newspapers, fruits or noodles. On the positive side, girls working in this sector indicate that they are independent in terms of working hours. They do not depend on the wishes of an owner. However, this type of work requires capital at the beginning, usually provided by parents. In the long run, it requires perseverance on the part of the girls and enduring health.

Although the participants in our study engaged in small businesses do not work in such polluted environments as the two groups mentioned above, because they do most of their work outdoors

they endure irregular weather. They also are required to wander from street to street. Binh, an 18-year-old girl from Nghe An peddling lottery tickets, explains that she has to walk about 10 kilometers a day along streets and alleys in order to sell all her tickets. Although she has been doing this work for three years, she still considers it to be temporary work. She suffers many psychological pressures:

I have been selling lottery tickets for three years. Everyday I have to sell the tickets, from 7 am till 7 or 8 pm. I earn from 100 to 200 VND per ticket. If a lot of tickets are sold, I can earn from 15,000 to 20,000 VND a day. If not, I will earn just 5 to 7 thousand VND a day. We have to go to all corners and alleys, all restaurants, all food stalls and all *cafés* to sell the tickets. We wander everywhere in a certain area, you see. We do not dare go to areas controlled by other lottery ticket sellers [...] I hate to do peddling lottery tickets. I can earn very little from it, at most twenty or thirty thousand VND, but I have to wander everywhere, meeting a lot of people. A lot of people! We have to insist for them to buy the tickets. Sometimes, they don't want to buy and they shout at us. I will stop doing this work soon.

Inh, another girl earning a living as a peddler, also complains about the situation of her work:

I have been peddling books for about a year. In the past, I peddled newspapers, but the income was very little; I therefore stopped doing it. When I first came to the city, my aunt-in-law received newspapers and showed me how to peddle them. We earned very little from peddling newspapers, just about 5 000 VND a day. On Sundays, we could not sell a lot of newspapers, so we earned nothing to eat. We usually had to borrow money to have food on Sunday. When we earned some more money on other days, we paid the borrowed money back. I can earn more from peddling books now. However, I sometimes earn more and sometimes earn less. I have meals out. I don't cook my meals. I spend 4,000 VND for breakfast. Sometimes I also have to spend 1,000 VND for the bus. I thus have to spend 5,000 VND in the morning. Lunch costs 4,000 VND and dinner costs 3,000 VND. In total, I have to spend 12,000 VND on daily meals. At night, I have to pay 3,000 VND to the owner of the room for rent. Thus, I have to spend 15,000 VND a day. That is all the money I can earn a day [...] Sometimes, I can save 5,000 or 10,000 VND a day. Very rarely! It is the money I have to save to come back home then.

Female teenage peddlers encounter a number of risks, as they must negotiate a complicated living environment. Inh, for example, says that she does not know how to keep her money safely, so that it is sometimes stolen. As a result, she can save very little money to send to her family. She explains:

Recently I lost money. It was the money to buy books to be sold. I lost it in a house. I was sitting there and keeping money in my pocket while I was selecting books. When I wanted to get it from my pocket to pay for the books, I found that I had lost it. There was nothing left. It was some tens of thousand VND. I then had to use the money I had saved. I also lost money another time, when I was going to visit my

homeland. I had put more than 530,000 VND in my bag. When I got out of the bus, I forgot to take the bag with me. I thus lost it.

Some teenage migrants look older than their age because of their struggle for survival early in their life. Vendors, in particular, have to fight to maintain the territory where they do their work. Lan, a 15-year-old girl from Ben Tre province who is peddling fruit in the area, reveals: “You know, my mother told me not to tell others about the places where I can do business well, because they could come there to do business in competition with me. They are very strange. They have done so to me several times, so I don’t dare reveal where I can do business well”.

There are now many food stalls and *cafés* in Ward 3. The demand for female workers is very high. Many teenage migrants who came to Ho Chi Minh alone are now working in this sector. From their point of view, their work is not hard. They can wear beautiful clothes. This type of work, therefore, has attracted many young female migrants. In reality, however, it is not ideal work because the working hours are very long. Although their income is relatively high, the girls are required to spend much of their earnings on clothing and cosmetics. More than the other groups of teenage migrants, girls working in *cafés* also often have to face sexual harassment on a daily basis and the stress of balancing “how to please their clients” and their own integrity and health. A summary of 18-year-old Vinh’s story illustrates this complex situation (see Annex 1).

Thirty years ago in Vietnam, community opinion was an obstacle for people who wanted to leave their home village. Those who “left their home village” were not respected by their community because they were viewed as people who had “lost their origin”. However, this feeling has changed. Rural people are no longer afraid to leave their village. Many are proud of the fact that they have migrated to the city. Girls are also encouraged to do so. However, traditional norms and values still play some role. For example, going to the city to help one’s family is highly appreciated by the community, but this does not mean that all types of jobs meet the community’s approval. The girls who are working in *cafés* or doing work of “high risk”, such as prostitution, usually try not to let others in their home village know exactly what kind of work they were doing.

In our interviews with Vinh, an 18-year-old girl from Soc Trang province working in a *café*, she reveals:

My parents said: “As you come to the City to work in a *café*, others look down on our family”. Yet, I think it doesn’t matter that I am working in the *café*. It depends on what I do. If I don’t do anything wrong, I will not be afraid of doing it. Right? [...] However, no one knows that I am working in the *Café*, because I have never told anyone about that [...] When I visit my home village, I change my clothes, so that I look similar to others in my home village and they therefore will not say anything bad about me.

Compared with laborers in other groups, teenage migrants in this group do not have to work in a polluted or uncomfortably hot environment. Their work is not as hard as that of others, while their income is relatively high. In reality, however, it is not easy for all migrants to become employed in this sector. Uyên explains: “It is necessary to have a beautiful appearance and good communicating skills. To be accepted to work for these restaurants or *cafés*, we must be nimble, gentle and sociable”. The girls working in restaurants and *cafés* have to communicate with all types of people. On the one hand, this makes them more self-confident in their communication skills; on the other hand, however, it can have a negative impact on the development of their personality and dignity due to the sexist attitudes and actions of some clients (see Annex 1).

Two girls have worked as maids: Quên, who is cleaning and cooking in a garment unit, and Rong, who was a housemaid until three months ago when she began sewing hand-bags. Both claim that this kind of work suits them, and that it was especially the case at the beginning of their stay in Ho Chi Minh City. It does not require a high level of education, but does require two types of skills. They must be skillful in learning how to use household appliances such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, microwave ovens, etc. Importantly, they must be honest in order to secure the trust of their landlords and landladies. Girls doing this type of work usually have some family or community relationship with their employers. Employers may be siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, or people coming from the girls’ village. Many girls live in the house of an acquaintance or relative while looking for a job or learning skills. During this time, they become housemaids for their acquaintance or relative. In return, they are provided with meals and accommodation. This is what happened with Rong and Quên. The girls claim that this work is not very hard. Housemaids do not suffer from the severity of the weather as do the girls peddling in the streets or from the terrible working conditions in small production units. One drawback, however, is that the wages are not very high. Girls working as housemaids usually earn 400,000 to 600,000 VND a month. As well, they have very few opportunities to make new social contacts

in order to improve their knowledge and develop a wider social network. Oftentimes, even when their employers take unfair advantage of them, the girls do not fully recognize their situation.

Female teenagers working as housemaids do not hold high levels of education or employment qualifications. Thus their work is advantageous for them as migrants. However, this employment also brings disadvantages because they do not benefit from legal labor rights. For example, the teenagers in our study work without labor contracts or social and health insurance. One additional problem is that the girls hesitate to express their needs because they are working for their relatives or family acquaintances.

4.2.1. Working Hours

The teenage migrants in our study work for relatively long hours, usually from 12 to 13 hours a day. Their working hours are not regular and depend on the nature and type of their work. Most of the girls work on weekends. In some sewing units they can finish their working day earlier (at 4 or 5 pm) on Sunday, but when they have to fill a large sale order, they often work from 8 am until well past midnight.

Although sewing and wrapping are hard work, these jobs are not as hard as other manual work that requires a lot of strength. However, girls who do this type of work carry out the same tasks, day after day. Their long working hours negatively affect their health because they are still physically maturing. Many girls in our research complain that they have to stand or sit with the same posture all the time, a requirement that makes them very tired and gives them back or shoulder pain. However, the girls typically do not realize the negative health impact of their work because most of them consider that this work is less hard than that in their home village. In their rural villages the girls would have to sweat on the farms and their income would be very insecure. In the city, by contrast, they work indoors and know in advance how much they will earn.

The teenage migrants working in *cafés* typically start working at 7 or 8 am and finish at 11 or 12 pm. They have very little time to relax. Uyên, an 18-year-old girl from Phu Yen who is working in a *café* in Au Duong Lan Street, reveals: “We have no free time when working in a *café*.

Whenever I have free time, I don't go anywhere, because I have to take that advantage to sleep. I need sleep. Well, this morning, I had to take an anti-sleep tablet". In fact, she went to a drugstore and asked for some medicine to help her not to feel too sleepy while working but she does not know the name of the product she is taking.

Unlike laborers working in sewing units or cafés where workers have to follow the timetable and working regulations put in place by business owners, teenage vendors can control their working hours. Yet, these girls often lengthen their workday in order to earn as much as possible. Most of them work from early morning to late evening, with some working until late at night. Their working intensity therefore is very high.

In summary, although in Vietnam an 8-hour working day is regulated by the Labor Code, the female teenagers in our study work much longer hours. Consequently, they do not have enough time for activities that would refresh their strength and help recover their health. As well, they rarely join in cultural, spiritual and entertainment activities.

4.2.2. Income

In general, the income of female teenage migrants in our research is relatively low compared to the typical income of working people in Ho Chi Minh City. Income varies according to the type of work and the level of skill of each specific girl. In sewing units and other production units of consumer goods, the girls are usually paid by number of pieces completed. Most of the girls doing sewing work indicate that they can save around 400,000 VND per month after paying for meals, electricity and other living expenses. If they work from early morning till late evening, they can save more (on average 716,666 VND per month). However, in the units where the teenagers we interviewed were hired through networks of acquaintances or relatives, the girls are paid by working days.

As we noted above, because young girls migrate to the city through social networks, their meals and accommodation, as well as some employment expenses, are usually provided by relatives or acquaintances. This support is a positive point of social networking. Because the female teenagers have a limited knowledge and are not aware of the Labor Code, however, they usually

accept the fact that their wage remains the same over time, without any promotion. In our research the girls working as seamstresses reveal that, when they first started to learn sewing, they received less than 300,000 VND per month; after they mastered sewing skills, their wages increased to an average of 500,000 VND. Yet, at the time of our survey, which is about two years after their first employment, the girls' wages remain the same, despite the fact that they are more skilled and thus more productive. As one 17 year-old girl tells us:

We came from Nam Dinh. We spent three months learning how to sew. At that time, we were paid 200,000 VND per month. We have been sewing children's clothes since we came here. Every month, each of us has 500,000 VND to save because our meals and lodging are provided by the owner [...] At present, our sewing skills are much better; we can do more, but our wage is still 500,000 VND per month, because we agreed with Mrs. Dung about the amount of wage when we first came here.

Teenage peddlers report an average income of 542,857 VND per month. Those working in *cafés* have a higher income than the others (about 800,000 VND per month). Vinh, the 18-year-old waitress from Soc Trang, says: "Working in a café or in a restaurant is really hard, but we can meet a lot of people and our wage is acceptable. My wage is 500,000 VND a month, excluding money for meals and accommodation. In addition, we also have some tips".

The income of teenage migrants working as housemaids ranges from 300,000 VND to 500,000 VND per month, depending on their specific work. Rong, the girl from Dong Bap, Bac Giang, who is now sewing bags, remembers: "I have been doing this work for only a few months. Before, as a maid, I had to work from 7 am till 10 pm. I was living in my working place and I was provided with three meals a day by my boss. She came from the same home village as me, so I felt rather comfortable. My wage was about 300,000 VND a month." Quên, the 18-year-old girl from Tra Vinh who is working as a cook in a sewing workshop that we visited, explains:

I am working here with about 20 seamstresses. I am responsible for cooking meals for our owner and for the workers. I get up at 7 in the morning to do cleaning. And then, I go to the market to buy food, cook lunch and wash clothes for the owner till 12 am. At 2 pm, I start to cook dinner and do cleaning till 7 pm. I have to work overtime on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. I also have to work on Saturday and Sunday. Every month, I get the wage of 500,000 VND and I don't have to pay for meals and accommodation.

If earning money is the goal and the motivation for migration, we can conclude that the girls in our study have partly achieved their goal, even though what they earn does not correspond to their working hours and the intensity of their work. After migration these girls have become

income-makers and in many cases they are the main breadwinners of their families. This role makes them feel satisfied with their income and working conditions. Those who benefit from the migration of teenage laborers, however, are other members of their family. The teenage migrants are not willing to spend their earnings on themselves; they accept miserable working and living conditions in order to help their parents and their family.

