

National Youth Policy Review: Vietnam



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ABSTRACT

Although there is a substantial amount of information and data on young people in Vietnam in numerous surveys and sources, there has been limited analysis of national-level data. This paper aims to fill this gap by providing up-to-date data and in-depth analysis of Vietnamese youth in four main domains: Education, Employment, Health, and Participation. The main data sources used in the report include (i) data from the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, the International Labour Office, the World Bank, and (ii) findings from empirical research papers, newspapers, etc. The paper found that young people in Vietnam have still faced many issues despite the recent efforts of the Government. Therefore, policies should be updated and adjusted to enhance the role and position of youths in the nation-building process.

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I. Situation of Young People

1. Key Definition of Youth

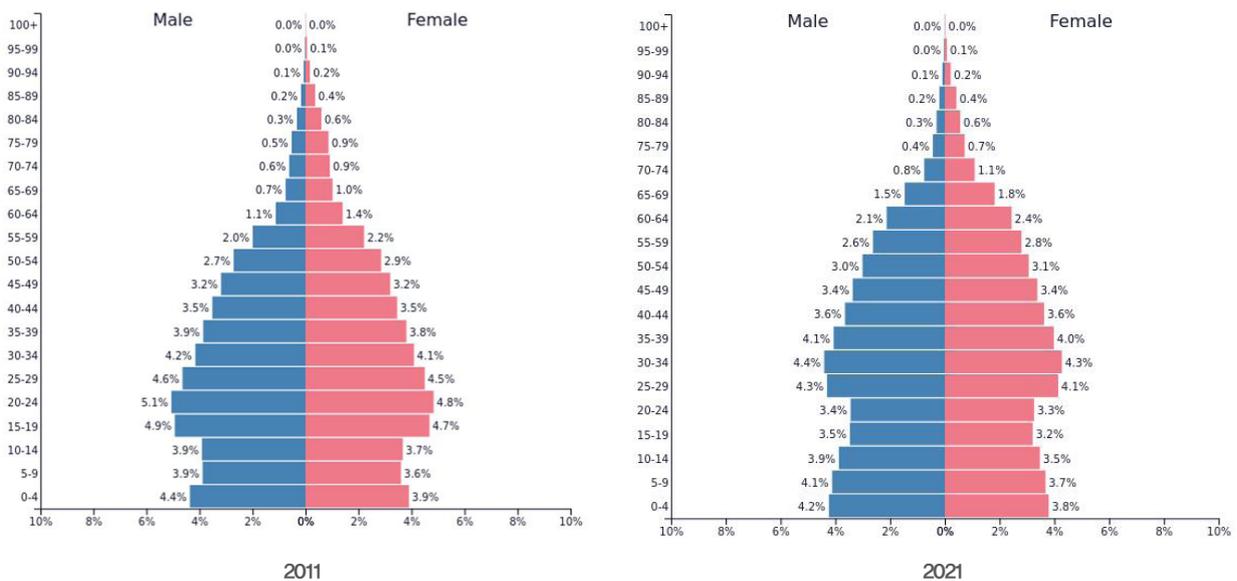
According to the 2020 Vietnam's Youth Law, in Vietnam, the youth refer to citizens aged between 16 and 30. However, the definition of youth in Vietnam varies in different policy contexts. Based on statistics numbers from the World Bank, the United Nations, and the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO), the term “young people” refers to individuals aged 15–24 years throughout this document, unless otherwise stated

2. Demographic Composition

Vietnam is experiencing a period of “golden population structure,” which means that the employment rate doubles the dependent population. According to GSO (2022), Vietnam’s total population reached 97.58 million in 2020 and increased to 98.51 million by 2021, in which the proportion of young people (15–24) accounted for about 13.4% of the total population. Thus, Vietnam is able to take advantage of young workers to develop the country, escaping the middle-income trap.

