



Introduction

Girls and women with disabilities in Vietnam encounter various forms of struggles and barriers to accessing resources, due to prejudices associated with both their disability and gender.

Women and girls with disabilities in Vietnam are absent from some policies and laws

- The Law on Gender Equality (Government of Vietnam, 2006, Law 73/2006/QH11) highlights equality between men and women and prohibits all forms of gender discrimination. However, it does not specifically mention disabilities.
- The Law on Persons with Disabilities (Government of Vietnam, 2010) includes minimal mention of gender and does not specifically address girls with disabilities.
- The amended Law on Children (Government of Vietnam, 2016, Law No. 102/2016/QH13: Article 10) categorizes disabled children within a specially designated group called “children in special circumstances.”
- Girls and women with disabilities are not mentioned in the Law on Education (No. 43/QH 2019), the Circular 03/2018/TT-BGDĐT on Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities, and the Circular 42/2013 on Educational Policies for Persons with Disabilities.

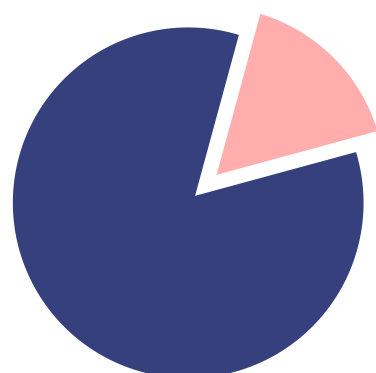
Source: Nguyen, X. T., Gonick, M., & Bui, T. (2021). Engaging girls with disabilities through cellphilm: Reflections on participatory visual research as a means of countering violence in the Global South. *Childhood* (Copenhagen, Denmark), 28(3), 380–394.

The Engendering Disability-Inclusive Development (EDID) partnership builds on established relationships with NGOs, policy makers, and researchers to improve the lives of diverse girls and women with disabilities in Canada, Haiti, South Africa, and Vietnam. Within the Vietnam case studies, we examines how diverse women and girls with disabilities in Vietnam have participated in decision-making processes in relation to their social, cultural, and political lives to foster leadership, inclusion, gender equality, and transformative justice in their communities.

EDID participants in Vietnam	Number
Girls and Women (including two key informants)	23
Key Informants	9
Total	30



Photo: EDID participants in a discussion group activity in 2023



Only **8.4%** of women with disabilities are household heads, compared to **91.6%** of women without disabilities.

Source: Statistics from GSO, 2016

Men with disabilities are much more likely to assume the role of household head compared to women with disabilities

19% of men with disabilities serve as household heads, compared to only **8.4%** of women with disabilities.

The **disparity** in **leadership roles** at home between women with and without disabilities, suggesting that disability significantly affects **women's likelihood** of assuming head-of-household responsibilities.

Source: Statistics from GSO, 2016

A disparity in upper secondary school attendance, with only **33.56%** of children with disabilities attending, compared to **68.65%** of children without disabilities.

This indicates a **significant drop-off** in educational continuation for children with disabilities.

Source: Statistics from GSO, 2016, p. 82



FACT SHEETS

Leadership skills demonstrated by women and girls with disability in Vietnam



Finding 1: Women and girls with disabilities engaged in leadership within a variety of domains and socio-political spaces

Women and girls with disabilities demonstrated their leadership by actively participating in and promoting collective action in a variety of socio-political spaces. They advocated for increased leadership opportunities, such as actively planned, organized, and managed their organizations, rather than depending on non-disabled individuals to create change for them. This effectively challenged the social hierarchy, where non-disabled individuals and the state predominantly assume leadership roles.

The opportunities to be in leadership positions, however, tend to be more available for women and girls with physical disabilities, while it is less accessible to those with intellectual, mental, or autistic experiences. Leadership is more accessible to those with class privileges. This suggests unequal opportunities for women and girls with disabilities in different social positions. Furthermore, there are distinctive attitudes to leadership as manifested by girls and women with disabilities. The girls engaged in leadership by leading some school activities and expressing a desire to share opportunities with other girls in their community. However, they seemed to show reluctance in acknowledging their leadership roles within their community. Conversely, the women tended to recognize and embrace their leadership roles based on their activist experiences.