Generally, teenage migrant laborers in our study have a higher income than girls in their home village who have the same level of education. However, their income is much lower than that of permanent local laborers in Ho Chi Minh City who have the same level of education and qualifications. Because the girls are young they have very limited knowledge of the labor law. Also, those who come from poor families in the countryside often feel indebted to those who gave them a job; they therefore try to work from early morning till late at night for many years without thinking of how much they are being exploited or how they can improve their own lives. On the one hand, the girls' social network provides assistance and support so that they can get a job in the city. On the other hand, their social network is also a factor leading to labor exploitation.

4.2.3. Changing Jobs

As we underlined above, the goal of migration to the city for young rural girls is to find income-generating opportunities. Consequently, when arriving in Ho Chi Minh City, their first worry is about getting a job. Unlike adult laborers who are looking for employment in large factories or production units with formal recruitment procedures, the girls in our research report that their acquaintances or relatives had already arranged accommodation and jobs for them in advance. At the beginning, these girls accepted almost all of the conditions set by business owners and employers. When these owners or employers are relatives or acquaintances, there is no formal labor contracts, just oral agreements. After the girls work for some time, however, they build new social relationships and thus many have the opportunity to change their work in the hope of getting a job more suitable to their ability and interests. Sen, an 18-year-old seamstress from Ben Tre Province, says:

Our work in the homeland is very hard. After seeing people in other hamlets go to the city, I thus wanted to go to the city, too. I asked my parents to let me go. At first I came to Binh Duong Province. At that time, the people coming from the same hamlet introduced a job to me. I started to work in a freezing enterprise, but the wage

was too low, so I moved to this city. One of my male relatives took me here. At the present, I am doing sewing work.

An, 17 year-old, expresses the same situation:

I came from An Giang. My work is to make shirt button-holes [...] When I came to this city, I earned a living by taking care of children for others for about a month and a half in Go Vap District [...] An acquaintance introduced that work to me [...] but then, I found the work not suitable to me, so I stopped doing it [...] I can earn more by taking care of children, but working time is very tight and inconvenient. It is more comfortable to work here.

Similarly, Minh, the 15 year-old girl from Ben Tre whose work is cutting thread in a bag-making unit, declares: “I am just temporarily doing this job. I want to save some money from it in order to learn sewing skills”.

After studying job selection and employment changes for the purpose of improving earnings, we realize that female teenage migrants in our study have been very dynamic. Although the income they earn in the informal economic sector is not high, job opportunities in this sector are relatively diversified. Nonetheless, changing employment requires these girls to adapt rapidly to new working conditions.

4.3. Living Conditions

For the sake of sending money to help their family, most of the girls try to save money as much as possible and live austere in their new urban environment. To illustrate more clearly the lives of these young girls, we now present specific living conditions of teenage migrants in Ward 3, District 8.

As mentioned above, most of the teenage migrants in our research came to Ho Chi Minh City through the guidance of relatives, friends and acquaintances. Their employment, meals and accommodation were therefore arranged in advance. However, these initial living arrangements were temporary. Many girls have changed their living place as well as type of their work.

The female teenage migrants working as peddlers or vendors in the streets or as laborers in production units usually rent a room to live. Most of the rooms are temporary, built with a corrugated iron roof, although some rooms have a wooden loft. While rent is usually paid

monthly, some girls pay a daily rate of 2,000 to 3,000 VND a night. “I live in a room for rent, which costs 3,000 VND per person per night. We do not have money to buy a house. Every night, I have to pay 3,000 VND. There are four rooms in the house. We rent one of the rooms. There is a fan, but we rarely use it. There are six people living in my room”, explains Inh, the 17-year-old book-peddler from Thanh Hoa.

These girls consider their room as simply a resting place after a hard day of work and as a place to store personal belongings; many of them therefore share a room. The number of roommates depends on the rent and the size of the room. In general, each girl has a very small space in the room. The monthly rent of a shared room ranges from 200,000 to 400,000 VND; thus each roommate has to pay from 40,000 to 60,000 VND a month. This rent is acceptable to the female teenage migrants who came to Ho Chi Minh City without their family. Housing facilities and furnishings for these girls are very simple. They do not have televisions or cassette players, which are common means of entertainment today. The most valuable items that these girls own are an electric fan or, in some cases, a radio.

Many of the problems we have observed concern the living environment in rooms for rent. Rooms for rent in Ward 3, District 8 are often temporarily built next to, or even above, canals. On sunny days, when the water level declines, the whole area is covered by a very stinking substance. During high tide in the canals on rainy days, water overflows into the rooms; the rooms are thus always wet and there is not enough fresh air. Most of the girls in our research are living in such an unhealthy environment. Since the rent is very cheap, however, they accept these conditions in order to save more money to be sent to their families. Furthermore, the cheap rooms for rent used by these teenagers are usually located in an insecure area such as a slum where there are social evils such as drug trafficking, thievery, prostitution, etc.

Frame 3. Rooms for rent in Ward 3, District 8, HCMC.

Several teenagers peddling lottery tickets stay over night in a row of rooms for rent that are built of bricks with an iron roof. The rooms are roughly 8 meters long and 3 meters wide. Many people of different ages stay together. Most of them came from the same province. On sunny days it is impossible to stay overnight in the rooms because it is very hot. On the contrary, on rainy days the floor is soaked with water so it is very wet and stinking, even though the roof is not leaking. Rows of rooms for rent in Ward 3, District 8 are usually located along seriously polluted canals. Consequently, when the water level declines on sunny days, a stinking smell emanates from the canals. At high tide on rainy days, water usually overflows into the rooms.

For teenage migrants who came to the city with their family, living conditions are somewhat better. Owing to the network of acquaintances and relatives, adult family members can find a house or a room of better quality. These families also invest more money in household goods. As Binh, an 18 year-old lottery ticket seller who accompanied her family to the city, explains,

I have been living here since it was built by the owner. We have to pay 300,000 VND per month. At first, it looked beautiful. In general, its area is relatively large. We have to cover our expenses for electricity and water: 5,000 VND per one cubic meter of water and 1,300 VND per one KW of electricity [...] we have a TV and VCR, etc. The only thing we don't have is a motorbike. My father says that we all would have to save money to buy a motorbike, but I don't think we can afford it.

For En, the 14 year-old girl who is selling fruits on a small boat, the boat is used as a place to live as well as to do business and store goods that are being transferred from her homeland to the city. Living conditions on such boats are very bad. The amount of living space is very small; the sanitary environment is terrible; the girl does not have access to electricity, clean water, a bathroom nor a toilet. Moreover, these boats are not safe; during the time of our survey, we witnessed the drowning of a 4-year-old child who lived on a boat.

Several girls in our sample do not rent rooms but live at their workplace. Most of these girls work for small-size production units. After a tiring day of work, they rest in a small room shared with other workers or push the sewing machines close to the wall and stretch out a sedge mat to sleep on the floor of the working place. Dân, a 17-year-old seamstress from Nam Dinh, describes the situation: "We usually have to work until 12 pm. After that, we have to tidy up and we start sleeping at about 1 am. Five of us [girls] sleep here [next to the five sewing machines]; he [the boy also working there] sleeps next to the door. The owners sleep upstairs". The girls thus do not have their own personal space, not even a bed to lie on. Though there are electric fans and a television, the girls are usually not allowed to use them; as well, because they have to work

overtime very often, when they do have free time they usually prefer to take a rest. Although such living conditions strikes researchers as bad, the girls themselves claim that they are acceptable because they do not have to rent a room. Moreover, the young migrants also feel that they can help each other when they live together. Teenage migrants working in a restaurant, a *café*, or as housemaids also often live in their workplace. However, their living conditions are better than those of the above-mentioned groups. While their living facilities are very simple, they are provided with a quiet place to sleep after a hard working day.

Much research on migrant laborers, specifically on female migrants, reveals that these laborers tend to minimize expenses on food, though hard work consumes much of their energy. This practice can lead to poor health. Our research on teenage migrants in Ho Chi Minh City gives the same finding. Teenagers generally, and female laborers working at an early age in particular, need a suitable diet. According to our observations and analyses of in-depth interviews, however, the diet of teenage migrants in our sample does not provide girls with enough energy to recover after their work. They rarely pay attention to what they eat, partly because their economic conditions are difficult and partly because they want to save as much money as possible to send to their families. Also important is the fact that these girls may not be fully aware of the importance of diet. Inh, the 17-year-old peddler from Thanh Hoa, says: “I always have meals out. I do not cook for myself [...] I have soup for dinner because I cannot afford a portion of rice meal at the food stall, which costs 3,000 or 4,000 VND. I feel full with a bowl of soup, which costs just 2,000 VND, and some cake, which costs 1,000 VND. That is enough.”

One more reason why teenage migrants in our research sample have only simple meals is that they are usually paid by piecework. Because payment by piecework can encourage laborers to work harder, it also makes girls pay too much attention to their income-generating activities. While they spend most of their time working, they do not care about their meals.

Frame 4. A meal at a private handbag-making unit in Ward 3, District 8

There are 15 people altogether, including eight females. The meal is served with three big pots of rice and two plates of fried eggs, two plates of fried soy-beans (15 pieces), two bowls of vegetable soup and one plate of fried peas. When asked about meals for other days, a girl working in the unit says that they sometimes eat meat and fish, but they often have simple meals because they do not have time to properly prepare food. At about 10:15 am everyday, one of the girls is asked to go to the market to buy food and cook meals. They therefore usually have a simple meal so that they have more time to work.

In summary, teenage migrants in our research endure very bad living conditions. Their living facilities are limited and temporary. In keeping with their work ethic, the girls try to curb their spending on food and other necessities in order to increase their remittances. This finding demonstrates that the personal benefits of working hard do not correspond to the income generated by these girls.

4. 4. Adapting to Urban Life

Cultural and spiritual activities are necessary for all people. They balance our life and help us recover our physical and mental health after working hard. However, the girls in our research have very limited opportunities to take part in these types of activities. They have to work long hours; their working intensity is high; and they do not dare spend money for their individual needs (both material and spiritual) in order to save more money to be remitted to their families. In addition, complications of the urban environment also limit their social contacts and thus their cultural and spiritual activities.

In order to survive in the city and fulfill their desire to save money, the teenage migrants in our study try to maximize time for income generation. They thus have little leisure time. When they have free time, they tend to use this time to sleep to recover their strength, as does Uyên quoted above explaining that, in order to do her work in the *café*, she “had to take an anti-sleep tablet” the morning of our interview. Also, due to their modest income, the girls face difficulties in making reasonable expenses for meals, clothes and saving; they therefore do not want to spend money for other material and spiritual needs.

Given their long working hours and lack of money, the girls in our study have very little opportunity to access the mass media. None of the teenage migrants who came to the City without their family own a TV set, and very few buy books or newspapers to read. In the rare case they do access media, the girls mostly watch or listen to entertainment programs. They do not pay attention to educational programs or current events, two activities that could compensate their low level of education and enhance their knowledge of social issues. As Chien, one of the 17-year-old seamstress from Nam Dinh, tells us: “There is a TV and a cassette-player in the upstairs. My uncle and aunt own them. In the days when we do not have much work to do, we go upstairs to watch TV. I just like to watch Korean movies and music”.

In addition to time and financial constraints, the girls have other difficulties in adapting to urban life due to their particular psychological characteristics. For example, they often feel afraid or anxious about risks in the urban environment. They do not dare to participate in cultural and spiritual activities, nor do they feel self-confident enough to make social contact with unknown city dwellers. Their contacts are almost only with their workmates, roommates and villagers. This restriction limits their opportunities to gain living experience or social knowledge. Part of the problem stems from the way that the girls are psychologically influenced by the preconceptions of their family members and friends who claim that urban life is very complicated and dangerous.

I have been told that this city is in great complication and chaos. I got a lot of warnings from my family, before I went here. My father advised me to be careful and not to go anywhere. When he heard that I was living in the working dormitory, my father no longer felt worried. And he keeps on reminding me in every letter ever since,

says 17-year-old Khôi. The girls realize that the knowledge and experience they have gained in their home village are not sufficient to make them self-confident in coping with the complications and risks of life in the city. To continue to live and work in the city, the girls have to take precautions for their safety. They try to limit participation in activities outside of their workplace, as well as their social contacts. From the girls’ perspectives these measures help them avoid the dangers of their new urban environment. Tranh, a 15-year-old girl from Binh Duong province who is doing wrapping work, reveals: “Since I came here, I have been always afraid of contacting or communicating with strangers. Except for my workmates, I don’t know anyone else”.

Most of migrant laborers in our sample disclose that they have never taken part in any cultural festival or been to entertainment places in Ho Chi Minh City, despite the fact that the animated urban atmosphere was an initial motivation for migration for some of them. For example, Chien “always dreamed of going to the South”. Yet, after living and working in the city for a few months, she decided that she wanted to return to her home village. She says:

I am fed up with living here, because it is too boring. In this city, people just care about their own family. They do not go to visit their neighbors. In our home village, at harvest time, we just concentrate on doing our own work in the field, but at the leisure time, we always go to visit our neighbors, talking and playing with them. It is very joyful. In this city, when we have nothing to do, we just stay at home all day; we do not know where to go; and it is very boring. Moreover, my uncle and my aunt do not let me go out, anyway. It is a city, you see, so it is not the same as rural villages. We cannot come to visit neighboring houses freely. We know this, so we do not go anywhere. When we have free time, we just sleep; we do nothing but sometimes go to the market. We have also visited our grandfather. We have just been to those places since we came here. We haven't been to anywhere else.