In 2011, the percentage of young people in Vietnam was highest, followed by the 25–29 age group and the 30–34 age group. However, after 10 years, the 30–34 age group accounts for the most significant proportion compared to other population groups, followed by the 25–29 age group and the 35–39 age group.

Figure 1 Vietnam Population Pyramids 2011 and 2021



Source: populationpyramid.net

Although the labor force in Vietnam has increased over the years, there is a downward trend in the number of young people participating in the labor market, decreasing from 9.25 million in 2010 to 6.06 million in 2020 (see Table 1). There are some reasons why Vietnamese youth demonstrate a decline in labor force participation. First, the fertility rate has declined over the recent decades. The average number of babies per woman has fallen from 3.74 children in 1992 to 2.12 children in 2020. Second, the college enrollment rate has significantly increased from 9.47% in 2000 to 22.82% in 2010 and 28.64% in 2019, implying that more young people want to earn higher degrees (The World Bank, 2020). However, such rates are still lower than other neighboring countries such as the Philippines or Thailand (Bao & Cho, 2021).

Table 1 Total workforce by age group (2010–2020)

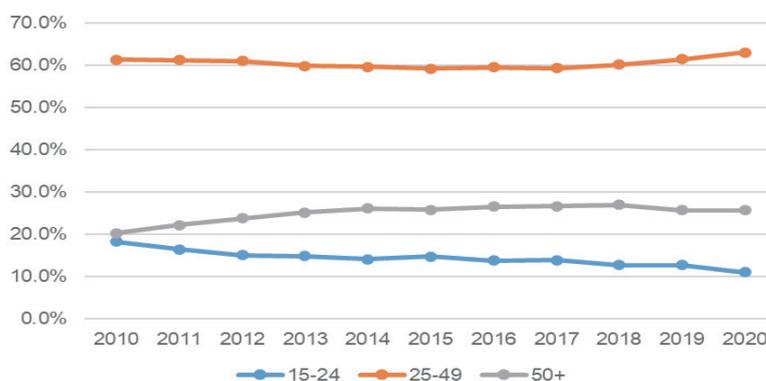
Unit: Thousand people

Year	15–24	25–49	50+
2010	9251.30	30988.80	10233.40
2011	8503.20	31614.30	11476.80
2012	7929.80	32177.30	12509.50
2013	7960.70	32078.80	13509.80
2014	7631.40	32257.30	14152.00
2015	8031.50	32167.40	14067.10
2016	7521.90	32443.00	14517.90
2017	7596.10	32573.80	14649.70
2018	7065.60	33366.70	14955.70
2019	7159.50	34308.30	14299.60
2020	6061.51	34622.23	14159.20

Source: GSO (2022)

Among three age groups, the proportion of people aged 15–24 participating in the labor market has decreased significantly, down from 18.3% in 2010 to 11.1% in 2020 while there is a slight increase for the 25–49 age group and the older group (See Figure 2).

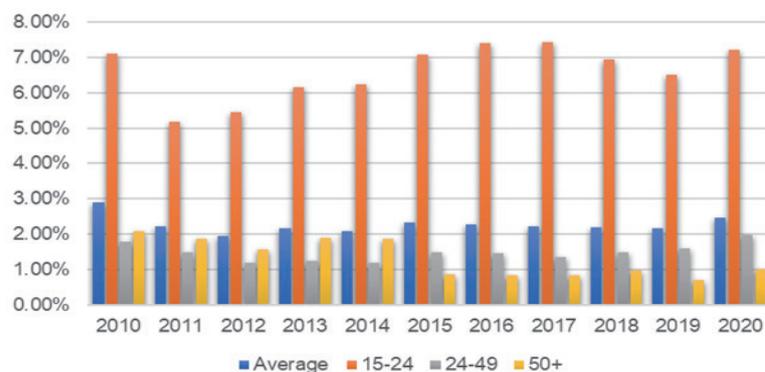
Figure 2 The percentage of the workforce by age group (2010–2020)



Source: GSO (2022)