“

“I want to bring the **best benefits** to my employees when I build a model. Thus, I call for their contribution, **self-training** each other, and **we work together** on our own.”

”

A participating woman demonstrated her leadership in an interview in 2022.



Photo: Girls and Women from EDID in a group discussion in 2023

Spaces for decision-making in community and social activities are crucial for women and girls with disabilities to build their leadership capacities and advocacy networks. They require genuine opportunities to actively participate in decision-making roles, rather than merely being present without the chance to voice their opinions or contribute meaningfully, which can often amount to tokenism.

“If you participate but play no decision-making role, it would be different from someone who is involved in decision-making. When you are a part of the decision-making process, it means [you are involved] at a higher level, and people will have a more respectful perspective about you.”

A participating woman demonstrated her knowledge on decision-making roles in an interview in 2022.

Contact us

The Decolonial Disability Studies Collective: <https://carleton.ca/ddsc/>

FACT SHEETS

Knowledge of Advocacy and Activism



Finding 2: Advocacy and Activism from the Perspectives of EDID Girls and Women

Through small group discussions, girls and women in the EDID project shared their understanding of advocacy and activism and presented the results of their discussions to the whole group. Advocacy, as understood by the participants, is perceived as mobilizing activities aimed at influencing stakeholders and their decisions to lead to social change and promote the rights of marginalized groups, especially persons with disabilities. These changes can involve policy modifications, amendments to laws, and efforts to raise public awareness to address social issues. The participants emphasized that advocacy is not limited to those directly affected, but also includes allies and supporters who mobilize efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable society and who are committed to driving change.

“

“Advocacy is the mobilization of stakeholders, and then the attraction, attention, and agreement of most of the community to engage everyone in problem-solving and unify to change something.”

”

An EDID participant represented her group to share their definition of advocacy in a group discussion in 2023.

EDID girls and women underlined the need for clear and specific plans to effectively target and influence relevant stakeholders, such as government departments and social organizations in advocacy efforts. They also stressed the pivotal role of communication in effective advocacy, by highlighting that media and communication are essential in gaining public support and encouraging broader participation in advocacy efforts.



EDID girls and women described the importance of advocacy in integrating rights into society and improving access to policy information, particularly for persons with disabilities. They highlighted the importance of equipping individuals with disabilities with knowledge and information to protect themselves and assert their rights.



Photo: EDID participants in a discussion group activity in 2024

“The media is actually very important nowadays. I really hope that next year we will be able to learn more, or we will have a training course related to policy advocacy through the media or skills related to the media.”

A participant added that media training and skills are crucial for successful policy advocacy.

“I think that community should have proper communication on intellectual disabilities that there are different types of intellectual disability but not the same”

A participant shared in a group discussion in 2023

Contact us

The Decolonial Disability Studies Collective: <https://carleton.ca/ddsc/>

FACT SHEETS

Challenges facing Women and Girls with Disabilities in Vietnam



Finding 3: Systemic Ableism and Intersectional Barriers to Participation and Decision-Making

Girls and women with disabilities in Vietnam encountered systemic ableism and intersectional barriers to participation and decision-making. The most ubiquitous form is ableism, which manifests in various ways such as underestimation, devaluation, and discrimination based on disability, ethnicity, and gender. It is crucial to consult girls and women with disabilities and obtain their consensus before making changes. However, their opinions are often overlooked, highlighting a major gap in inclusion. These systemic shortcomings underscore the urgent need for more inclusive policies and genuine representation to better ensure full participation of girls and women with disabilities.

“Pedestrian traffic lights do not have a sound mode for visually impaired people to cross the street, which causes persons with visual impairment to wait and have to ask for help from others to cross the street.”

An EDID participant from the “Strong Women Group” shared one of their everyday challenges in a group discussion in 2023.



