

## VIETNAM, NDC ANALYSIS, 2022

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### **Executive summary**

In September 2020 Vietnam updated its NDC, showing more substantial promises of mitigation and solid commitments to adaptation. The Updated NDC promises to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below business as usual (BAU) levels by 9% (unconditional) and 27% (conditional) by 2030. In order to do that, the relationship between NDCs, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and reliable net-zero routes must be strengthened. Vietnam should set more ambitious goals to assess the status of gender mainstreaming and youth engagement in climate change policies for long-term strategies and better impacts, by applying a gender/youth lens and effective gender-sensitive policies to combat climate change. Youth and women experience the effects of climate change differently, and they also provide diverse, complementary capacities for solutions. Any comprehensive strategy for combating climate change will ensure that both gender and youth-sensitive responses are listed and considered in laws and regulations.

### **Summary of main recommendations:**

- For greater effectiveness in long-term mitigation, Vietnam must include gender equality in all its climate plans.
- Climate funding that supports women and young people's engagement in climate action must increase.
- Youth and women need to be more actively involved in climate action, particularly in decision-making and as active stakeholders, instead of only being listed as vulnerable groups.
- Vietnam should develop a Youth Engagement Plan (YEP) to better understand and incorporate the perspectives of youth in addressing climate change.

## **1. Introduction**

All countries must act closely together and contribute their efforts to mitigate and adapt to changing climate conditions, achieve worldwide climate goals and avoid meteorological tipping points. Catastrophes of increasing intensity and frequency have happened worldwide as a result of climate change, which is the greatest threat to sustainable development and key pillars such as health, human rights, global food security, and peace. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) represent nations' endeavors to follow global ambition while tackling climate issues within national and local contexts. To achieve the NDC's goals and ensure no one is left behind, multi-stakeholder involvement is a sine qua non as a comprehensive systematic approach. On the matter of a multi-stakeholder approach, women and youth should not just be mentioned as vulnerable groups in NDCs but rather be enhanced in their active roles and meaningful engagements in climate action, which is crucial to accelerate climate action (Gichohi, 2019; Ruiz & Vallejo, n.d.).

Vietnam is at high risk of vulnerability to climate change, with 70% of the population living in coastal areas and low-lying deltas, which are critically exposed to riverine and coastal flooding. Additionally, the proportion of people living in rural areas and working mainly in agriculture accounted for 75% of the country's population. Therefore, Vietnam's NDC, along with other development and environmental plans, should emphasize the pivotal end of incorporating two critical pathways: the resilience pathway (adaptation) & decarbonisation pathway (mitigation) (World Bank Group, 2022) while enhancing youth involvement to tackle climate challenges, since meaningful youth engagement and gender equity can be the catalysts for Vietnam to achieve the SDGs and its climate goals (Note et al., 2021) (Rohr, 2007). Unfortunately, based on the reality that women are the most

vulnerable group in the context of climate change, there is a lack of focus on their realities (Ruiz & Vallejo, n.d.), and despite the potential of young generations to contribute to climate action in various sectors, gaps that affect their effective and meaningful contribution persist. By analyzing Vietnam's NDC, the author aims to focus on gender and youth issues in the general framework of adaptation and on their roles toward achieving long-term mitigation strategies.