Compared to other groups, the unemployment rate of the 15–24 age group is always the highest despite many advantages such as health or dynamism. In 2020, the unemployment rate of the youth was 7.21%, followed by the 25–49 age group and the 50-plus age group with the rates of 1.99% and 0.99%, respectively (see Figure 3). It should be noted that these rates are higher than that of 2019 due to the negative impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic. The 15–24 age group has the highest unemployment rate because many of them have to compete with experienced workers when entering the labor market (ILO, 2020). Additionally, universities and colleges do not provide enough incentives to encourage a high-skilled labor force that responds to the labor market demand, which increases the unemployment rate for fresh graduates (Tran, 2016).

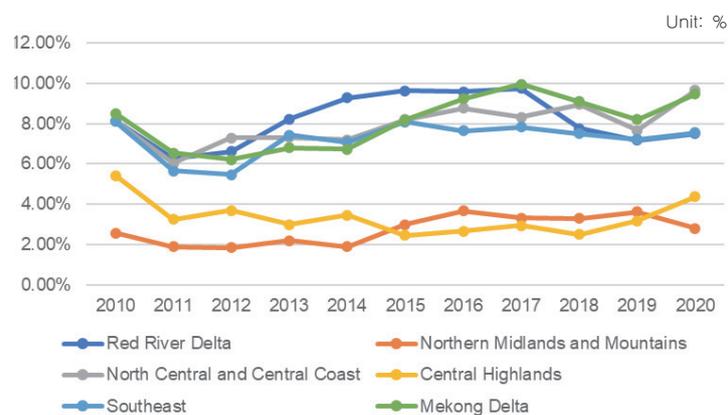
Figure 3 The unemployment rate of the labor force by age group



Source: GSO (2022)

There is a wide variation in youth unemployment rate across geographic regions. In 2020, among six geographical regions, the Northern and Coastal Central region witnessed the highest youth unemployment rates, at around 9.64%, followed by the Mekong Delta with 9.45%. The Northern Midlands and Mountains has the lowest rates, at 2.81% (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 The unemployment rate of the 15–24 age group by region



Source: GSO (2022)

Additionally, women's unemployment rates are considerably higher than men's for many years while more young people living in urban areas are unemployed when comparing to those living in rural areas.

Table 2 Comparison of unemployment rate of the 15–24 age group by living areas and gender

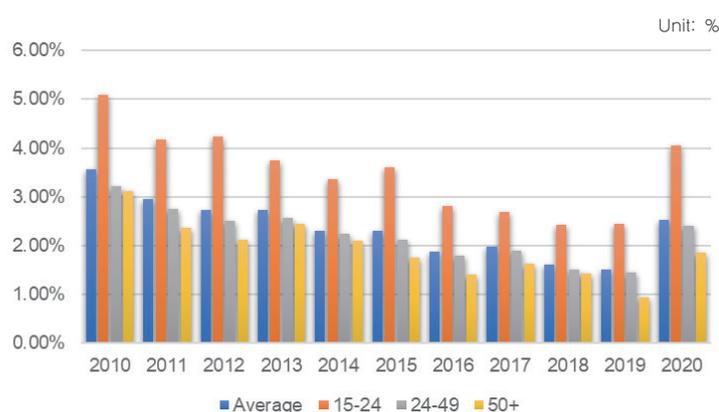
Unit: %

Comparison of unemployment rate		2019	2020
Living area	Rural area	4.89	5.45
	Urban area	10.40	10.58
Gender	Male	6.49	6.02
	Female	6.54	8.53

Source: GSO (2022)

All age groups have underemployment rates¹ significantly lower than their respective unemployment rates. Among all age groups, the percentage of people aged 15–24 is always the highest in terms of the underemployment rate in the 2010–2020 period. In 2020, the underemployment rate of the youth was 4.05%, followed by the 25–49 age group and the 50-plus age group with 2.41% and 1.86% respectively (see Figure 5). It should be noted that these rates are higher than that of 2019 due to the negative impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, possibly because younger people tend to work part-time, which leads to an increase in the underemployment rate (Carmichael et al., 2021).