Photo: Girls and women shared artworks advocating for inclusive education

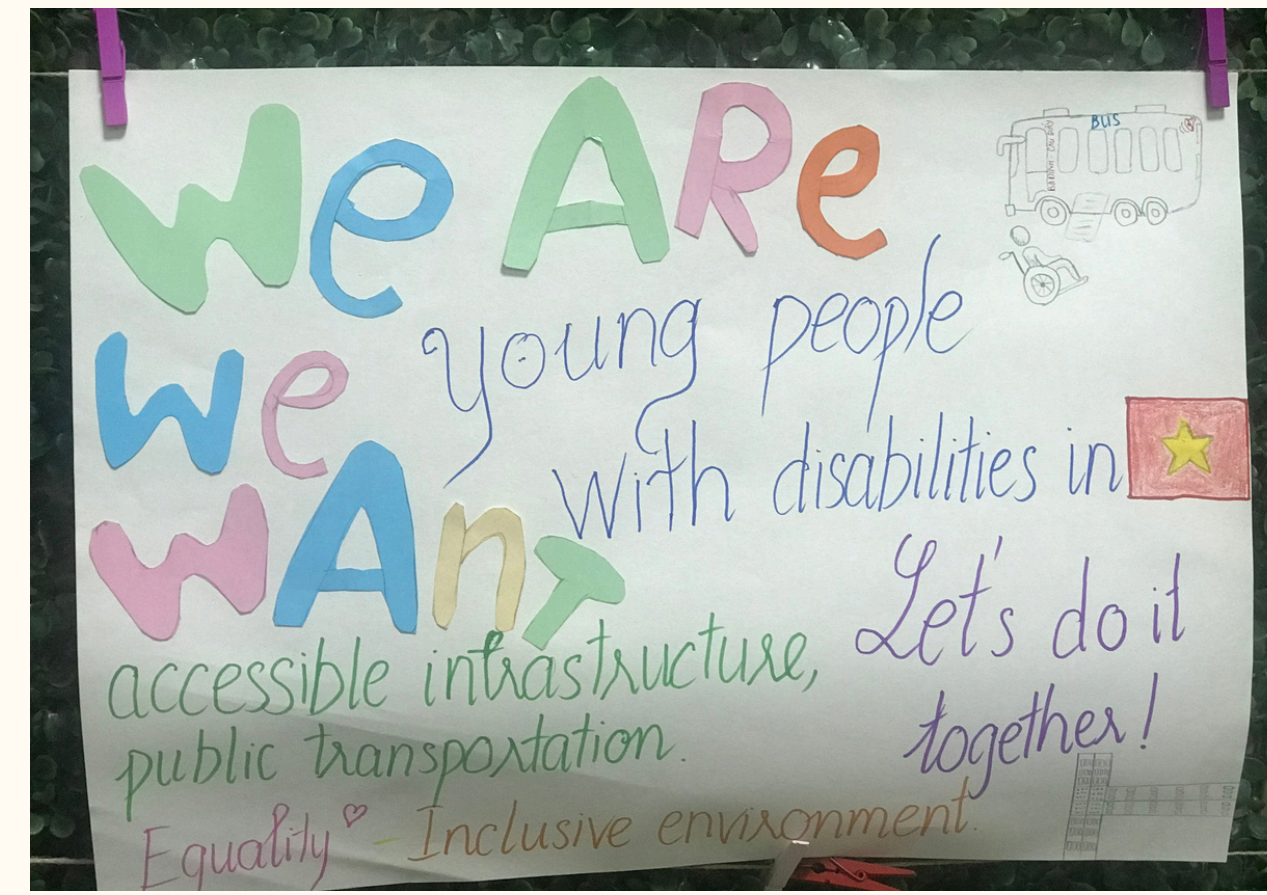


Photo: An artwork from girls and women with disabilities advocating for accessible infrastructure and public transportation.

“In the past, during nine years of school, I was never allowed to stand in line for physical exercises at school. I was not happy at all because sitting alone in the classroom is really boring. I could do the physical activities, but the teachers assumed that since I had a disability, I didn’t need to participate in physical education.”