## **2. General information and evaluation of Vietnam NDC/INDC**

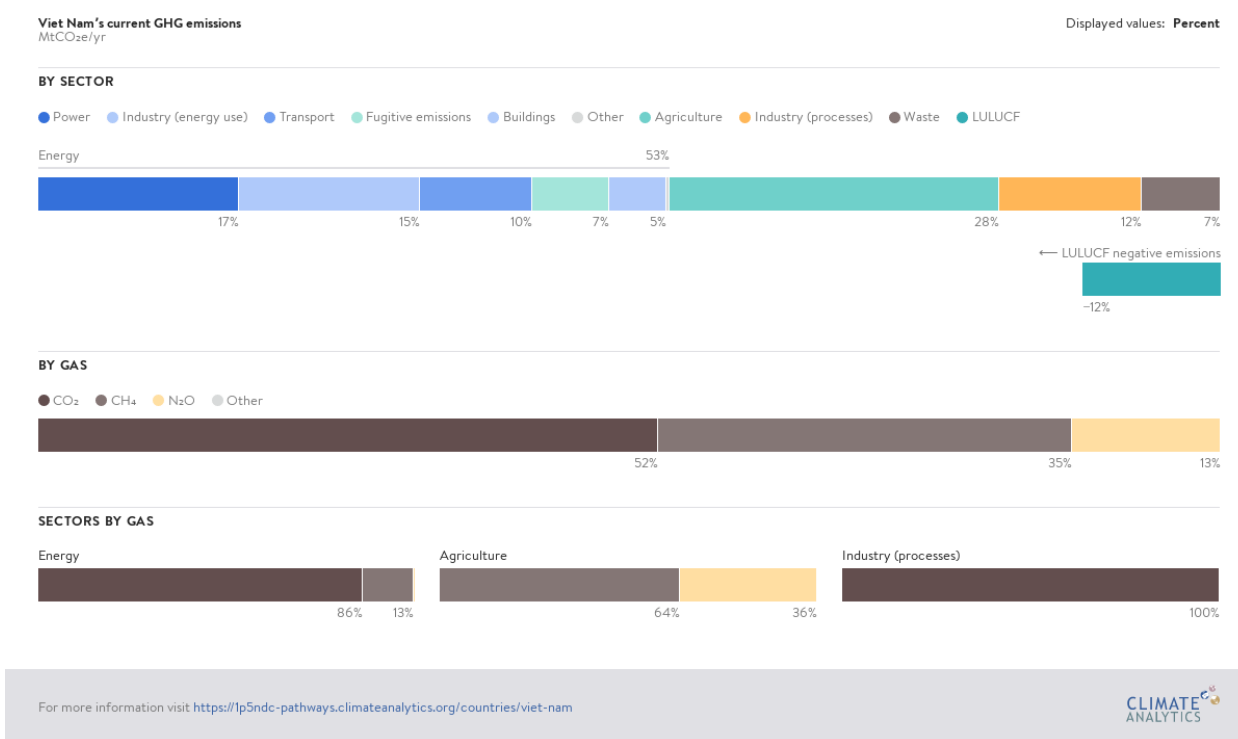
Vietnam first submitted an NDC in October 2015. This version highlighted general issues on climate mitigation and adaptation and represented the country's ambition in tackling climate issues - in fact, this goes in hand with the UNFCCC's 2019 NDC Outlook Report, which emphasized that adaptation plays a key role in the NDC enhancement process (Doyle, 2019). In this first NDC, the mitigation component outlines the energy, agricultural, forestry, land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) and waste sectors' GHG reduction roadmaps for the years 2021 to 2030. However, this first NDC was not comprehensive as it did not present a clear pathway towards this vision, nor did it assess complex social, economic and governance realities.

In 2020, Vietnam submitted a more comprehensive and robust NDC. During COP26, Vietnam's Prime Minister stated that the country would undertake the following actions, demonstrating the country's steadfast dedication to change:

- Achieve net-zero GHG emissions by 2050,
- Stop deforestation by 2030,

- Reduce methane emissions by 30% from 2020 levels, joining more than 100 other nations in making similar commitments,
- Contingent on support from other countries, Vietnam aims for a conditional 27% decrease in emissions below BAU levels, confirming a firm commitment to decrease greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 9% below BAU levels by 2030.

The updated NDC represents a modest 1% increase over the prior one, which is not particularly innovative or ambitious in terms of reducing GHG emissions. According to a report from Baker McKenzie published in 2021, Vietnam may cut its overall GHG emissions, excluding those from the land sector, by 73–79% from 2015 levels by 2050. However, to reach this goal, Vietnam will need to balance its remaining emissions with land-use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF).