Figure 5 The underemployment rate of the labor force by age group



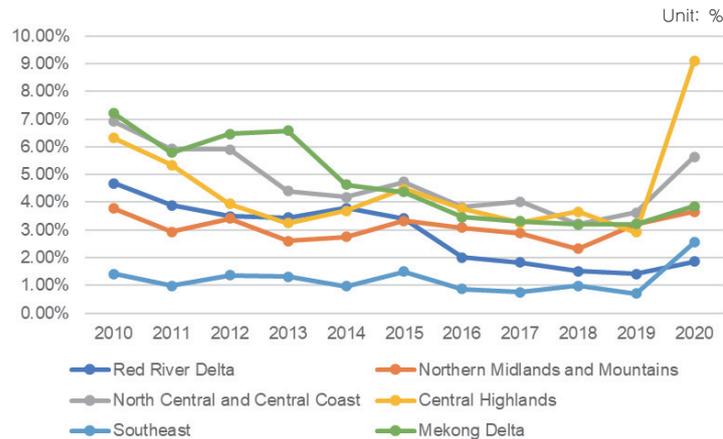
Source: GSO (2022)

¹ According to the GSO, underemployed people include employed people during a specified time-reference period that meet three following criteria:

- Having a desire to work more, that is: Having a desire to do one or more extra jobs to increase the total number of working hours; or to replace one or more of current jobs with another to increase the number of working hours, or to increase the number of working hours of current jobs, or a combination of them;
- Willing to work overtime, that is, shortly (for example, in the coming week), if given an opportunity;
- Working under 35 hours per week in the reference week.

There is also a wide variation in youth underemployment rate across geographic regions. In 2020, among six geographical regions, the Central Highlands witnessed the highest youth underemployment rates, at 9.12%, followed by the North Central and Central Coast with 5.64%. The Red River Delta has the lowest rate, at 1.86% (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 The underemployment rate of the 15–24 age group by region



Source: GSO (2022)

According to the ILO's 2016 Report on Informal Employment in Vietnam, informal employment is highly prevalent among the young (15–24 years) and over 55 years age groups. This is because young people frequently take temporary jobs while attending school or looking for jobs, whereas those in the older age group (55 and over) prefer informal jobs or cannot find formal jobs due to their age or retirement. In 2016, the rate of informal economy workers in the young age group (15–24 years) was high (60.2%), with six out of ten young workers working in the informal economy. Males had a 20% higher rate than females (70.1% versus 49.1%). According to the ILO report, there is a negative relationship between qualifications and participation in informal employment. Workers without qualifications, also known as untrained workers, are more likely to work in informal settings. As a result, young workers without qualifications have a much higher chance of finding informal work.

Table 3 Rate of informal economy workers by age group and gender (2014–2016)

Unit: %

Age group	2014	2015	2016
Total	58.8	58.3	57.2
15–24	65.8	62.6	60.2
25–54	55.9	55.3	54.3
55–59	66.1	69.2	68.8

60+	79.5	82.4	81.4
Male	61.2	61.6	60.7
15–24	74.6	72.9	70.1
25–54	58.4	58.5	57.9
55–59	57.9	62.0	62.6
60+	75.0	78.7	77.8
Female	56.1	54.5	53.3
15–24	55.8	51.1	49.1
25–54	53.1	51.7	50.3
55–59	77.5	79.3	77.3
60+	84.2	86.2	85.3

Source: ILO (2018)

One point worth noting is that the percentage of trained people in the youth group² namely 19–24 has increased significantly (see Table 3), but growth rates are lower than that of the older groups (such as the 25–29 and 30–34 age groups). This difference can be explained by the fact that older individuals have more experiences and time to complete bachelor's or higher education degree programs.