Adolescence is a time of psychological and biological changes. It is also a key time for young adults to learn and thus shape their personality. Female teenage migrants coming to the city not only have to leave their first and most important environment of socialization – their family – but they also have their learning and living experiences interrupted. This interruption contributes to the risks and potential mishaps that the girls face in their urban life.

According to our research, female teenage migrant laborers, especially those coming alone to the city, know very little about general social conditions and their legal rights. In part, this is why their income does not correspond to the energy and time they expend for their work. This is clearly reflected in their working hours, working intensity and working environments. Facing severe challenges, there is the potential that girls like those in our study will be attracted to illegal activities such as prostitution or drugs. According to a local policeman, Ward 3, District 8 is where a lot of migrants are living. Of those migrants, many teenage girls are working in bars and discotheques, as well as engaging in prostitution. As this policeman explains, “There are a lot of those people in our local area. They mainly came from provinces. They are young. They usually rent a room in the different rows of rooms for rent in our Ward. They do not do prostitution in this area, but they do it in other Wards. It is therefore very difficult to take control over this

issue.” These female teenage migrants have a poor understanding of sexuality, fertility health, and HIV-AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

In reality, when making a decision about migration to the City in search of a job, most of the girls have hoped to earn a more stable income than they could in their home village and build a better life for themselves and their families. At that time, they considered only positive points and could not imagine what difficulties and risks they could face while earning a living in Ho Chi Minh City. Consequently, a lot of girls are not fully prepared psychologically to cope with difficulties. For example, they do not know how to deal with depression or they worry when they are without parents or other family members; they find it hard to adapt to their new living environment. In reality, the girls quietly endure hardships and difficulties, hoping that things will be better in the future. As before, they still hope for an improved life, but their wishes have somewhat changed; they have become more practical and more realistic. As Lan, a 15 year-old from Ben Tre, tells us:

I have been peddling fruits in the street for over two years. I wanted to come to the city to learn sewing skills, but I did not have money to learn the job, so I had no choice but to peddle fruits. My mother said that I should continue this work and when we have the money she will let me learn sewing skills. However, I think it is impossible because my parents are still deep in debt. My wish now is that my fruits can be sold out every day.

After living and working in the city, many of the girls in our study want to go to school or wish to do a job that gives them enough money to live without leaving their home village. Others expect to work harder to save more money in order to stabilize their life when they return to their home village. However, all these outcomes remain wishful thinking; most of the girls are aware of this. When asked about plans and intentions for future, a lot of them have no answer because they do not know how to realize their dreams. Others are more aware of their ability and conditions. Living and working in the city taught them that if they want to improve their employment, they must equip themselves with working skills that are suitable to their ability and aspirations.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

According to our study in Ward 3, District 8 in Ho Chi Minh City, the major reason for the migration of female teenagers to this city is economic difficulties in their families. Typically, the girls in our study came to Ho Chi Minh City because they did not have work in their home

villages or their income was unstable. They realized that they would have to take part in non-agricultural activities to improve their economic conditions and that their employment needs could be met in urban areas. Access to employment and assurance of living arrangements greatly influenced the decisions about migration made by both the girls and their family members, their parents in particular. Although they were very young and lacked working skills or qualifications, the girls found relatively stable employment and a place to live easily and quickly. The social networks available in the city provided positive assistance and support for them at the beginning of their stay in their new environment. This demonstrates that community networks among rural people are maintained and developed in urban areas, even in large centres like Ho Chi Minh City. Yet, these networks do not have only positive impacts. Findings of our research show that relationships in this network are also a factor leading to the labor exploitation of female teenage migrants.

In addition to the objective economic reason, female teenagers in our study wanted to widen their knowledge and experience, to escape their monotonous life in a poor rural homeland, and to set up a better life in the future. They believed much of what they had heard through mass media and stories told by their neighbors or acquaintances about the positive consequences of migration to the city and could not imagine what living and working conditions they would encounter.

At the time of our research, our participants are working in the informal sector where working skills, qualifications and education are not strictly required. This work is convenient because it is suitable to their present ability. Yet, this situation also brings many disadvantages to them. These girls do not have formal written labor contracts; they do not benefit from the protection of the Labor Code. They are forced to accept long working hours with high working intensity in harmful working environments, while their incomes are low and do not correspond to the time and energy expended. Despite these facts, most of the girls in our study are not aware that they are being exploited. While some may know, they do not dare protest because they are afraid of losing their job or harming relationships among home-villagers. Moreover, a lot of them also feel satisfied with their work in the city because they think it to be better paid and much more valuable than what they would be doing in their home villages.

Although being very young, the female teenage migrants in our study are well aware of their responsibilities to their families. They are not afraid of working in severe conditions or having an austere living situation, lacking everything (both materially and spiritually) in order to save as much as they can to be remitted to their families. Many of these female teenage migrants have become a main source of income for their families. From this perspective, the migration of these girls brings economic advantages to their families. For themselves, the girls are willing to suffer disadvantages. Their suffering clearly illustrates the younger generation's inheritance of the cultural tradition "to live for the sake of others". However, we acknowledge that this finding also reflects the limited opportunities these girls have to enhance their social knowledge once they become trapped in such difficult working and living conditions.

As they have to work for so many hours and also minimize their expenses, the girls have very few opportunities to access mass media or take part in cultural and spiritual activities. Without social contacts, they live separately from the rest of society. While people at their age usually enjoy outdoor activities and have fun, these girls lock themselves within their limited space. For them, isolation from the rest of the urban environment is a strategy to protect themselves from risks. As analyzed above, adolescence also is a time of psychological and biological changes. It is a time for young people to learn and develop their personality. The fact that these girls have very few social contacts and cultural-spiritual activities has a negative impact on their social knowledge and living experiences. This impact subjects them to risks and mishaps, as well as makes them unable to deal with social challenges. Because they have no guide and lack knowledge and living experience, these girls are at risk of falling into "social evils" and illegal activities.

Family, school and society are three environments where people can equip themselves with necessary social knowledge and develop their personality. For female teenage migrants who leave their families and school in order to earn a living, their two first environments as arenas of socialization are interrupted. As noted above, once relocated to their new living environment, the girls in our study isolate themselves from the rest world. They therefore do not have opportunities to learn and develop. This makes it more difficult for them to integrate and adapt to their new life; it sometimes made them fail to build a life in their new urban setting.

From a development perspective, our research team concludes that female teenage migrants in Ward 3, District 8 contribute to their families and communities of origin, as well as to the economic development of Ho Chi Minh City through their hard labor. Teenage female migrants therefore deserve support from broader society and local governments in order for them not to become a generation of second-class citizens. There must be specific and appropriate policies and programs for long-term migration strategies in Vietnam.

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ANNEX 1

VINH'S STORY

Vinh was born in 1986 in Soc Trang, a province in the Mekong Delta. More than three quarters of Soc Trang's territory is dedicated to agriculture, mainly rice production. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Soc Trang, then part of Ba Xuyen Province, was known as the "granary of the Mekong Delta". Since the middle of the 1990s, taking advantage of Soc Trang's 72 kilometers of sea coast, aquaculture has become a key economic sector, with the highest seafood export turnover in the country during 1998. According to the 1999 national census, 80% of the labor force is working in agriculture and aquaculture. Shrimp production and exportation have helped to reduce Soc Trang's poverty rate. However, when the demand for shrimp in the United States dropped in 2001, the price of shrimp dropped as well, and as a consequence Vietnamese shrimp breeders suffered considerable losses in 2001 and 2002.

In addition to economic difficulties in aquaculture, Soc Trang people also suffered losses caused by natural calamities, such as the storm No. 5 in 1997, which caused over 300 billion VND worth of damage. More than 120 people are still missing; more than 20,000 houses collapsed; 50 hectares of rice, ready to be harvested, were lost because the fields were flooded with salty water and totally destroyed, causing great losses for farmers. Soc Trang farmers usually have problems selling their agricultural products, not only rice but also their "bumper crops" such as corn, water melon, onion and squash, which are being grown by many Khmer people after rice harvest in order to get additional income. The price of these crops is also much lower than in the past.

Due to these difficult conditions, Soc Trang people have spontaneously migrated to Cambodia, Ho Chi Minh City and other nearby provinces in order to find work and improve their life. While they often migrate with family members or with a group of people from the same village or commune, some people migrate individually.

1. Reasons for Migration:

Vinh's family lives near the town of My Tu, in one of the poorest districts in Soc Trang. "There are 7 people in my family", says Vinh. "I am the third of five children. My older sister is living here in Ho Chi Minh City, my older brother is married and my two younger brothers are still of school age; they are living at home with my parents."

Vinh's parents have only a few thousand square meters of land, on which they do farming. They used to also have a small shop where they sold different products such as salt, instant noodles, etc., as well as served coffee, breakfast, refreshments, and so on. People in the area are poor, so their shop had few customers however. Moreover, customers often bought drinks on credit and did not repay their debt. During the last Tet holiday, a person who frequented their shop died in the neighborhood; since then people have avoided the shop even more. Vinh's parents finally stopped doing business because they ran out of capital. "Our living conditions have gotten worse", says Vinh.

When she was still living with her parents, after harvesting on their land, Vinh and her siblings would go to Cambodia to work on harvests there or to Tien Giang or Dong Thap to cut sugarcane in order to earn extra money for the family. Although all members of Vinh's family have been working hard, their living conditions "are still difficult and worse than that of others in their village". In the face of such economic hardship, Vinh and her sister decided that they had to migrate to Ho Chi Minh City to work in order to improve their current miserable life and help their family. In addition, Vinh was also curious: she wanted "to see what Ho Chi Minh City is like". At the age of 16, she took a bus, alone, to Ho Chi Minh City to look for a job.

Vinh's parents, especially her grandfather, did not agree to let her go to Ho Chi Minh City to look for a job. When they learned that she works in a Café, her father said: "as you come to the City to work in a café, others look down on our family". In contrast, Vinh thinks that: "it doesn't matter that I am working in the café. It depends on what I do. If I don't do anything wrong, I will not be afraid of doing it. I don't care what others think about me, but I care how to earn money to be sent to my parents". Until now (February 2004), she has been working at the same café for over three years, but apart from her parents, members of her family in Soc Trang still do not know that she is working in a café; they think she is doing the same factory work as her sister.

Vinh decided to work in the café because she did not want a job as hard as her sister's.

"My sister came to Ho Chi Minh City before me and she got a job in a plastic firm in District 2. Although she earns more money than people who work hard in the field in our home village, she has to wake up early and stay up late to work, especially at the end of the year, when sale orders of the firm must be urgently accomplished. The most miserable aspect of her job is that she has to suffer plastic smell. It is very terrible. If I smell it for a while, I vomit immediately [...] I do not want to have such a hard job as my sister. Moreover, I used to make coffee to be sold in our stall when I was in our home village. I am used to doing this. In our home village, after working in a café for a year, people will feel very bored. Yet, I have never felt bored of working in this café... It is not a hard job, anyway".

Vinh does not hide her hopes, which are the same as those of her friends doing this type of work. She says: "I am working here and if I meet someone, who loves me, my life will positively change. At that time, I will live permanently in the City and will have a stable job". Vinh and her friends think that they have a lot of opportunities to have a city lover when they are doing café work.

2. Work History and Working Conditions:

When, at the age of 16 and with only three years of schooling, Vinh arrived at Mien Tay Bus Station in District 6, she saw that a lot of cafés have a notice-board indicating that they need to employ waitresses. She went into one café close to Phu Lam Park and was accepted.

"When I came there to ask for a job, the owner accepted me immediately. The next morning, he took me out to have breakfast. He bought a lot of things for me. A few days later, he said he wanted to love me. I did not like this, so I fled and went to a café in District 7 to work. In District 7, a lot of customers also took me out to buy things for me. However, when I came back to the café, I took them off. If I had kept wearing those things, other customers would have found it difficult to buy the same

things for me. In addition, some people might ask me why I kept working for a café, when I had so many valuable things!”

At that time, Vinh earned just VND 600,000-700,000 per month. She was sleeping in the café. Although she did not have to pay rent, she did not like to stay at her workplace overnight: “It was very unpleasant. At 5 am, the owner woke us up to prepare things so that the café could open at 6 am. From that moment till 11 or 12 pm, we did not have any time to lie down even for a while. We sometimes had a lot of customers, so we had to stay up till 1 or 2 am. And then, my friend and I found this too hard, so we decided to share a room for rent outside”.

At the beginning, Vinh did not know how to “be pleasant with customers”. She was not used to the behavior of impolite customers and she also did not know how to behave with the owner. She changed jobs several times. After working in District 6 and District 7, she worked in District 2, Binh Thanh District, and she eventually moved to Dong Nai and Binh Duong Province. At present, she is working in a café in Ward 3, District 8 where our team conducted its research. Her main reason for these changes is economic: “my income was not high; in addition, customers loved to be with me too much, so they were fighting with each other”. But she adds: “Moreover, I was also abused”. By “abused,” she means that customers of the cafés deliberately touched her, flirted with her, and asked her to have sex with them. Although she did not like this, she thought that she had no choice but to let them do so.