**Chart 1:** Historical emissions per gas and per sector. Last available (negative) LULUCF data point from 2014.

Data Reference: [Vietnam Government. Vietnam Third Biennial Updated Report. \(2020\).](#)

The 2015 NDC did not mention vulnerable groups and focused on stakeholders under each specific criterion. Gender issues and youth were also omitted in this first edition. In the 2020 Updated NDC, gender issues and child protection were mentioned, showing a strong connection between climate action and other socioeconomic factors, as mitigation and adaptation go hand in hand with sustainable development in the long term. The new NDC showed strong ambition on the adaptation pathway, focusing on sectors allied with global adaptation efforts. The UNFCCC's 2019 NDC Outlook Report emphasized that adaptation plays a key role in the NDC enhancement process (Doyle, 2019). Crucially, the adaptation pathway should be the key to long-term emissions reduction strategies (LTS) especially based on the reality and context of Vietnam (Dang et al., 2013).

### **3. Gender issues in Vietnam's NDC**

Below are the citations from Vietnam's Updated NDC about gender equality and women:

*“Women, especially ethnic minority women, are highly vulnerable due to limited access to education and fewer opportunities to participate in non-farm employment.” (Vietnam Updated NDC 2020; Page 13)*

*“Gender equality: Climate change, increased natural disasters and climate extremes produce different impacts on women and men. While men are exposed to more risks due to their involvement in search and rescue operations, women are generally more vulnerable to health and socio-economic problems.*

*Several negative impacts of climate change on women's health include increased prevalence of diseases and epidemics, especially among pregnant women, girls, women with chronic diseases and older women. Regarding the socio-economic aspect, as female*

*farmers usually have lower levels of education and less access to information and finance than men, their livelihoods depend mainly on natural resources. They have high sensitivity but low adaptive capacity in the context of climate change. This is problematic, especially in cases where females are heads of households. In addition, women in farming households usually have limited decision-making power compared to men. They, therefore, may not be able to apply their experience and understanding in selecting varieties and cultivation techniques suitable for the climate change context in agricultural production.” (Vietnam Updated NDC 2020, page 14)*

According to these statements about women and gender equality, Vietnam’s updated NDC indicated women's vulnerabilities under the specific context of climate change and socioeconomic realities in Vietnam. However, there was no mention of women's roles as active stakeholders contributing to climate action. By limiting itself to pointing out women’s vulnerabilities, the updated NDC failed to include actions to empower this vulnerable group, thus lacking a transformative gender integration approach. Fortunately, the UNFCCC Women and Gender Constituency developed a powerful coalition to support women's rights: a five-year expanded Lima work program on gender and associated gender action plan was agreed to by parties at COP 25 ([Decision 3/CP.25](#)), which Vietnam can rely on to guide and craft its national gender and climate change policies.

Achieving equality, sustainable development, and peace depends on women's full participation and leadership in politics at all levels, as well as strong policy and legal frameworks that evidence the country's notable progress toward promoting gender equality in politics. From the Constitution to the National Gender Equality Strategy and Vietnam’s other high-level political documents/resolutions, there is legislation specifically addressing

gender equality. However, Vietnam's advancement of women in politics is inconsistent, and the nation runs the risk of falling short of the goals it set for itself by 2025 and 2030.

### **Women, Adaptation, and Long term - Mitigation in Vietnam**

Weather changes cause difficulties and directly impact livelihoods (most notably those of farming-reliant communities), food security and poverty reduction. Therefore, finding solutions to help vulnerable groups increase resilience and adapt to climate change is a top priority in the strategy of many countries and organizations around the world.

Vietnam is a country with a sizable agricultural sector, since more than 70% of its population lives in rural areas and relies heavily on agriculture. Therefore, in the face of the complex situation and developments caused by climate change, Vietnam's agriculture sector is at risk of being severely affected by unusual changes and the increase in extreme weather patterns. Besides, Vietnam is affected by monsoons and other weather phenomena such as El Niño and La Niña (MONRE, 2015), which increase the risk and consequences of extreme weather patterns such as typhoons, floods, landslides and droughts. Moreover, Chart 1 shows that 28% of emissions, excluding LULUCF, come from agriculture, rice farming, animals (through enteric fermentation and manure management), and soil management as the primary sources of emissions.

Women play a more active role in rice production in Vietnam, particularly in rural areas where 63.4% of working women are employed in agriculture as opposed to 57.5% working men (FAO, 2019). Notably, compared to 60% of males, 71% of rural women laborers lack access to vocational training (MARD cited in UN Women and FAO, 2014), and as a consequence of lacking the necessary information and abilities, are less able to successfully adapt their farming practices to climate change (FAO, 2019). Thus, women should be

provided with more opportunities to participate in climate action programs. To ensure the successful implementation of climate change adaptation initiatives in agriculture, where climate vulnerability and the engagement of women is considerable, gender integration across national policy is essential. Rural women farmers need support to adopt new technologies and diversify their sources of income in order to combat climate change effectively.

### **Case study - REDD+**

Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) is one initiative that contributes to GHG reduction through carbon sequestration, and REDD+ is also a great example of long-term adaptation and local-community-based solutions. Vietnam's NDC cites REDD+ as a pillar of the country's efforts under mitigation and adaptation in the LULUCF (land-use, land-use change and forestry) sector. To this end, the Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) has provided USD 5 million to implement project support for REDD+ readiness (mitigation initiatives through efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and foster conservation, sustainable forest management and forest carbon stock enhancement) in Vietnam (FCPF-2).

Despite the effectiveness and importance of REDD+ in climate action, the gender dimension of this topic has received little attention. According to extensive research (*Gender and Climate Change: An Introduction - Google Books*, n.d.; Larson et al., 2018; Pham et al., 2016), men from the same village are more knowledgeable about REDD+ and its activities than women are. Although many women attend REDD+ meetings, significant barriers still stand in the way of women's full involvement. A case study of a REDD+ program in Vietnam demonstrated how a lack of understanding of meaningful participation, gender relations and



power dynamics prevented equal benefit sharing and/or caused social and gender inequalities to worsen.

#### **4. Youth**

##### **Lack of consideration of youth's vulnerabilities in responding to climate change.**

Despite the fact that youth play an essential role in climate negotiations, youth vulnerabilities were not taken into account in Vietnam's NDC. The lack of defined goals and initiatives to address young people's vulnerabilities in the face of climate change is one of the policies under review. The capacity to fully execute climate strategies will be impacted by the absence of youth engagement and other overlapping vulnerabilities.

Youth are both a vulnerable group and vital stakeholders with great ambitions and the capacity to contribute to the nation's climate goals.

In 2021, Vietnamese youth developed the country's first special report, "*Youth for Climate Action in Vietnam*", which they presented to Mr. Alok Sharma, the COP26 president-designate, evidencing the willingness of Vietnam's young generation to take action. The youth report claims that there are four main barriers preventing young people from taking climate action: financial restrictions, a lack of stakeholder support, and skill and technology limitations. Therefore, recognising youth as stakeholders in climate action could contribute to further meaningful youth engagement.

##### **The necessity for youth engagement toward the success of NDC.**

Even though the updated NDC did not make a clear statement about youth, the adaptation strategy mentioned education and raising awareness by "...enhancing education on natural disaster prevention and control, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in

schools”. Moreover, according to a World Bank report (World Bank, 2020) Vietnam must prioritize investing in human capital if it wants to accomplish its aim of having a high-income economy by the year 2045. Through an innovative partnership approach that incorporates peer-to-peer, intergenerational, and cross-cultural forms of collaborative learning, youth-led work will investigate how local, traditional, and indigenous knowledge can develop understanding and strengthen local and societal resilience.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This analysis shows a number of opportunities to enhance the bargaining power of women and youth in climate action as well as their essential roles in contributing to the NDC’s success as well as how, under the aegis of sustainable development, tackling adaptation and mitigation simultaneously generates efficiency, "win-wins," and chances for innovation.

To conclude this analysis, the author would like to share the following recommendations:

- Gender equality must be integrated in all climate strategies to better impact long-term mitigation.
- More climate finance should be allocated to sustain the involvement of women and youth in climate action.
- Youth and women need more active involvement and engagement in climate-related decision making processes.
- Vietnam should develop a YEP (Youth Engagement Plan) to better understand youth perspectives and their gaps in climate action, as well as to provide opportunities for youth engagement and ensure their rights.

- Business actors are encouraged to support climate finance for youth/women-led initiatives projects while organizations can support their groups through capacity building.

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