Table 4 The percentage of trained working people by age groups (2010–2020)

Unit: %

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
15–19	1.50	1.70	1.90	2.20	2.00	1.80	2.00	1.40	1.80	1.30	1.15
20–24	15.90	18.20	21.20	25.10	25.90	29.10	28.50	27.80	26.00	25.00	23.53
25–29	24.10	25.30	27.30	29.70	30.60	33.90	35.80	37.00	38.30	37.00	37.91
30–34	20.00	20.80	22.50	26.10	26.70	30.10	31.00	31.90	33.30	34.80	36.31
35–39	14.00	15.00	17.20	18.60	19.80	22.50	23.80	26.40	27.60	30.70	32.41
40–44	12.10	12.90	13.80	14.60	15.10	16.70	17.30	19.10	19.70	21.70	24.57
45–49	13.10	13.60	13.50	13.70	14.20	14.60	14.80	15.60	15.50	15.60	18.02
50+	11.80	12.20	12.50	13.40	13.10	12.80	12.60	12.90	13.10	11.70	12.22

² According to the GSO, trained people refer to:

(a) people who have been trained at a school or a technical/ vocational education and training institution;

(b) people who have not been to any school or a technical/ vocational education and training institution but have acquired necessary skills that are equivalent to Level 1 worker with diplomas/ certificates

3. Key Youth Issues

Youth and Education

Education plays a significant role in the development process of Vietnam. Data shows that Vietnam has focused on increasing the years of schooling for young people. Compared to countries with similar economic conditions, the country has achieved excellent results. For example, more than 99% of primary school-aged children are enrolled in school, and the literacy rate of people aged 15–24 is 98.625% (The World Bank, 2019). However, despite receiving high PISA scores, approximately 40% of Vietnamese students drop out before completing upper secondary school (Viet, 2021). According to the Vietnam Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on Children and Women Survey 2020–2021, the completion rate among Vietnamese students was highest in the primary (98.3%), followed by secondary (86.8%) and high school (58%).

Besides, there is a significant gap between higher education and vocational education regarding quality and quantity. This has resulted in excess of those obtaining undergraduate degrees compared to the need while there is a lack of high-quality labor resources for marketplaces (Nguyen et al., 2019). At the same time, Vietnam is still experiencing financial difficulties in the higher education sector (Pham, 2018). According to the World Bank, Vietnam spent about 5% of the country's total GDP on education; however, only 0.33% of GDP is invested in higher education, which accounts for 6.1% of the total government investment in education, ranking it the lowest in Asia countries (Chung, 2020). In Vietnam, higher education institutions lack research facilities, learning space, and incentives for innovation in faculties or higher education systems, such as curricula and teaching methods. Also, according to the global university rankings, Vietnam ranks behind other Asia countries such as the Philippines and Thailand because higher education outputs do not perform well compared to others. On the one hand, the educational system focuses too much on theory and academia instead of providing practical skills for students. Existing curricula prioritize higher education over non-formal education and vocational training, resulting in a mismatch between skills and labor market needs. On the other hand, the educational system also limits the initiative and creativity of learners. As a result, many recent graduates cannot meet job requirements, experience difficulties in finding a suitable job, or are forced to work in inappropriate positions.

Furthermore, there are educational disparities among living areas regarding education services and learning conditions. This disparity directly affects youth's ability to access education, especially those living in disadvantaged areas, and contributes to labor market imbalance. Additionally, although there are financial support policies for students, it is difficult for them to access. Besides, these policies are not stable and have not caught up with the development of the economy, preventing young people from accessing education, especially during the pandemic.

Youth and Employment

Every year, hundreds of thousands of young people enter the labor force in Vietnam. These individuals offer a significant source for economic development in Vietnam, as a more educated workforce is required to attract investment and stimulate economic development (Anh et al., 2015). According to GSO (2022), the 15–24 age group has always had the highest unemployment and underemployment rates in Vietnam. Specifically, in 2020, the youth unemployment rate was 7.21%, three times higher than the country's unemployment rate (2.48%), while the youth underemployment rate was 4.05%, followed by the 25–49 age group and the 50-plus age group with the rates of 2.41% and 1.86% respectively. Many young people who are out of school have to earn a living for their families in low-paid work and poor conditions. As a result, the higher youth unemployment and underemployment have imposed higher economic, political, and social costs on Vietnamese society (Doan et al., 2017).