After changing her workplace several times, Vinh’s working skills have been much enhanced. She now has a lot of experience and knows how to treat customers; her income therefore has increased. Though she says that her monthly income is about 800,000–900,000 VND, we estimate that her total monthly income is at least 1 million VND since she has to cover expenses such as the remittance of 500,000 VND sent to her family every month, her rent of 100,000 VND for sharing a room, and 20,000 VND/day on food. In addition, she also has to spend money on facial care and cosmetics. The above-mentioned income does not include the tips which customers give her. (According to a lot of girls working in cafés that we met during our research, their main source of income is the tips from customers.) Yet, Vinh does not think her income reflects her hard work from 7.00 am till 11.00-12.00 pm. Furthermore, she sometimes has to work until 2 or 3 am because there are a lot of customers. She also has to please her customers, meaning that she has to talk with them and treat them very sweetly, so that they will not only come back to the café, but also recommend it to their friends. Most importantly, pleasing customers means that they will like her and give her more tips. She says: “I could not sleep for the past few days because we have had a lot of customers. I sometimes feel so tired and fed up with this work”.

Vinh is sometimes very bitter when she talks about her customers:

“Most of our customers are old goats. They always flirt and tease us. When this happens, I feel annoyed and very sad. Some customers are very old, but they still like to touch my body. And, they even try to kiss me. I feel annoyed, but I have to control myself, because I have no choice but to accept it in order to help my family. Gradually, I feel better and... It is also joyful to talk with customers. When I recall how I have to please them, I feel self-pity. Yet, it doesn’t matter to me. It is important how we treat customers. Only when we have done something wrong, can they dupe

us”. [For example, she might be abused when she agrees to have sex with a customer.]

Vinh knows that her hard work is not appreciated by her family and neighbors. She says: “I do not want anyone to know my working place. I work here and send money to my family, in order to support schooling fees of my two younger brothers”. Or: “I do not want anyone in my home-village to know what job I do. Moreover, my parents haven’t told anyone about my job; thus, no one in my home-village knows what job I do in Ho Chi Minh City. My parents are afraid I could be infected with diseases”.

At the time of her interview, Vinh has a boyfriend – a 30-year old truck driver. He is the customer who gives her the highest tips and he flirts with her. She explains:

“He is very jealous and selfish. I am working here, so I have to sit next to my customers; I have to smile and talk with them. When he comes in and sees me doing it, he usually quarrels and fights with the customers. Yet, he loves me much. He often buys a lot of things for me. He sometimes buys clothes, sometimes a gold armlet, sometimes a necklace, rings, etc. When I visit my family in my home-village, I often give all those to my mother. When I come back to Ho Chi Minh City, he asks me about them and I lie to him and say that I sold them. He buys new ones for me, but I then give them to my mother again. I do not like to wear them.”

There are a lot of risks for Vinh when she is doing this job, but she has not realized them. She finds her work very interesting. “I work indoor all the time. I have opportunities to wear nice clothes and talk with many people”, she says. In terms of responding to the customers who take liberties with her, she thinks very simply: “All men ask for that. It depends on me. I do it when I want. No one can force me to do it”. These risks are why Vinh knows very well how to prevent pregnancy and how to have an abortion. She reveals: “We have to use condoms or take morning-after pills. If we unintentionally are pregnant, we must have abortion, when it is within a month or 2 months or 5 weeks. If we have already been pregnant for 3 or 4 months, we can have abortion, but it will be very dangerous... If we have abortions for many times, our uterus will be thinner etc”. In contrast, her understanding of HIV/AIDS or reproductive health in general is extremely limited. She says: “I don’t care about those diseases, so I know nothing about them. Anyway, I do not have time to care about them”. She does not mention if she has had abortion herself, and the research team did not ask.

At the time of our interview, Vinh is very pale, possibly from severe anemia, and looks unhealthy. Her skin has a lot of pimples and wrinkles that are a result of having her face chemically treated at a facial care salon. As a result, she looks much older than her age of 19. She says: “Whenever I am sick, I come back to my home village to be medically treated. It costs much money [...] My parents do not tell me what disease I have. I guess the disease is not common, so my parents do not tell me. They are afraid I will do something foolish, if I know what disease I have”. We hope Vinh does not carry AIDS, as this would make her life much harder.

3. Future Plans

Compared with other girls of the same age in the research at Ward 3, District 8, Vinh more easily adapted to the living environment in Ho Chi Minh City. She has a strong viewpoint about

differences between the City and her home village. She says: “I prefer to live here. In this City, people live without paying attention to others. In my home village, it is different [...] I like the lifestyle here, anyway. In my home village, people are too talkative. I hate it and I feel furious [...] We should treat others the same way they treat us. If they are kind to us, we will be kind to them too”.

Working in a café, Vinh has to work from early morning until late at night; she thus has never been to the cinema or music centers, although she has been in Ho Chi Minh City for over three years. She says: “I have to work here from early morning till late night. After work, it is already late, so I just come to the room I rent to sleep. Sometimes, when I am ill, I want to go to the doctor, but I do not have time to go. We [she and her roommates] just try to work as much as possible, so we do not take care of our health. We all look so thin, like storks”.

Recently, Vinh’s health problems have gotten worse. As a result, she looks ahead to a new life: “In several months, I will come back to my home village and I will also take a vocational course on hairdressing. My lover already gave me money and asked me to take the course long ago, but I did not agree with him. But, I will. By the way, I will treat my disease so that I can open a hairdresser’s shop, after I recover from the disease”. In fact, when she was still in her home village, Vinh already liked hairdressing and she wanted to come to Ho Chi Minh City to learn this new skill. Because she did not have money to learn a new trade, she has been working in a café in the hope of saving enough money to one day be able to learn the job she likes.

The story of Vinh is not unique. Several studies show that most of the girls working in cafés, bars and restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City are female migrants from rural areas. A great number of these girls become prostitutes. Thus many girls who come from other provinces to Ho Chi Minh City to work in cafés or restaurants as waitresses in the hope of improving their lives have the same sad experience. It is very difficult for them to make their dreams come true. Although working in cafés can give them a higher income than work in their home village, in addition to tips and gifts given to them by customers, the work damages their health and beauty quickly. After working in a café in Ho Chi Minh City for three years, what Vinh now wishes most is to recover from her disease. She says: “I just wish to recover from my disease so that I am well enough to work. Yet, I will not keep working here, but I will come back to my home village to open a café or a hairdressing salon. Working here makes me too tired and bored. I always feel sleepy, but I cannot sleep. When I am lying down, I just think around from this to that”.

**ACCESS TO RESOURCES OF THE KTU WOMEN
AT HONG HA COMMUNE, A LUOI DISTRICT,
THUA THIEN - HUE PROVINCE**

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ACCESS TO RESOURCES OF THE KTU WOMEN AT HONG HA COMMUNE, A LUOI DISTRICT, THUA THIEN - HUE PROVINCE

1. INTRODUCTION

Hong Ha is a commune of A Luoi highland district, Thua Thien-Hue province in Vietnam. Like other highland areas in Vietnam, this district is home to many ethnic minorities living in unfavourable natural conditions (forest and land degradation, steep topography, etc.) with undeveloped facilities (insufficient roads, housing, schools, etc.) and limited access to education (no secondary school in the commune) and other public services (absence of markets, telephone and communications, etc.). It is also one of the poorest communes in Thua Thien-Hue province. Research on gender roles in Hong Ha has revealed that women have limited access to the resources necessary for development. However, this research has only described this problem and has not yet analysed reasons for women's limited access. Thus, deeper study of women's access to and control over the resources needed for development is of great significance and necessity.

Five ethnic groups (Ktu, Bru, Van Kieu, Pa Ko, Ta Oi, Pa Hy) live together in Hong Ha. Ktu is the largest group; it is settled in three (Arom, Parinh and Kon Sam) of the five villages of the commune. Ktu is also the biggest group in several provinces in Central Vietnam. This group speaks the Mon-Khmer language (Nguyen Huu Thong, 2004). Due to limitations in time, human resources and funding, this research focuses only on the Ktu, studying their access to and control over three main resources needed for development: land, credit and information.

A research team consisting of members from Hue and Vinh universities was established. This team aimed to contribute to the general understanding of gender issues in sustainable and equitable development as well as enhance the capacity of its members to carry out gender research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to several authors, "resource" has a meaning similar to "property." Resources indicate what can be mobilised to reduce poverty and inequality. Long-term resources include financial

and natural assets, as well as social and community relationships (Ford Foundation, 2002). For other researchers, types of resources consist of capital or productive assets, politics, knowledge, technology, time, space and capacity to mobilise resources.

“Access” refers to the opportunity of a person to use a resource. “Control” over a resource refers to the capacity to authorize the use of that resource and to impose that authorization on others (Kusakabe, 2001). Access means that a resource may be available, but it does not mean control over its use. Control means the rights to make decisions related to a resource (Saito and Spurling, 1992).

2.1. Land

Research in many countries, especially in developing countries, shows that although women play an important role in the production and reproduction of labour, they have few opportunities to access land. Typically, women gain indirect access to land through their husbands or their husbands’ relatives (Saito and Spurling, 1992). As well, laws on land inheritance are also gender biased; the right to inherit land is usually given to sons (Quisumbing, 1994).

In Vietnam, the previous system of cooperatives, which existed from the late 1950s to the late 1980s, limited inequalities in land ownership. The Land Law issued in 1993 assured that land was to be distributed relatively equally. However, for women uncertain access to land was still a problem that needed further consideration. Widows were named in land-use right certification only until their sons grew up. After divorcing, women could lose land. For ethnic minority women in particular, access to land as well as other productive resources was a social concern. For example, for the Mo Nong group in Tay Nguyen (the Highlands), due to the influence of matrilinearity, land ownership inheritance gave priority to daughters. However, according to Gebert (1997), this inheritance practice was changed during the redistribution of land and the issue of long-term land-use certificates by the government. These certificates were issued under the name of the heads of household who, in most cases, were men. This situation was similar to the case of H’Mong women in Tua Chua (Lai Chau) or black Thai women in Yen Chau (Son La) (Gebert and Hang, 1997). Since the new Land Law, issued in 2003, the names of areath husband and wife are to be written on the land-use certificate.

In the market economy, land ownership and access to land have an important influence on rural households. Lacking land, capital and technological knowledge presents great difficulties for poor female heads of households (usually widows and single mothers) (Binh, 1997). Moreover, the rights of women in land transfer and land use are more easily abused than those of men (The National Committee for the Advancement of Vietnamese Women, 2000). Inequality in the right to own land or obtain credit related to land has deprived women of daily life resources, forcing them to be dependent on men (World Bank, 2001). Also, before the 2003 Land Law, the absence of women's names on certificates of land-use rights limited their access to other resources, such as credit.

2.2. Credit

Some research shows that supporting women to get better access to savings and credit improves their economic position and economic security, and thus their households' welfare. Micro-credit emerged as an intervention against poverty because of its positive impact on economic development as measured through a series of social development indicators (World Bank, 2000). When women have access to credit, their position in their household and community is likely to be strengthened and their decision-making role is likely to be enhanced (VIE, 96-011).

Access to credit is not always accompanied by positive changes in gender relationships or improvement in the position and roles of women in the household and society. Research into micro-credit schemes for women reveals that, if women get only access to credit without controlling the capital, there is no change in gender relationships. However, to control credit as a resource, women need a certain level of knowledge, such as knowing how to read and write, to calculate budgets, and to use the loan effectively. In the final analysis, simply access to micro-credit does not guarantee that women in general and ethnic minority women in particular will escape poverty.

Despite these problems, research also shows that women are the most appropriate subjects for saving and credit activities because they play a very important role in taking care of their family's welfare. In Vietnam, in most cases women manage the expenses of their family. When they have

an income, women typically give priority to children's needs and other necessary expenses. Once receiving a loan, women are likely to use the money in productive ways, increasing household income and contributing to family welfare more than usually happens when men receive loans. Women are also more careful about expenditures than men, and are more concerned about repaying loans than men are (The Women's Union of Ha Tinh province, 1999).

Previous research also shows that very few official financial services reach poor people, including programs specifically designed for them (Vietnam – Voice of the Poor, 1999). Poor people are often discriminated against. In contrast, individuals who have a good chance of repaying loans, people who have "relations", richer people, and people in government enterprises are favoured (Oxfam, 2000). In 1999, there were 5.6 million Vietnamese households borrowing capital from official sources, of which 2.7 million households were poor or had low income. Additional research has revealed that women receive only 10% of loans from the Bank of the Poor; while women account for 41% of all borrowed capital, only 29% of this money is borrowed from official sources (Investigating Life Standards, 1997-1998). Therefore, poor women access informal credit schemes that carry high rates of interest and limit the amount of available funds (VIE-96-011).