An EDID participant shared one challenge in accessing education in a group discussion in 2023.

Access to education of girls with disabilities have not been fully realized due to systemic ableism within educational systems. This manifests in several ways: inadequate teacher training limits equal participation opportunities in the classroom; the lack of necessary infrastructure and adaptive educational materials creates barriers that hinder the engagement of girls with disabilities in classroom activities.



FACT SHEETS

The Voices and Agenda-Making of Participants



Finding 4: Collective efforts to mobilize knowledge and engage disabled and non-disabled communities in promoting inclusion, accessibility, and social justice

Women and girls with disabilities in the EDID project valued collective efforts and the creation of shared spaces where they can exchange knowledge and mutual interests. By proactive engagement in the policy dialogue and consultative session, they collaboratively built their agenda. They express strong support and a desire to share opportunities with their community through collective actions. These collective actions and spaces enable them to mobilize and support one another, fostering a sense of unity and empowerment.



“Young people will be a very important generation to change policies, so in the future they may form groups or maybe they will support the **next young generation**. If those young children are supported from an early age, they will acquire enough knowledge and reach potential skills. Then, when they grow up, it will be easier for them to integrate into society.”

“Deaf people commit to call on our allies, such as sign language interpreter groups, parents of deaf children. **We will work with these allies to make an impact**, raise awareness, and support deaf students”



Statements from the manifesto shared by girls with disabilities in a Policy Forum in 2023



“I think that in order to speed up the process we will need **collective efforts** of children, women and people with disabilities, and **more communications** would be needed.”

Women and girls in the study emphasized the importance of establishing robust connections between various stakeholders (organizations, groups, associations, and clubs representing people with disabilities) with governmental agencies to tackle the challenges they are facing. They discussed to identify issues they wanted to bring to the policy dialogue and delivered powerful messages to policymakers and communities, highlighting their local knowledge of inclusion and exclusion.



Photo: Girls and Women from EDID discussed their understanding of inclusion through paintings created by girls and women with disabilities.



I want to bring more projects to my local area so that women, as well as girls with disabilities, can participate in these projects.



A participant expressed her determination in an interview in 2022.

Contact us

The Decolonial Disability Studies Collective: <https://carleton.ca/ddsc/>

Recommendations from Girls and Women in EDID



EDID girls and women recommend:

For Government Institutions

- Engage and consult with people with disabilities in the policy-making process to ensure their opinions are inclusively incorporated.
- Implement training programs for public officials and media professionals to enhance their awareness towards language and terminology when referring to people with disabilities, ensuring adherence to legal standards and inclusive communication.
- Increase public awareness and understanding of relevant laws and policies concerning people with disabilities.
- Establish and enforce guidelines to enhance accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in various settings, such as access to education, public services, public resources, and employment.

For Community

- Implement specific programs tailored to people with disabilities in the community to facilitate their empowerment and ensure their voices are heard.
- Center women and girls with disabilities in community development programs.
- Foster an inclusive and supportive environment to enhance people with disabilities' participation in decision-making processes.



“It is imperative that we should ask associations of persons with disabilities to advocate for us, because only persons with disabilities can understand the group, the association, and the community of diverse disabilities”

A participant shared her opinion in a manifesto presentation at the Policy Forum in 2023.

For Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs)

- Develop women's committees within existing associations of people with disabilities and advocate for the creation of emerging socio-political groups, specifically for women with disabilities in provinces lacking such initiatives.
- Foster community and peer counseling among women and girls with disabilities.
- Collaborate with public agencies to review and supplement legal documents, ensuring they are inclusive and responsive to the experiences of people with disabilities.
- Conduct comprehensive research on people with disabilities to gather and present detailed statistics on their current life experiences. Engage people with disabilities in the Research Committee within the DPOs to amplify their voices and ensure their perspectives are represented effectively.
- Facilitate open dialogues between businesses and people with disabilities to discuss mutual interests.
- Foster positive and inclusive changes in the workplace and employability opportunities.



Photo: Participants shared their perspectives at the Policy Forum in 2023.