While the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one has resulted in many new and increased job opportunities in Vietnam (Reerink & Lim, 2013), the country still faces challenges in providing enough jobs for an increasingly educated workforce and providing young people with relevant skills for the growing service and manufacturing sectors (Anh et al., 2015). This is because the number of educated workers has increased while higher education fails to meet employers' expectations and market needs. Another concern is the quality of employment among young people. Despite considerable progress in formalizing the market and enhancing labor market policies, the Vietnamese labor market continues to have a considerable number of informal workers. Data show that the main percentage of employed youth (60.2%) worked in the informal sector (ILO, 2018), and many of them did not write written contracts with their employers. In addition, the proportion of young people engaged in manual occupations accounted for about 36% of all youth employed, while only 12% of total youth employment worked for jobs requiring complex skills (Nguyen et al., 2015).

There is a wide variation in youth unemployment and underemployment rates across geographic regions. In 2020, among six geographical regions, the Northern and Coastal Central region witnessed the highest youth unemployment rates, at around 9.64%, followed by the Mekong Delta with 9.45%. The Northern Midlands and Mountains have the lowest rates, at 2.81%. However, the Central Highlands witnessed the highest youth underemployment rates, at 9.12%, followed by the North Central and Central Coast with 5.64%. The Red River Delta has the lowest rate, at 1.86%. Additionally, women's unemployment rates have been considerably higher than men's for many years, while more young people living in urban areas are unemployed when compared to those living in rural areas. Last but not least, while many policies have been implemented to provide support for vocational training, preferential loans for economic development, and sending workers to work abroad, these often provide only short-term support for young people.

Youth and Health

Vietnam has made remarkable progress in strengthening its universal healthcare system. However, young people still face many serious health problems or are exposed to health-risk behaviors. First, road traffic accidents and drowning have become the leading causes of death and disability for the 15–24 age group. For example, the majority of people killed in motor-vehicle crashes are between 18- and 55-years-old, accounting for nearly 70%. If calculated separately, the percentage of traffic accident victims aged 27 and under accounts for about 35% (Long, 2020). Second, the proportion of suicide among young people in Vietnam is also relatively low compared with other countries in the region, but these rates have been on the rise recently, and actions need to be taken to address this issue. According to a study conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), approximately 8% – 29% of adolescents in Vietnam suffer from mental health disorders. It is estimated that at least three million young people and adolescents in Vietnam suffer from mental health problems. However, only about 20% of them receive the necessary medical care and treatment (Yen, 2020). Third, the spread of HIV/AIDS, a lack of sexual and reproductive health information and services remain a significant threat to the health of Vietnamese youth, particularly those in high-risk groups such as young migrants or drug addicts. According to the Ministry of Health (Ha, 2021), the HIV epidemic is decreasing in Vietnam, but the country has an average of 12,000 new infections and 2,000 deaths each year. Men account for 85% of new infections, ranging from 16 to 29 (46%) and 30 to 39 (29%).

While there are many health-related issues, the awareness of young people about health promotion and physical training is not high. Only 23.2% of young people exercise every day, while 38.8% of the youth polled have a habit of getting annual checkups (Youth Research Institute, 2018). There are several reasons for not going to regular checkups, including the lack of financial resources (23.9%), no habit of visiting doctors (65.6%), time limitation (29.9%).