The Woman's Union (WU) has the most popular credit scheme for women, with a rotating fund totalising 4,000 billion VND. This program is implemented in all areas of all regions and at all levels of the country. The WU's micro-credit scheme does not require collateral, but rather strict money savings and an assurance of good monitoring of funds by borrowers. In general, loans are small with easy conditions and simple administrative procedures at the hamlet, village, or commune level. The repayment rate is usually over 90%. However, the Vietnamese WU is not a professional financial organisation, and most union staff is not trained bank staff. Without a legal foundation to assure their activities and strengthen their professional capacity, the WU credit staff might be unable to maintain their financial activities in the long term (VIE-96-011).

In addition to gaining access to credit through the banks and WU's system, women can also access credit through informal practices, such as gathering and sharing money or forming a credit team or a saving-credit group with neighbours and/or family members (Rutherford, 8/1998),

although these practices are not widespread. For poor people, especially poor women, borrowing from specialized private sector sources is the most popular because of flexibility and convenience, even though the high rates of interest can lead to worsened poverty.

2.3. Scientific and Technical Information

On the one hand, the economic reform process in Vietnam since the 1990s brings convenient socio-economic conditions for households; on the other hand, it brings many new challenges. For example, women's education level is generally low. While this problem existed in the past, today it is a major hindrance in rural areas. Illiteracy, re-illiteracy¹ and low levels of education directly affect the learning of science, technology and financial management by women (Binh and Lan, 1996). There is a large demand for scientific and technological information for women. Poor households in both the lowlands and highlands have low standards of living. Poor women in particular have few chances to enjoy cultural activities. They rarely watch TV or listen to the radio because of limited access to media and little free time. This problem impedes the acquisition of knowledge about science, technology and the economic market by poor people, particularly poor women.

The lack of information and scientific knowledge about cultivation and husbandry leaves many women confused and passive when faced with difficulty (pests, animal diseases, etc.). It is crucial that women participate in instructional courses about production techniques, choosing and looking after animal breeds, cultivation, using plant protection chemicals, preventing diseases in farm animals, and using appropriate fertilising methods (Binh and Lan, 1996).

Households in remote areas face a lack of information about the outside world and about new techniques and successful methods. Thus low literacy levels in ethnic minority areas and the inability to speak the national language have isolated the Ktu from the rest of the country and contributed to their lack of knowledge. In several villages in Lao Cai province, even the leaders of the villages have low levels of education and language skills (Vietnam - Voice of the Poor, 1999).

¹ In Vietnam, this refers to people who may have completed primary school but need to again receive training in reading, writing and calculation.

Much research shows that rates of illiteracy are higher in low-income households, with women's illiteracy higher than men's. As a result, information is usually supplied in a form that women cannot access (Vietnam - Voice of the Poor, 1999). Most group discussions with poor farmers identify lack of information and technology as a critical problem. Farmers claim that they miss opportunities to enhance production due to a lack of necessary techniques and information. In the final analysis, the low level of literacy and language skills has increasingly marginalized tribal minority women from the development process.

3. OBJECTIVES, QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. General Objectives

The general objective of the research is to provide information on access to and control over resources by Ktu women to policy makers and development workers in order to improve the position of these women and increase the sustainability of their development activities. Specific research objectives are:

- to understand Ktu women's access to and control over development resources, namely land, credit and technical information;
- to identify factors which restrict the capacity of Ktu women to access these development resources;
- to identify possible strategies to strengthen the capacity of Ktu women to access these resources and improve their community roles.

3.2. Research Questions

1. What access do Ktu women have to the resources needed for development? What are these women's particular needs?
2. What factors restrict or strengthen Ktu women's access to resources? Why?
3. What strategies could improve the capacity of Ktu women to access development resources?

3.3. Research Methods

3.3.1. Data Collection:

The information about physical and socio-economic conditions was collected from annual reports and statistical sources available in Hong Ha commune. Information was also collected in relation to credit and land from the reports of the Thua Thien Hue Agricultural and Rural Development Bank and the People's Committee of A Luoi district.

Focus-group discussions were organized with four different groups: male and female local leaders; male farmers; poor female farmers; better-off and middle-income farmers. Each group had seven members. Participants discussed the resources needed by Ktu women, as well as by the community. Obstacles to women's access were also discussed, as were possible solutions that would strengthen access to and control over resources by Ktu women.

In-depth interviews were conducted with seven local leaders (the Chairmen and leaders of the commune's People's Committee, People's Council, Women's Union, Farmers' Association, as well as the managers of financial, cultural and land management offices). The purpose of these interviews was to understand the process of land certification for farmers and the provision of credit and information to the people in the commune. Interviews were also used to collect data related to securing loans from provincial agricultural and rural development banks. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with seven single Ktu women to understand their situation in terms of access to and control over land, credit and information.

3.3.2. Written Questionnaires

Quantitative data were collected through the use of questionnaires administered through interviews. The method of quota sampling was used to select 40 individuals, 22 women and 18 men, from households of different economic situations. The major purpose of this aspect of data collection was to obtain information on access to and control over land, credit and information. Questions concerned issues such as landholding area, awareness of men and women about the importance of entitlement in land-use right certification, knowledge about getting loans, and so on. The respondents were men and women for whom farming was their principle activity.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize quantitative information such as land area per household, perceptions of men and women regarding the importance of the name on land-use right certification papers, the rate of men and women accessing credit and information, etc. Qualitative information was taken from field notes and in-depth interviews.

4. RESEARCH SITE

The research was carried out in Hong Ha commune, A Luoi district, Thua Thien Hue province. Hong Ha is one of the 21 mountainous communes of A Luoi district, west of Hue, 50 km from the city and 20 km from the centre of A Luoi district. Hong Ha is divided into many small pieces of mainly hilly land. The total area covers 14,100 ha of which farming land accounts for only 96.27 ha (0.68%) and forest land is 11,026.5 ha (including natural forest and planted forest, occupying 78.2%). In Hong Ha, land for wet rice planting is limited to 20 ha, which is later used for dry rice. The rest of the land is used to grow subsidiary food crops such as bananas, sugar cane, cassava, and maize. Farming and subsidiary food crop land lies along the two rivers. The hilly land is poor so that the local people plant only one crop, rice, followed by one or two cassava crops. Historically they would then desert the land for four to five years; today this land is used for reforestation.

The total area of natural forest is 10,261.4 ha, of which 113.8 ha is protected forest at the upstream of the Bo River. During the war, the natural forest was severely damaged. Many parts were burned down and became impossible to be revived. After the war, the area and quality of forests have decreased. While there are many reasons for this decrease, the main reason is human damage notably through slash-and-burn planting methods and a lack of awareness about the significance of the forest. The amount of bare area has increased, whereas farmland now occupies a small proportion of the total land area.

Before 1975, because of the war, Hong Ha people temporarily left their village to find shelter in the deep forests along the Vietnam-Lao border. At that time they earned their living mainly by planting the hilly areas, hunting, and gathering forest products. After Liberation they were encouraged to resettle along the transport route where there is the potential for cultivation, along with conditions necessary to access the infrastructure (schools, clinic, etc.) and other social

services. Nowadays most of Hong Ha people have become sedentary and the custom of slash-and-burn has been eliminated. As a consequence, land was allocated to them by the government in order to stabilise their living conditions. The annual income they receive for taking care of the forests and for reforestation has weaned the local people from the habit of slash-and-burn cultivation.

About 60% of the Hong Ha population is poor, with an average annual income of 750,000 VND per capita. Of this income, 600,000 VND comes from their production (different crops and livestock) while insurance and social welfare subsidies account for the remaining 20% (Hoang Thi Sen, 2002). Hong Ha has two kindergarten classes and one primary and secondary school for students from year 1 to year 9. In 2001, the Government built a Post Office and a cultural centre, as well as a TV station to serve the local people.

Among the four ethnic groups living in Hong Ha, Ktu is the biggest. This is why they were chosen as the participants to our research. See Table 1.

Table 1. Population and ethnic groups in Hong Ha commune, 2003

Ethnic groups	N of Households	N of People
Ktu	118	620
Ta Oi	106	562
Van Kieu	0	3
Kinh	20	84
Total	244	1 269

Source: Hong Ha Commune Statistics, People's Committee, 2003.

Hong Ha, like many other mountainous communes in Thua Thien Hue and elsewhere in Vietnam, has gradually shifted from a nomadic lifestyle to sedentary farming. However, hillside cultivation still plays an important role in people's lives. Due to a shortage of wet rice area, local farmers rely on hilly land to plant dry rice, cassava and other crops. However cultivation on the hillside has changed over the years because the amount of land available has decreased due to reforestation. The result is low crop yields, reflecting poor soil quality and a shortened cultivation period.

The minority groups in Hong Ha in general and the Ktu in particular have increasingly appreciated the advantages of planting wet rice for food. Wet rice planting was not practiced until the IDRC-funded development project “Community Based Natural Resource Management”, implemented between 1998 and 2005. Therefore, wet rice planting is still new in this area and, as a consequence, yields are low. The total area used for wet rice cultivation is 20 ha and this area is usually affected by floods. For many families, non-wood products (rattan, conical hat leaves²) provide their main income, although these are on the decline.

In general, the Ktu community is self-sufficient; their market economy is underdeveloped. Investment in production is low and productive output is also low. Local people rely on their experience rather than on new technology for their production.

5. KTU WOMEN’S ACCESS TO RESOURCES

5.1. Access to Land

The development of each country, household or individual requires many different resources, among which land is basic. Whether in rural or urban areas, secure access to land is the basis for earning a living (DFID, 2002). Throughout Vietnam’s history land has been the most important means for the livelihood of farmers, especially those in the mountainous areas since they have very few skills and opportunities to access off-farm activities. Because of its importance, access to land is at the origin of many other social issues (Vương Xuân Tinh, 2002). For example, it can provoke conflicts between groups or families. Land tenure security is also an important factor in strengthening environmental protection interventions and sustainable resource management. The right to access land is particularly important for women because of their role in assuring food security and reproduction.

5.2. History of Land Types

Hong Ha commune, A Luoi district, Thua Thien Hue was officially founded in 1963. During the period of 1963 to 1974 the local people lived in a scattered manner in the forests. Land was the common property of the community, so local people were free to clear land and work on the

² These are the terms used in Vietnam, where people usually do not know the exact name of the plant.

territory of their commune. Since October 1974 people have resettled in Hong Ha. During the period of 1975 to 1985 the land was managed by cooperatives. Labourers were paid according to the score they received based on their work. Following privatization, in 1986 the area for wetland rice cultivation was allocated according to the number of members in each household, while residential land and home gardens were allocated according to the terrain and the house location of each family. According to local policy, each household was given 2,500m² of land but, because land was already occupied, people were allocated the land they already held. Each household was free to clear upland areas for agricultural production (rice, cassava, maize) according to the labour force available. Beginning in 1998, based on the district policy, the whole land (settlement land, home gardens and wetland) was measured and distributed to households according to the number of household members. Upland areas were still exploited freely, according to the needs and capacities of each household (with permission from the People's Committee and the forestry institutions). However, in reality, residential land and wetland continue to be used according to each household's previous occupancy; the commune intervenes only to redistribute land in the case of a conflict between households. The size of land varies from one household to the next. Households with more labourers will clear more land so that, when the commune leaders measure land for redistribution, these households can legally claim more land. Thus, although the state law officially requires an equitable use of land, in Hong Ha there are differences in recognized land use because of the history of land occupancy in the mountainous area as well as the continuance of tradition.

Thanks to the small size of the population, there was no shortage of land in the past, only differences in land use due to variations in household location and labour force. Nowadays, due to an increase in population, especially an increase in the number of households, available land has become limited. Before 1998, those households that were newly formed (young couples) could find land for themselves, which they then reported to the commune. Today, newly formed household must ask approval from the commune's authorities before building a home and garden. In general, land has become increasingly rare and the concept of a land market has emerged.

5.3. Status of Land Use in Hong Ha and the Position of Ktu Women

Productive land in the Hong Ha commune includes residential land and home gardens, land for the cultivation of wet rice and upland crops (upland rice, food crops such as cassava, maize, bananas), fish ponds and forest (including natural forest, planted forest and bare hills). Previously, upland was very important for gardening because people grew food for family consumption there (upland rice, maize, vegetables). However, thanks to the application of new technology, wetland and home gardens are now the most important sources of agricultural products, especially for women who

Box 1.

Madame M. is a Ktu woman living in Parinh hamlet. Her husband took a second wife and left to live in the house of the new wife. She has had to work hard to raise her children alone. The home garden is rather big. It was used for planting cassava, maize, beans and dry rice. However, the husband took the biggest and most convenient parts of land. She says: “He took the less hilly and the easy land which I cleared, but if I spoke about that he would hit me. I have to work on the narrow stretch of the remaining land, steep and next to the stream because he doesn’t let me use the other better piece of land. My land is small, steep and difficult to work on, but I have to work to feed my kids.”

generate the daily food for their families. Of these, wetland rice contributes the most to food security of the household. The local people consider “better-off” families as those having enough rice for the entire year. As a result, only residential land, home gardens and land for wet rice cultivation are distributed by the commune. This distribution is made according to the number of household members. As noted above, despite the official requirement for equality in land distribution, differences exist in reality.

