

RIGHTS FOR ACTION

Putting People at the Centre of Action on Climate Change



CASE STUDY 4: THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Building the resilience of all citizens through access to education and training enables successful adaptation in Vietnam

The right to learn is conferred on the Vietnamese citizens by the country's constitution. The Government of Vietnam also emphasises women's rights in its National Strategy and Law on Gender Equality Building and this informs the country's national climate change strategy. This led to adaptation training projects, especially in the most vulnerable communities, that improve women's disaster preparedness, reduce disaster related mortality and raise awareness of climate change.

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Vietnam is particularly vulnerable to climate change. The country sits on the tropical cyclone belt, is heavily dependent on seasonal rainfall and has a long, low lying eastern coast. Thus the effects of climate change have the potential to impact across all sectors and developmental activities in the country. In recent years severe and recurrent drought and floods, and increasingly frequent tropical cyclones have put the Vietnamese people on the front lines of climate change.

Farmers like Ranh Nguyen (35) in the Binh Dinh province in central Vietnam have witnessed the devastating toll of climate change first hand. Storms, heavy rains and subsequent floods destroy livelihoods and kill people and livestock every year. Ranh, like many women engaged in agriculture throughout the world, is faced with disproportionate risks from climate change due to pre-existing gender inequalities.

However, thanks to the implementation of robust constitutional and legal commitments to the right to education and gender equality, Ranh and others in her community have participated in adaptation training projects that improve their disaster preparedness, reduce disaster related mortality and raise awareness of climate change.

“Thanks to good preparation and detailed mapping that we developed in the meetings before each storm, nobody in the village was killed or injured severely in the last year storm season. Crops, fowl and cattle were saved,” Ranh explained. She is now an official member of the Committee for Flood and Storm Control in her community.

The foundation for this life-changing project, implemented by the Vietnam Women’s Union, in

partnership with UN Women, was laid through Vietnam’s National Climate Change Strategy (2011) which recognises that successful adaptation is dependent on the engagement of all citizens and emphasises the opportunities provided by responses to climate change to advance human rights and socio-economic goals. Furthermore, at the constitutional and legal level, the connections and interdependence of women’s rights, education and the needs of more vulnerable communities are explicitly recognised.

The right to learn is conferred on citizens by Chapter II of Vietnam’s Constitution and further chapters make the provision of education an obligation for the State as ‘a top national policy’. The constitution also emphasises the important role of education for regions and peoples with particular challenges and disabilities including people living in remote areas, members of particular ethnic groups and people living in poverty.

The Government of Vietnam emphasises women’s rights in its National Strategy and Law on Gender Equality Building. Article 14 of this law deals with gender equality in the field of education and training, recognising that ‘man and woman are equal in accessing and benefiting from the policies on education, training, fostering of professional knowledge and skills’. Vietnam’s National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020, includes the objective to gradually ensure equal participation in the education and training between men and women. The strategy also sets out measures to promote gender equality in the field of education and training including ‘assist(ing) female workers in rural areas in vocational training under the law’.

These constitutional and legal commitments provide the basis for Vietnam’s national climate change strategy which recognises the links between better climate action and the promotion and wider enjoyment of rights. The project from which Ranh and her community benefitted is both informed by, and a platform to advance, the right to education and gender equality.

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FACT: Under Article 6 of the UNFCCC¹, governments have committed to educate, empower and engage all stakeholders to enhance understandings of the challenges and solutions related to climate change.

The Right to Education - Lessons learned

- a) Strong legal and constitutional recognition of the right to education provides a favourable context for education initiatives nationally and enables the design and implementation of innovative adaptation training that saves lives and livelihoods.
- b) As women and men are affected differently by the impacts of climate change, with women likely to bear the greater burden in situations of poverty, climate actions have to be gender sensitive. Vietnam's National Strategy and Law on Gender Equality Building has enabled gender responsive climate policy which is protecting the lives of women on the front lines of climate change.

¹ United Nations (1992) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change available at: https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf