

Creating Equal Market Opportunities for Women by Advancing Supplier Diversity Through Gender-Responsive Procurement (Sd-Grp) in Thailand and Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality is a social phenomenon in which people are not treated equally based on gender. Gender inequality prevents women from gaining fair access to networks, finance, and markets, including procurement markets. In Thailand, women's labor force participation rate is 59% compared to 75% for men. In Nam, in the fourth quarter of 2022, women's labor force participation rate was 61.1% compared to 73.1% for men. This research focuses on UN Women's efforts to create equal market opportunities for women by advancing supplier diversity through Gender Responsive Procurement (GRP) in Thailand and Viet Nam. The purpose of the research is to find out UN Women's role in addressing gender inequality in the workplace in Thailand and Viet Nam through implemented programs such as Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP) and We Rise Together. The method used is library research. The data collection method is done by analyzing and exploring several journals found in books, the internet and other relevant data sources. The results show that the Australian Government-supported 'We Rise Together' initiative aims to create equal market opportunities for women by promoting supplier diversity through procurement. The program has trained women-owned businesses and buyers in nam since 2023, with the aim of advancing gender equality. The Leaders Learning Lab as part of the WEP dialogue, showcases the development of gender equality policies, increasing skills and market access for women entrepreneurs, expanding access to technology and funding, and increasing visibility through advocacy campaigns in Thailand.

Keywords: *Gender Inequality, Gender Responsive Procurement (SD-GRP), Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), We Rise Together, Thailand and Viet Nam.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender, hindering women of various backgrounds, races, classes, sexual orientations, abilities, and education from fair access to networks, finance, and markets, including procurement markets. As a result, they encounter barriers in initiating, expanding, or maximizing their business earnings. In Thailand, the labor force participation rate for women stands at only 59%, contrasting with the 75% rate for male workers. Additionally, women in Thailand spend 3.2 times more time on unpaid domestic work and care compared to men. Similarly, in Viet Nam, it is projected that by the fourth quarter of 2022, the female employment rate will be approximately 61.1%, while the male employment rate will be around 73.1%. UN Women is involved in implementing the WE RISE Together program to enhance gender-responsive procurement in Thailand and Viet Nam. The signatories of WEPs in Thailand have introduced the Leaders Learning

Lab to establish fair marketplaces. Moreover, the UN Women's initiative in Nam aims to support small women-owned businesses and promote sustainable development through the improvement of business skills and gender-responsive procurement practices. The purpose of the research is to find out UN Women's role in addressing gender inequality in the workplace in Thailand and Viet Nam through implemented programs such as Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP) and We Rise Together

METHODS

The method used by the author in this research is library research. The data collection method is carried out by analyzing and exploring several journals contained in books, the internet and other relevant data sources.

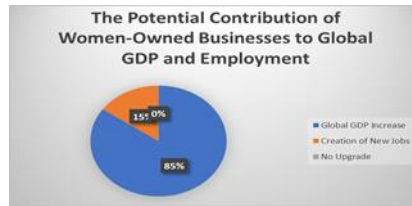
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research found that the Leaders Learning Lab initiative has had a significant impact on increasing market opportunities for women-owned businesses. Through the establishment of innovative supplier networks and gender-equitable procurement practices, women-owned businesses have seen a significant increase in the number of contracts awarded to them. Since 2023, the 'We Rise Together' initiative has trained 467 women-owned businesses and 440 buyers in Viet Nam. This training has been a critical factor in enhancing the capabilities of these businesses, making them more competitive and ready to meet market demands. The study found that enhancing women's leadership has significantly contributed to this growth, which is supported by UN Women's strategy for the period 2022-2026.

Impact Women-Owned Enterprises

The contribution of women-owned businesses, the difficulties they face in accessing resources and markets, and the potential for global economic growth and job creation if they grow on par with men-owned businesses. The Leaders Learning Lab is an initiative group to pioneer Gender Responsive Procurement established by UN Women Thailand that implements the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP), specifically WEP 5. This initiative has had a significant impact on women-owned enterprises by increasing their market opportunities. The establishment of innovative supplier networks and gender-equitable procurement practices have opened up new opportunities for these businesses. Data collected shows a significant increase in the number of contracts awarded to women-owned enterprises.

This pie chart visualizes the relative contributions of various factors to the total economic potential that could be generated if women-owned businesses grew at the same rate as men-owned businesses. If women-owned businesses grew at the same rate as men-owned businesses, there is a huge potential to boost global GDP.



Estimates suggest that women-owned businesses growing at the same rate as men could add \$2 trillion to global GDP. This is equivalent to about 2% to 3% of total global GDP. In addition to the positive impact on GDP, the growth of women-owned businesses could also create between 288 and 433 million new jobs.

Training and Capacity Building

The 'We Rise Together' initiative, supported by the Australian Government, aims to create equal market opportunities for women by promoting supplier diversity through gender-responsive procurement in Thailand and Viet Nam. The training aims to create equal market opportunities for women by promoting supplier diversity through gender-responsive procurement. The results demonstrate the positive impact of a holistic approach to women's economic empowerment, where the training focuses not only on women entrepreneurs but also on buyers to ensure inclusive demand. Since 2023, the 'We Rise Together' initiative has been training women-owned businesses and buyers in nam. This training is crucial in enhancing the capabilities of these businesses, making them more competitive and better prepared to meet market demand.

Training Participants	Number Trained (2023)
Women-Owned Businesses	467
Buyers	440

The UN Women Strategy Note for Viet Nam 2022-2026 aims to significantly advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It is aligned with the UNSCDF 2022-2026, the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and the Viet Nam Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021-2030. The aim is to support Viet Nam in achieving its national development priorities and SDG 5, so that no woman or girl is left behind.

Despite progress, there are still many barriers to overcome to achieve full gender equality. Challenges such as gender stereotypes, limited access to finance, and lack of support from professional networks remain barriers for women in business. Therefore, there needs to be continued efforts to address these challenges, including awareness-raising, policy changes, and broader support programmes.

How effective are UN Women programmes in facilitating gender-responsive procurement to support women’s empowerment and social inclusion in Thailand and nam? Overall, The Leaders Learning Lab and ‘We Rise Together’ initiatives demonstrate

that through a gender-equitable approach, social inclusion can be achieved. The success of these programmes highlights the importance of collaboration between various stakeholders to create an enabling environment for women’s economic empowerment and broader social inclusion. It also shows that a structured and collaborative approach can have a significant impact in promoting women’s economic empowerment. These successes not only provide direct economic benefits to women, but also contribute to more inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development in Viet Nam and Thailand.

CONCLUSION

Social inclusion ensures that all parties have equal access to opportunities and facilities in every area of society, but gender inequality that has been perpetuated for a long time has prevented women from developing their businesses and capabilities as is the case in Thailand and Viet Nam. Through programs initiated by UN Women such as Leaders Learning Lab and We Rise Together, women in Thailand and Viet Nam are educated and opened up opportunities for them to develop their businesses and contribute to the country's domestic income. Key findings from this study indicate that UN Women programs have been successful in providing the necessary support for women-owned enterprises, improving their access to markets, and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5. The effectiveness of gender-responsive procurement in addressing the challenges of women-owned enterprises, expanding their market reach, and increasing their competitive capacity. Through women's empowerment programmes, it helps a country to create prosperity and equal justice for women. In addition, such programmes can boost the country's economic growth in a sustainable manner.

The critical analysis relied completely on data gathered from official websites and scientific journals available on the internet. The findings of the review highlighted certain shortcomings of the article. The article is relatively recent, and there is still limited literature on the UN Women's Programme study in Thailand and Viet Nam. This is due to the recent nature of the case study, and not many have yet addressed this topic in writing. In addition, the enduring effectiveness of this study remains uncertain, as there is no quantitative data available regarding the long-term success of a company despite the observed increase in market access.

Suggestions for further research to be able to describe clearly the program established by UN Women in Viet Nam that applies the Women Empowerment Principle (WEP), namely the Workshop program, almost like the Leaders Learning Lab program established by UN Women Thailand. Then with the growth of programs that support women-owned businesses in Thailand and Viet Nam spearheaded by UN Women and the private sector, it is hoped that the Government can take part in these development programs.

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