Within the research site, the “better-off” group typically holds higher rice-growing wetland when compared to “poor” and “average-income” household groups. Residential and home garden areas are also larger in the better-off household group and smallest for poor households, although the difference is not great. Almost all farmers desire more wetland and home garden areas because these are the best for generating food and income. Because upland areas are still not measured and certified by the commune authority, the local people can freely reclaim this land, according to their labour on it. Forest lands are managed primarily by state organizations, although farmers are contracted to plant trees.

5.4. Ktu Women's Access to Land Certified by the Commune Authority

Although residential land and home-gardens have been measured and recognised by the commune authority, the “red books” certifying land-use rights have not been issued. These types of land are certified by the commune authority and registered in the name of the heads of household. Among the 40 household members that we interviewed, only one separated woman who has a house on her parents' land and one woman who is a second-wife were registered as heads of

Box 2.

Mrs. K is a woman in Parinh hamlet. Her husband left her for a new wife 10 years ago but kept his name as head of the household. Until now no one certified Mrs. K as head of her household, so she is not listed among those who have the right to use land in the local area. Although living with the second wife, her husband is still the registered head of household: he can borrow from the banks while Mrs. K, raising their five children, is not able to get a loan because she does not bear the title of head of household.

household; in the remaining 38 households the land is registered under men's names. Due to insufficient concern on the part of the local authority, Ktu women do not have their names registered in the list of those recognized to hold the right to use land, even after their husbands have left them. If a couple separates or divorces, women may thus lose their access to land use. For example, in Parinh hamlet, a husband got a second wife. The first wife had to live with her daughter and cultivate her daughter's land in order to earn a living. In another case, the husband took on a second wife and occupied with her the best and largest cultivated area (see Box 1). Similarly, one woman in Kon Sam hamlet had to ask her parents for a piece of land to build a house and to cultivate to feed her children. All the land she had been cultivating is now being used by her husband and his new wife. However, there is also a case in Parinh hamlet in which a husband departed for a new wife and left the house and the entire land to his first wife and their children. Even though the woman could use the land after her husband left, she alone had to feed six children and her mother-in-law as well. In another case, also in Parinh hamlet, a husband sold the wood house and then left with his second wife, leaving all the land for his first wife who had to feed five small children. It is worth noting that among 40 interviewees, five belong to couples that were separated; in most of these cases the husbands left to live with a new wife. Among these five separated couples, three women lost the right to use the land.

Not being listed among those who have their land-use right certified by the local authority creates further problems for women. In particular, it limits women's ability to access other resources, especially credit. An example is the case of Mrs. K. in Parinh village (see Box 2). It is obvious that the local authorities and mass organisations paid little attention to Mrs. K's situation. This neglect could be due to the influence of traditional customs in which irresponsible and unfair treatment by husbands is considered normal; as a result, there is no intervention to protect women's lawful rights in these cases. In terms of forest, most households were provided with temporary land-use rights. All the interviewees said that the papers securing these rights are under the names of the men.

The mode of land-use also influences the livelihood of both individuals and households. During fieldwork we were told that, for residential land and house gardens, the decision on how to use land is made primarily by the wife (42.5%) or by the husband and wife together (37.5%). For home gardens, where they have been growing cassava, vegetables and other food plants such as beans, wives often make decisions regarding land use. However, husbands usually decide how to use a home garden that is planted with new species introduced by development programs or projects.

Concerning the decision on how to use wetland, the majority of female interviewees said that their spouse decided (52%), many stating that "wet rice is a new crop here". It is a major food crop and thus of interest for the women. Nevertheless, the decision on how to use this type of land is made by the husband, as confirmed by the group of male farmers who were interviewed.

For hilly land used to grow subsidiary food crops such as bananas, cassava, or maize, the majority (60%) of female interviewees said that their spouse decides on what is grown. However, because of the nature of the work, wives participate in decision-making in 22.5% of the cases. In fact, this land had not been measured and certified by the commune. It was cleared by households for planting and, due to poor soil quality, crop yields were low and served mainly to feed families rather than generate income.

In short, in addition to access to land, Ktu women could control some types of land through decision-making about land-use. However, final decisions are typically made by men because they have more opportunities than women to access production activities utilizing new technologies. This finding shows that women's position in the family is inferior in comparison to men's. It is obvious that the right to access land is an important factor in women's independence, but the right to decide how to use land is also necessary for women's autonomy, especially in cases where women must take all the responsibility for feeding themselves and their children.

5.5. The Importance of Titles on Land-Use Certificates

The right of access to and control over land is important for both individuals and family households. Most interviewees said that a certificate for land-use is necessary for their family to feel confident enough to invest in a long-term production plan. In terms of having the women's names on the land-use right certificate, 63% of male interviewees said that it is important for women, in that they would feel confident to invest in long-term production, they would not be afraid of having their land occupied by anyone else, and they could secure a loan should their husbands leave. However, up to 30% of men claimed that this is not necessary or important because the names of husbands are already on the certificates. These men claimed that this is sufficient for women, who only need to know how to plant. The remaining 7% said that they had no opinion about this. It is clear that traditional ideas recognizing women's role only in cultivation are still widespread among Ktu men in Hong Ha. Even those who have more progressive opinions feel that women need land titles only when they are abandoned by their husbands. In other words, there is very little support among Ktu men for the idea that women should have land-use rights "as women".

In contrast to men, most of the women recognized the importance of having their name on the land-use right certificates. Two thirds of female interviewees said that having their name on the land-use right certificate is important and necessary for them so that they would be the rightful landowners and not worry about having their land occupied by anyone else. Many women further argued that they should have their name on the land-use right certificate so that they can keep the land when their husband dies. Women also pointed out that if they do not have their name on the certificate, their husbands could give the land away to others. It interested us that,

despite this reasoning, women were still ready to accept their traditionally subservient position to their husbands and to give their husbands more authority in decision making on family matters. As a consequence, when asked about some types of land that are not certified by the commune, many women answered immediately: “My husband will bear the name because he is the head of household.”

However, among the female interviewees who were the poorest or in special situations, such as their husband drank a lot, the majority thought that bearing their name on the land-use right certificate is neither important nor necessary. For the most part these women stay at home, rarely attending training workshops or participating in community activities. A few seldom even talk to their neighbours because of their long working days and the patriarchal attitudes of their husbands. In contrast, the women in better-off and middle-income households have more contact with outsiders so they understand the right for women to bear their name on land-use right certificates.

5.5.1. Land Inheritance

Historically, Hong Ha was an area with plenty of land and a small population. Therefore, land rights were not a critical issue because after getting married young couples could find the land they needed. At present, land is measured, confirmed, and regulated by the commune authority. However, after receiving their allocated land households can transfer their land to anyone they like. In addition, the stored land in this commune has become gradually scarcer, especially land for growing wet rice and establishing home gardens. The land available to new households has decreased little by little. As a result, land inheritance has become very important, especially for young couples newly separated from their parents' households.

Individual in-depth interviews, as well as discussions with farmers and local leaders, on the right of land inheritance show that traditionally the Ktu gave priority to sons. Many of the interviewed women and men of the Ktu minority agreed that “up till now, in the Ktu group, a married girl has never received a part of land from her parents, but sons have”. Many others also said: “Previously and currently the parents' land is given to their sons only”. The Ktu men and women agreed: “the

sons must live on the parents' land to take care of them, so it's reasonable and correct for them to give land to their sons. Married daughters will be taken care of by their husbands' families."

For families having daughters only, the daughter who lives with the parents after getting married will inherit the land. Married daughters who do not live with their parents will not be given land by their own parents, but rather by their parents-in-law. A few participants indicated that if their married daughters did not have land, they would give them some, but only a small share as the larger shares would be given to sons. For example, one woman in Kon Sam village returned to live with her parents after being divorced. These parents gave her land for housing and cultivation, but her share was smaller than that of her younger brother.

Although a married woman can farm on land inherited from her husband's family, if the husband's family is big the share will be small. Furthermore, these women will have the right only to use the land without ownership. As a result they have to depend on their husbands. When being interviewed about the ownership of inherited land, both men and women answered immediately: "The husband is the owner of the land because the land is given by his parents."

The right of land inheritance for sons is well established. It was not our original intent to compare the views of Ktu people from different generations. However, we found that there are differences in the points of view of different age groups: Almost all people over the age of 30 considered that, in the future, they would leave their land to their sons because, traditionally, after a son marries he would still live with them. On the contrary, when their daughters marry, they would leave for their husband's household, so the parents would lose their land to the husband's family. A woman in Parinh village said: "I will give my land to my son because he will stay to look after me. Even if my daughter's husband's family has little land, I will not give my daughter any because it is the husband's family's responsibility, even though I love my daughter very much." Another woman (35 years old) said: "I have both sons and daughters, but I share my land among my sons only, because they will live with me. After getting married my daughters will have to find land from their husbands' families; even if their husbands' families have no land to share, they should find land for themselves because they live with their husbands' families already. My land will be divided among my sons only." In another case, one woman (42 years old, in Kon Sam village)

said: “Later on, I will transfer my land to my sons only. I do not want to change that because my sons will become the householders and will take care of me when I am old.”

In contrast to these views, many people under 30 years of age had a different point of view. Some said that they would divide their land between their sons and daughters, and stated that the practice of giving land to sons only is old fashioned and feudal, and needs to be changed. One man (25 years old) said: “My property in the future will be divided equally among both my sons and my daughters.” Another man in A Rom village said: “For me, both my sons and my daughters will share my land. Nowadays, we think differently than feudal people from the past.” One woman (27 years old) from Kon Sam village said: “Later, my daughters who get married and live near me will be given some land, because both my sons and daughters are my children.”

In a word, there is a bias in the Ktu’s traditional point of view about land inheritance that advantages men. Both in the old days and today, Ktu women have not had the right to inherit their parents’ land because they will belong to their husbands’ families after the wedding ceremony. Currently, such a traditional practice is being changed in a progressive way. The Ktu younger generation recognizes that it is not fair for Ktu women. They wish to change the old way of thinking. What factors influence this change of view by young Ktu people? We could not answer this important question; it needs to be studied further to deepen our understanding of cultural change.

5.5.2. Quantity and Quality of Land Accessed by Ktu Single Women

Generally, widows in our study had access to sufficient land for cultivation, but their land-use rights were not guaranteed. In A Rom village, we encountered the case of a woman who returned to live on her parent’s land when her husband died. Her parents gave her land for housing without a garden. She worked together with her parents and siblings on wet rice and hilly garden land. At the time of our fieldwork, her parents were healthy and her siblings were still young, and the land ownership was not clear. When her brothers will get married and start new households, the parent’s land will become scarce. Looking ahead, this widow’s access to the land might be threatened if it happens that the family land is not sufficient for her brothers’ needs. In some cases, widows still lived on their husband’s land, but the husband’s family was listed in the

certificate issued by the commune authority. This practice generated insecurity for the widows, especially when there were conflicts in the husband's family. Divorced and separated women often have to look after both their children and their parents-in-law, even though they are disadvantaged and lack secure land-use rights.

In short, the majority of Ktu single women did not have secure access to land. For many different reasons (such as ill-treatment by the husband when the couple separated or divorced), both the amount and quality of these women's cultivated land were limited in comparison to male-headed households, especially those having both a husband and wife. This situation is common in some other Northern mountainous communes in Vietnam where many widows and single women have few opportunities to access extra and reserved land. Also, due to debt, many poor women have had to return their shares of land to the cooperative (Binh and Lan, 1996).

5.6. Roles of Local Authorities and Mass Organizations in Issuing Land-Use Rights and Distributing Land

The organization that has the authority to decide the rights to use land, to distribute public land and reserved land before issuing a long-term land-use certificate (called *Red Book*) is the commune People's Committee. However, according to the central government's regulations, representatives of the mass organizations (Women's Union, Farmers' Association, Youth's Union, Veterans' Union) should also participate in this process. The People's Committee's officer is in charge of making plans to distribute land and preparing to measure the land in the field. The Board of Land Distribution (representatives of the People's Committee, People's Council and mass organizations) will consider the real situation in the field to decide on the final distribution. After approval, the land files are established and the Chairman of the commune's People Committee signs the certificates for land users. Hence, the People's Committee and mass organizations play an important role to clarify the boundaries and to certify the right of land-use for each individual and household in the commune. However, the Women's Union is seldom included in such a process, even though the Women's Union is a mass organisation that represents women's interests and benefits, and understands women's situations most clearly. Their participation could ensure that the interests of local women in general, and Ktu women in particular, are represented during the process of land distribution and certificate issuance. Access

to land by women can be improved only when mass organisations, especially the Women's Union, work together with local authorities during the process of land distribution and certificate issuance.

5.7. Access to Credit by Ktu Women

5.7.1. The Role of Credit in the Development of Household Economy

Credit is an important resource in the development of the household economy. Almost all poor people need loans for doing business or investing in their production since the annual income of poor households does not permit reinvestment or saving. Therefore, receiving a loan is a pressing need of the poor in order for them to diversify their household production, develop their household economy, and reduce their poverty. In the context of Vietnam, growth, equality, stability, and sustainability are four key elements in policies attempting to reduce poverty. The poor generally, and poor women in particular, need this additional assistance to improve their livelihood. Credit programs give them an opportunity to upgrade their living conditions, enhance their self-confidence, and take advantage of opportunities. Thus, credit is an essential factor in helping the poor participate in the development process.