Youth and Participation

The participation of young people in Vietnam is commonly understood on a purely voluntary basis. Several youth organizations such as the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, Vietnam Youth Federation, and Vietnam Students' Association are funded by the State budget for their activities and operations. Although the percentage of young people in these organizations is relatively high, the participation is not comprehensive. According to Youth Research Institute (2018), only 23.8% of young members actively participated in the activities of the Youth Union, while 37.6% of them depended on the assignment of others. When it comes to new regulations and policies at the policy-formulation and design stage, the participation of young people is still low, although these individuals appear at various levels, both national and local levels. About 40% of the youth did not participate in developing youth policies, while their activities focused mainly on propagating and

disseminating new policies and the implementation of these policies (Youth Research Institute, 2018).

There is also a significant difference between rural and non-rural youth when participating in community activities since programs and campaigns for young people mainly occur in urban areas. A greater emphasis on participatory approaches for young people, as well as greater access to the policy process, are required to effectively engage with their participation in political, social, and economic life. Besides, there are also significant overlaps of functions and responsibilities among youth-related organizations (the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Committee on Vietnamese Youth, National Assembly Committee for Culture and Education, among others).

II. Policy Realities

1. Governmental Institutions Related to Youth

Vietnam had the Ministry of Youth in 1946 as part of a provisional government formed by late State President Ho Chi Minh, which was replaced by the Ministry of Home Affairs accountable for managing the youth. In 2020, the National Assembly proposed that legislators begin studying the establishment of the Ministry of Youth based on the existing Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, as the Union lacks the authority to issue circulars or make decisions (Tuoi Tre News, 2020). Until now, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) – Department of Youth Affairs is responsible for the performance of state management, including:

- (i) promulgate according to its competence or submit to competent state agencies for the promulgation of youth policies and laws; youth development strategies, programs, and plans;
- (ii) recommend the incorporation of youth development policies, targets, and objectives in socio-economic development policies, strategies, programs, and plans of sectors and fields;
- (iii) assist ministries and sectors in incorporating statistical indicators on Vietnamese youth into their indicator systems;
- (iv) guide ministries, ministerial-level agencies, and provincial-level People's Committees in conducting the task of state management of youth; organize knowledge and skill training for the contingent of cadres and civil servants carrying out the task of state management of youth;
- (v) assume primary responsibility for managing, utilizing, and disseminating data on youth and youth development indicators, as well as coordinating with related agencies;
- (vi) assume primary responsibility for, and collaborate with, ministries, ministerial-level agencies,

government-affiliated organizations, and the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee in developing and implementing youth policies and laws;

(vii) examine, inspect, settle complaints, denunciations, and petitions; review, perform the work of emulation and commendation, handle violations according to its competence or recommend competent agencies, organizations, or individuals to handle violations in the implementation of youth policies and laws.

Besides, ministries and ministerial-level agencies (such as National Committee on Vietnamese Youth, National Assembly Committee for Culture and Education, etc) shall coordinate with the Ministry of Home Affairs in performing the state management of youth and have the following responsibilities:

- (i) promulgate policies and mechanisms to encourage youth participation in development programs in their sectors or fields;
- (ii) incorporate youth development policies, targets, and objectives into their respective socio-economic development policies, strategies, programs, and plans; incorporate statistical indicators on Vietnamese youth into their indicator systems;
- (iii) guide provincial-level People's Committees to implement youth policies and laws that fall under their respective state management.

At the local level, Provincial-level People's Councils shall have the following responsibilities:

- (i) promulgate resolutions on youth development in their respective localities for implementation of the State's youth policies and laws;
- (ii) decide on youth development targets and objectives in their local socio-economic development plans of each year and each period;
- (iii) decide on the distribution of budget funds for the implementation of youth policies and laws and youth development strategies, programs, and plans in their localities;
- (iv) supervise the implementation of youth policies and laws in their localities;
- (v) decide on payrolls of agencies assigned to perform the state management of youth.