5.7.2. Credit Schemes for Disadvantaged Groups

Recognizing farmers' needs for credit, the Vietnamese central government created several formal credit fund resources with easy access. These resources include the governmental Decree No. 14 (1993), a policy of lending funds to households in order to develop agriculture, forestry, fishery and rural economies. The content of the Decree is that anyone who needs funds and meets the criteria can obtain short-term, middle-term, or long-term loans. The special aspect of this policy is that it gives priority to poor households, women, and minorities. There are a number of advantageous conditions, such as not requiring collateral and a lower interest rate than on similar loans.

Based on the above Decree, on May 29, 2001 the Vietnamese State Bank declared the announcement No. 508/NHNN-CSTT, related to interest rates of different credit categories. It stipulates that poor households participating in associations or mass organisations can borrow funds to develop their productive capacity or trade capacity for poverty reduction and hunger

alleviation¹. This Decree has created favourable opportunities for poor households to borrow funds².

Prior to 2003, credit activities for the poor were transferred to the Agriculture and Rural Development Bank and the Bank for the Poor. However, these banks could not do two tasks well at the same time: trade in capital and practice social welfare policies. Therefore, the government issued the Decree No. 131/2002/QĐ-TTg, signed October 04, 2002. The governmental Decree No. 78/ ND-CP, signed October 04, 2002, related to credit for the poor and other underprivileged groups, enabled the establishment of the Social Policy Bank. This bank is a non-profit organisation. Its activities are ensured by the State. The compulsory reserved rate is 0 %, and the bank does not pay insurance, tax or other state financial duties. The credit policy of the Social Policy Bank gives advantages to all citizens, but especially the poor and the minorities, enabling them to access resources with relatively favourable conditions. In this way it aims to encourage economic development, poverty reduction and hunger alleviation in Vietnam.

5.7.3. Access to Credit Funds by Ktu Women

In order to exercise the basic democratic principle of “to know, to discuss, to monitor and to get benefit,” “to know” is the foremost step. So did local people know about credit fund resources available in Hong Ha commune? Part of the answer can be found in Table 2.

These findings show that, despite the fact that many credit fund resources were available in Hong Ha commune, these resources were not well known to local people. The existence of large-scale schemes of the State, such as Credit Programs 120, 135 and 327, seem not to be known by the local people. The percentage of local people knowing about credit fund resources through organizations such as the Farmer’s Union or the Veterans’ Association was also limited. Although the fund for animal husbandry from Hue Agriculture and Forestry University (managed

¹ The loans fall into two categories: 5 million VND/household for business; 5 to 7 million VND/household for improving gardens, processing agricultural products and practicing animal husbandry or aquaculture. The interest rate for the poor belonging to region III and extremely poor communes is 0.45%/month, compared to 0.5%/month for the poor living in other regions.

² For example, opportunities include a low interest rate without collateral, payment in installments, the possibility to ask to prolong the loan duration if being unable to pay in time; the renewal period is one third of the 20 month loan duration. In case of unavoidable failure, if one is certified by the local authority, the Bank for the Poor will take the debt into consideration.

by the Women's Union) is not overly large, this program provides local people with agriculture extension services (training courses, providing breeds, technique and skill guiding, study tours etc.). Hence their program was known to the majority of local people, especially women (77.3% of the women interviewed).

Table 2. Access to information on available credit fund resources, by percentage and gender in Hong Ha

	Credit fund resources	% local people who had information		
		% of male farmers	% of female farmers	% of total
1	Fund for animal husbandry of Hue Agriculture and Forestry University, managed by the WU for pig raising	72.2	77.3	76.9
2	Fund for poverty reduction and hunger alleviation	50.0	22.7	35.9
3	Fund from the Farmer's Union	27.8	18.2	23.1
4	Fund from the Bank for the Poor, managed by the WU	27.2	16.7	25.6
5	XMIT Fund (Germany), managed by the Farmer's Union	22.2	22.7	23.1
6	Fund from the Veteran's Association	16.7	4.5	10.3
7	Credit Program 120 for job creation, managed by the FU	5.6	9.0	7.7
8	Credit Program 327 for greening bare hills	11.1	4.5	7.7
9	Credit Program 135 for communities in special situations (poor), managed by the People's Committee	5.5	4.5	5.1
10	Fund for Flood Protection, managed by the People's Committee	-	4.5	2.7

Source: Survey data in Hong Ha, 2003.

Generally, apart from preferential funds for women (used for pig rearing), most of the other funds were little known by women. If known, the information was not specific. For example women knew about the Fund from the Farmer's Union, the Fund for Flood Protection, the XMIT Fund, the fund for animal husbandry of Hue Agriculture and Forestry University, but they did not know

that the Farmers' Union runs these three resources. Thus, knowledge about fund resources was not widespread among local people, especially women. Does this lack of information influence women's access to credit funds?

Among our study participants there was a high need to borrow money. Almost three quarters of the individuals interviewed indicated a need (77.7% of the men and 68.2% of the women). What did they mainly borrow money for? Overall, in Hong Ha commune, the primary reasons for borrowing were to develop animal husbandry and cultivation. However, there were differences between women and men (see Table 3). Almost two thirds of the women wished to borrow to develop animal husbandry (63.6%) rather than cultivation (4.5%). The women claimed that the climatic conditions as well as the quantity and quality of land do not favor cultivation. Therefore production would be low and fluctuate. Unlike men, women often expressed multiple aims for loans. For example, they desired loans to develop animal husbandry, rebuild houses, pay off previous loans and spend on household expenses. Similar to poor women in other local areas, some poor Ktu women try their best to invest in household production, confirming their limitations in marketing capacity and in shifting their occupation. The research also shows differences in the needs for borrowing between those who have a better-off living standard and those of average and poor households. On average, better-off families wished to borrow about 7.3 million VND in order to develop large-scale animal husbandry and production, while the average-income and poor families expressed a need to borrow about 2.9 million VND to rear cows, grow vegetables and rebuild houses; only a few of them used the loans for household expenses or for paying off previous debts.

Table 3. Main Purpose of Loans, by Percentage and Gender

	Main purpose of loans	% of male	% of female
1	To develop animal husbandry	55.6	63.6
2	To develop cultivation	38.9	4.5
3	To build and rebuild houses	22.2	9.0
4	To cover household expenses and/or pay debts	-	9.0

Source: Survey data in Hong Ha, 2003.

Women in Hong Ha commune tend to borrow money from Hue Agriculture and Forestry University through the Women's Union rather than banks and other organizations. According to our discussions with local women, as well as with the president of the Women's Union, most of the women needed loans. However, they only liked borrowing from the WU since they could buy breeds together and have a chance to be involved in training courses on animal husbandry, thus improving their skills. The WU monitored and helped women raise pigs together effectively; it held monthly credit group meetings for women borrowers to review their current situation and share daily difficulties. In short, most Ktu women prefer to borrow from the Women's Union due to the practical assistance that the Union provides and the mutual help among group members that supports them and helps them build their capacity. The WU not only helps women get access to funds but also encourages them to utilize the borrowed funds purposefully and to develop their household's economy.

Our findings show that there were 30 households receiving loans among the forty households surveyed, with the total amount of 62,000,000 VND borrowed. On average, each household received more than two million VND. However, borrowing varied among households. Many poor households that desired loans could not get access to any fund, whereas average or better-off households could borrow from two or three different sources during the same period. It was common to find that some extremely poor local people could not get access to formal credit fund

Box 3.

Mrs A., A Rom villager, was 29 years old and a healthy woman. Her husband died and she was living with her mother-in-law and a five-year-old daughter in a poor household. She knew that loans were given to local people. She wished she could get a loan but could not borrow from any organization. She claimed that these organizations were afraid that she would not repay a loan since she was so poor. Many other people in the village shared her situation; they were too poor to get loans. If she could obtain a loan of about 3 million VND she would rear pigs. She thought that she would be able to repay a loan as she knew how to rear a pig and she was healthy but the problem was that she could not afford to buy both breeds and feed.

resources (see Box 3). One of the requirements of banks or credit organizations to lend money is that the borrower should have the capacity to repay their debt as guaranteed by providing collateral (although the banks claimed to make loans without collateral). In other words, labour-power, know-how, experience and the wish to escape from poverty are not regarded as assets.

Our research also shows that, although the size of the fund was small, the Hue Agriculture and Forestry University Fund enabled many households (28.2% of the surveyed households) to get access to needed money. The second most popular fund was the Poverty Reduction and Hunger Alleviation Fund (18% of the surveyed households). The Bank for the Poor had the largest amount of money loaned, but the number of households getting access to their fund was lower than the other two (15.4% of the surveyed households). The loans of the Bank through the WU were generally small with short returning cycles (usually one year) so the utility of these loans was less effective. As the president of the WU of Hong Ha commune in 2003 explained, “Funds of the Women’s Union were usually small, hence borrowers had to wait for their turn. As well, the loans were usually small. With such a limited amount of money, many could just buy breeds but not buy feed or improve their pigsty”. In sum, credit programs for women managed by the WU have facilitated Ktu women’s access to credit but the loans are too small to make a real difference in the economic situation of the borrowers. Other rural areas of Vietnam where credit funds have been provided by the World Bank share the same issue (VIE-96- 011).

5.8. Limitations in Women’s Access to Loans

Our data show that most credit resources in Hong Ha commune were borrowed under men’s names. This is because only heads of households can receive loans from credit schemes. Thus almost three quarters of borrowers were men. Among these men, about a third borrowed money as heads of households who “can decide all issues in the family”. The rest knew how to negotiate loan procedures, had access to some means of transportation

Box 4.

H.T.R was 30 years old. Her husband left her and their two children (8 year old daughter and 5 year old son). They lived with her aged mother in a poor household. In 2003 she borrowed 500,000 VND from the Hue Agriculture and Forestry University Fund to raise pigs but the pigs died. She did not dare to continue borrowing because she was afraid that she could not repay a loan.

(typically, a bicycle), and spoke the Kinh language. In addition, local women reported that their husbands often do the borrowing as they are freer, while wives are overburdened with their work: “After a hard working day, I go to bed at once without washing my feet”, said a woman during a focus group in 2003.

Our research shows that six women borrowers received loans under their own names. Of these, one was a single woman; in another case, the woman's husband did not have identification papers; four reported that because they were accessing credit funds designated for women, they had to take loans under their own names. These women borrowed money because they wished to rear animals, a common task for women who in general are more experienced in animal husbandry than their husbands. In-depth interviews showed that many credit resources require the beneficiaries to be women, such as the Fund for Animal Husbandry of Hue Agriculture and Forestry University (managed by the WU). However many women asked their husbands to write the application form for them, then they took the form to receive the money and gave the money to their husbands, who were free to use it as they wished, explained male farmers who were interviewed in Parinh village. These men also said that, in doing so, the priority was already given to the women by the credit program. Some female farmers explained that, even if the women are the beneficiaries, they have to have their husbands' agreement before they can borrow the money because both of them have to work to return the loan.

Both women and men stated that the level of understanding about financial matters is higher for men. Data show that, in 2003 in Hong Ha, on average men had 5.5 years of education (out of a ten-year education system). In comparison, women in better-off households had 3.5 years and in poor and average-income households 3.3 years. As a result, the men maintained that the husband has the right to decide everything in the family, and the women considered that the man is the breadwinner in the family. The women therefore did not dare to do things or decide what they had the right to do, such as getting a loan by themselves. In addition, the husbands knew more Kinh language so they could communicate and use the funds more effectively than their wives. Therefore, it can be said that the policy of giving loans to women still does not create equality between wives and husbands in the family. Moreover, it does not help women to develop their family production according to their needs and working experience. A commune leader, head of Hong Ha Organisation of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs, said that it was not important as to whose name would appear on the loan, as the most essential issue is that "the spouses reach an agreement about the loan". The head of Hong Ha WU, agreed, stating that "whose name would be used to get the loan will not influence the effectiveness of the loan if the spouses discuss and decide together how to use the loan".

The use of loans also has a relatively large impact on the access to credit by women. If a woman does not use a loan effectively, for example, she would have difficulty getting new funds. There might be two reasons for this outcome. First, women are afraid of being unable to repay loans, so they do not apply for another loan. Second, the credit programs or banks will not allow women to borrow money if they have not repaid a previous loan. Also many Ktu women revealed that even when they applied for a loan under their own names, they owned the money but dared not use it if their husband did not agree on how to use it because, as a woman explained, “if we lose the money, our husbands will not help us to return the funds”. In addition, according to the head of the security team, “many women received money and voluntarily gave it to their husbands for them to use”. In other cases, the husbands took the money without their wives’ agreement and the funds were not used effectively.

Although spouses might discuss how to use a loan, this does not mean that the loan would be used effectively since it is difficult for Ktu women to control use of the money. As stated above, animal husbandry is the number one option of Ktu women. However, as one participant told us, in one situation “the wife borrowed the money, then discussed and agreed on how to use the fund with the husband, then she gave the money to the husband to buy breeds but the husband spent money on drinking wine so that they didn’t have enough money”. Another woman indicated that “men usually go to buy breeds because they have to drink wine with the sellers (also men) until the sellers feel that they are willing to sell the breeds. Women cannot do it”. According to the head of Hong Ha Organisation of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs, “Ktu people attach much importance to connections or social relations through activities such as smoking and drinking. The sellers do not charge high prices; if they feel like it, they will sell at a low price; if not, they will not sell”. Or, as women in one focus group agreed, “only men can buy breeds and there’s always some money lost”.

Moreover, our research shows that in Hong Ha, if the fund was given in conjunction with training workshops, the money was used more effectively. Conversely, if funds were given without training workshops, the more funds that people received, the more difficult their life might have become. “Some people borrowed 2,400,000 VND within one year, but they did not do anything

with the money because they did not know what to do and dare not do anything. They only paid interest every month, and repaid the full amount of the loan after one year”, as observed by the President of the Farmers’ Association.

In short, to use loans effectively, and for this effective use to influence the ability of Ktu women to get access to further loans, some specific conditions are needed. First, spouses must discuss and agree on how to use the funds to overcome poverty and develop their family’s economy. Second, training courses on animal husbandry techniques and cultivation are needed, as well as training in accounting in order to enhance the management capacity of Ktu women. Third, a contingency fund has to be established, or awards should be given to those who borrow and use funds effectively. Currently the Commune People’s Committee and mass organisations are the liaison between the banks and the people, but the commune has not had any policy to encourage those who work well with credit programmes. “Making loans and the use of the money are managed by the bank; the commune is only responsible for reminding the beneficiaries to do well”, said the Head of Invalid and Social Affairs and Poverty Reduction Organization of the Hong Ha commune. The commune so far has not given any awards to the commune WU which, in the opinion of the Chairman of Hong Ha commune, manages the best credit scheme in Hong Ha. Meanwhile, the Hue Agriculture Forestry University Fund held study tours for local people (especially for women) who received loans to share information and learn from models in other local areas. This practice encouraged the women a lot; as they said, “we like to borrow the money and we like the University to let us go visiting”.

5.9. Changes in Gender Relations when Women had Successful Access to Loans

Even though men-women relationships are still far from equal, getting funds and using them effectively were likely to improve the role of the Ktu women in their families and community. People expressed the opinion that “100% of women who got a loan and used it effectively attended meetings, felt more confident and cheerful, and spoke more. Those who didn’t get funds rarely attended meetings and, even if they went, they rarely spoke”. For those who got access to loans, “in their family, the economy is better, the spouses are happier”, said the head of the Hong Ha Commune Division of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs. “These women change: [they become] more confident, speak more, like to help others and encourage them to get loans. Their

families experience more changes. For example, they have more food, the kids can go to school, and the women are more respected by their husbands”, according to the head of Hong Ha WU. Further, one interviewee claimed that “getting a loan and earning a profit have changed the women: they are more active, confident and enthusiastic in social activities, their families are richer, their husbands respect them”.

Thus, receiving a loan, attending meetings with the credit group, being guided on how to work, and working effectively have made women more self-confident and able to voice their own opinions, not only in their family but also at social meetings. In this way, access to loans has brought considerable changes in the role and position of the Ktu women in both their families and community.

5.10. Access to Technology and Information

In Hong Ha, where the majority of the population are of Ktu and Ta Oi ethnic minorities (over 93% of the commune’s population), levels of knowledge and basic understanding about production and cultivation are still very low. Many women of working age are illiterate and cannot speak or understand the official language. Answers to our questionnaire show that 43.5% of the women of working age are illiterate, and the rest have completed only 3rd or 4th grade, while none has graduated from a secondary school. Compared to women, the illiteracy rate for men is 5.6%. Hoang Thi Sen’s research on gender roles in agriculture and forestry in Hong Ha (2002) conducted a few years earlier has shown that the rate of illiteracy of heads of households was 16.6 % for men and 66.7% for women. The average number of years of school attendance was four years for men and 1.3 years for women (Hoang Thi Sen, 2002). However, during the last ten years, programs and projects in the commune have affected people’s point of view about the role of technology and scientific techniques in developing the economy, local society and individual households. Through experiments in the field and study tours, the local people were made aware of the importance of technology, so now they want to learn more in order to carry out pilot schemes in their own gardens and fields. Nonetheless, many poor people wanting to learn new technology could not.

Our research shows also that 100% of the women interviewed considered getting access to technological information is necessary for themselves and their family and 94.3% of interviewed men said that getting access to technological information was necessary for women.

5.10.1. Access of Ktu Women to Technology Information and Training

For the past few years, the Agricultural Extension of Thua Thien Hue province has expanded their network, sending staff to the communes so that during the productive season training workshops can be held in the communes or villages. The Hue Agriculture and Forestry University has also implemented some research and pilot schemes on models for rice production, animal husbandry, and the development of gardens and forest. However, only 52.2% of women attended the training on rice production, and 56.7% on livestock production. In the family, women and girls usually raised pigs but the proportion of men (78.8%) participating in pig-raising workshops was higher than for women (56.7%). There were also training workshops on population and family planning that were held in the commune more regularly and they were usually attended by women only (see Table 4).

For other workshops, the number of participants was very small. Farmers often claimed that because these training courses are provided by specific projects, only farmers who are direct beneficiaries would attend. In total, 27% of the men said that they never attended training courses, while 18% of women gave the same response. However, the attendance of poor women was still limited (Box 5), even when they would have liked to participate.

Table 4. Participation in training workshops and study tours, by percentage and by gender

	Training workshop and study tours	% of participants	
		Female	Male
1	To plant and take care of wet rice	52.2%	48%
2	To plant fruit trees	17.5%	11%
3	To plant cassava	4.7%	17%
4	To plant rubber tree	4.4%	29%
5	To plant Dó bau [aquirina crasna]	4.4%	5.8%
6	To plant to protect against erosion	4.4%	5.8%
7	To raise pigs	56.7%	78%
8	To raise fresh water fish	4.4%	17%
9	To raise chicken, duck and cattle	4.4%	5.8%
10	To visit good examples of cultivation and husbandry in other areas	47%	64.8%
11	Population and family planning	0%	100%

Source: Survey data in Hong Ha, 2003.

Training on technology was the most effective activity for Ktu women and for Hong Ha people in general to access new technological information. This is confirmed by the fact that up to 63% of the women said that training on technology was easy and the most effective activity for them to access new knowledge, especially when training was held with practical guidance in the field, such as how to distribute seedlings, plant rice, take care of rice, measure and spray pesticide, do weeding, process food, build animal sheds, and take care of animals.

Box 5.

Mrs. A. in A Rom village said that she never went to school. Her husband died early and she had to take care of an old mother and two little children. She said: "I want to have new breeds, to learn technology but because I am not included in the project and no fund is invested in me, I am not invited to attend training classes in cultivation and husbandry techniques. If I want to learn, I have to meet the head of the village's Women's Union for advice. I don't have a radio, a TV so I never listen to radio, watch TV or read newspaper. I want to attend training classes in cultivation and husbandry techniques so that I can work more effectively."

However, the women were rarely invited to the training workshops held at the commune level, away from the village; if the family was invited, the husband would go because he knew more about the workshop and also how to ride a bicycle.

5.10.2. Access of Ktu Women to Technological Information through the Media

Access to technological information through the media by listening to the radio, watching TV or reading newspapers is common to many people in Viet Nam but it is a limited activity among the Ktu women in Hong Ha commune.

Our study found that only one woman listened to the radio and none read newspapers on a regular basis. About one third watched TV and almost one half exchanged information with neighbours. While the women's need for technological information was high, the conditions and capacity to get access to it was very limited, especially for those in very poor households. Some households did not have a radio and only 30% had a TV; many women watched TV at their neighbours, which was inconvenient. In addition, participants lacked time. In the evening, only after finishing housework could the women watch TV, but only entertainment programs were on at that time, further limiting their access to technological and market information.

Another very important difficulty for the Ktu women in Hong Ha was their low levels of education and the fact that they did not speak the official language fluently so that they could not understand or remember what they heard or saw from the media. Very few could read and understand newspapers. The men's level of education was higher and they had more time to access the media. As a result, 30% of Ktu women never listened to the radio, while 86.8% never read a newspaper. Among them, many women indicated that they could not understand the media messages. Almost one half of the men said they never read a newspaper because they had no access to a newspaper. Thus, not only was the rate of women who did not get access to the media higher than the rate for their male counterparts, but it was for completely different reasons. If printed material had been available, men could have read it but the women could not have. Being illiterate or having a low educational background is a big obstacle, which will take a lot of time for Ktu women to overcome. It is the consequence of poverty and underdevelopment in the mountainous regions. Even in talking to other people, men had more opportunities than women. The commune centre had a bookshelf with a few books on technology. But, as a common practice, only commune leaders went there to read books and newspapers. Women rarely went to the cultural house. Exchanging information between neighbours was also uncommon for them, so

they could not learn from other people's experience. Thanks to projects about hill garden planning, wet rice cultivation and husbandry that have been conducted in the commune, people's opportunities to exchange experience and information and improve their production have increased.

6. CONSTRAINTS ON ACCESS TO DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

The main obstacles and constraints on Ktu women's access to key development resources can be summarized as follows.

6.1. About Access to Land

- The priority in land inheritance has traditionally been given to sons.
- The higher value placed on men's roles and preference for sons over daughters, shared by women as well as men, hinder women from getting access to land.
- The practice for the land certificates to bear the name of the head of household only impedes Ktu women's safe access to land.
- Husbands' negative attitudes also limit Ktu women's secure access to land, especially when they take a second wife and abandon the first wife.
- Governmental and mass organisations' lack of concern also limits Ktu women's safe access to land, especially single women.
- Lack of participation by women in the transfer and distribution process also hinders Ktu women from getting equal access to land.
- The Ktu women's subordinate social position limits their capacity for fighting to gain the right for equal and secure access to land.

6.2. About Access to Credit

- The management of credit schemes, with the policy of allowing only the heads of households to bear their name on the loan; application forms written in the Kinh language; loans given without training; disqualifying poor people without collateral from getting a loan, all these practices make it difficult for Ktu women to access public funds.

- The unequal sexual division of labor results in women and girls doing most of the domestic work, which prevents them from participating in social activities. For example, men usually go to buy breeds because they have to drink wine with sellers until the latter feel happy to sell the breed, whereas women cannot participate because such conduct is not appropriate for them.
- The capacity of the credit staff is still limited, especially in the WU. The WU usually waits passively for funds to come; as a result, sources for loans are limited. Record books are not clear; consequently, some households can borrow a lot and from different funds, while others cannot borrow at all.
- Because Ktu women's level of education is lower than that of Ktu men's, their communication skills are limited and weaker; they lack self-confidence and dare not take initiative.

6.3. About Access to Information

- Women's education level is low in general, so many of them do not speak or write the Kinh language fluently. This limitation undermines their self-confidence in communication.
- Due to the unequal sexual division of labor, women not only have sole responsibility for housework but they also work in the fields; thus they have little time and energy for social activities or for getting access to information sources, including the media.
- Many organisations in charge of providing information to people do not pay proper attention to gender issues. Media outlets have not adapted the need to help women become more knowledgeable and use information more effectively.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The minority community in Hong Ha, of which Ktu people account for the highest portion, now still faces many difficulties in life. Different types of resources are needed for local development; land, credit and technological information are the most important of these resources. Our research shows that Ktu women have fewer opportunities than men to access such resources. The lack of gender sensitivity on the part of leaders in the process of certifying land-use rights, traditional customs which give priority to sons in land inheritance, a lack of concern on the part of local authorities, and the limited role of the WU in certifying and distributing land, all work to restrict Ktu women's access to land, especially poor and single women. Further, the principle of

requiring the name of the head of household on loan applications disadvantages women, as does their educational background. Women have few opportunities to attend training workshops, read newspapers and listen to the news due to the limited sources of information. Even what is available to them is in the Kinh language. Women's workloads also act as a barrier to their access to available resources. Finally, our research reveals the importance of strengthening the role of the WU in the process of managing land and credit funds, as well as in the organization of cultural and informational activities to improve the Ktu women's access to different types of resources.

Our team concludes with the following recommendations. To increase the opportunities for women to access land, credit and technological information, the following policies can be of benefit.

- In issuing the land-use right certification, the names of both spouses should be included according to the new Land Law of 2003.
- Land should not be distributed randomly or in the same way for everyone. Priority should be given to the poor and to single women so that they receive land that is both convenient and suitable for cultivation.
- Strengthening the participation of the Women's Union in the process of land distribution would be a good solution to ensure access of Ktu women to land.
- Credit-related activities should be held in the local area so that it would take less time for the beneficiaries to participate and increase the opportunities for women to receive loans.
- Technological training programmes and information sources should use the appropriate minority language so that minority people in general and Ktu women in particular can receive the information more effectively.
- Women's Union's participation during the process of land management, the provision of loans and cultural and information activities must be strengthened so that Ktu women's needs are reflected in the design, implementation and monitoring of local development plans.
- Enhancing awareness of inequalities between men and women among community development staff, local leaders and local people in general is an essential condition to decrease gender discrimination in access to land, credit and technological information.

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