In parallel with Provincial-level People's Councils at the local level, Provincial-level People's Committees shall perform the state management of youth and have the following responsibilities:

- (i) organize the implementation of youth policies and laws, as well as youth development strategies, programs, and plans in their communities; incorporate youth development targets and objectives into their local socio-economic development programs and plans for each year and each period;
- (ii) build the contingent of cadres and civil servants performing the state management of youth; ensure the lawful and legitimate rights and interests of youth when investing in the development of educational,

medical, health counseling, cultural, physical training, and sports establishments;

(iii) manage, use, and disseminate statistical data on youth and youth development indicators in localities; conduct statistical and information activities, and annually report to the Ministry of Home Affairs on the results of the implementation of youth policies and laws;

(iv) examine, inspect, and handle violations; resolve youth-related complaints, denunciations, and petitions related to youth; direct and guide lower-level People's Committees in the performance of state management of youth.

Apart from the governmental institutions above, several organizations deal with the issues of the youth. First, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, a socio-political organization of Vietnamese youth, plays a vital role in youth movements and organizations; it organizes and guides children's activities and takes charge of the Ho Chi Minh Young Pioneer Organization. It shall oversee and give social criticisms on youth policies and laws; sum up and report ideas and proposals of youth to competent agencies or organizations; and participate or coordinate with related state agencies in formulating, propagating, and implementing youth policies and laws. Second, the Vietnam Youth Federation, a broad social organization of Vietnamese youth, aims to unite and rally Vietnamese youth of all strata to strive for the cause of national construction and defense. Third, the Vietnam National Union of Students, a socio-political organization of Vietnamese students, aims to link the Vietnam Communist Party – the Government – and other organizations with students and as an educational force at colleges and universities. The Vietnam Youth Federation and the Vietnam National Union of Students shall coordinate with the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union in overseeing and making social criticisms of youth policies and laws.

2. Overview of Existing Youth Policies by Domains

Education Policy

Based on Law on Youth (2020), policies regarding education aim to (i) ensure equal access to education and create conditions for youth to participate in scientific research; (ii) introduce and implement programs on education in morality, ideal, national traditions, cultured lifestyles, life skills, and the sense of law observance for youth; (iii) adopt policies on credits, scholarships and school fee exemption and reduction for youth as prescribed by law; (iv) encourage and support youth to study and raise their professional qualifications and skills; and capability to create, research, and apply for scientific and technological advances; (v) offer incentives and supports for organizations and individuals investing in scientific research and innovation activities of youth; participating in training life skills and other necessary skills for youth.

Several specific policies regarding young people are as follows:

- Decision No. 5/2022/QĐ-TTg dated March 23 2022, amending and supplementing several articles of the Prime Minister' s Decision No. 157/2007/QĐ-TTg dated September 27, 2007 credit for students;
- Decision No. 311/QĐ-TTg dated March 05 2022, approving the Program "Educating revolutionary ideals, morality, and cultural lifestyle for young people, teenagers and children in cyberspace in the period of 2022 – 2030";
- Decree No. 81/2021 / ND-CP dated August 27, 2021, the Prime Minister, stipulating the mechanism of collection and management of tuition fees for educational institutions under the national education system and the policy of exemption from tuition fees, support for study expenses; price services in the field of education and training;
- Decision 1331/QĐ-TTg dated July 24 2021, approving the Vietnamese youth development strategy for the 2021–2030 period;
- Decision 13/2013/QĐ-TTg dated February 6 2013, on regimes and policies for cadres of Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, Vietnam Student Association, Vietnam Youth Union in educational institutions and teaching institutions occupation;
- Decision No. 2160/QĐ-TTG dated November 26 2010, approving the Scheme on strengthening law dissemination and education to raise legal awareness for young people, etc.

Employment Policy

Based on Law on Youth (2020), policies on labor and employment aim to (i) provide vocational counseling and orientation as well as labor market information for youth; teach professional skills and professional ethics for youth; ensure that youth are neither forced to work nor exploited; (ii) create conditions for youth to have jobs; create jobs on the spot for youth in rural, mountainous, and island areas suitable to each region, each zone, and each period of national development; (iii) create conditions for youth to borrow concessional loans from the National Fund for Employment and other lawful credit sources for self-employment and production and business development.

Several specific policies regarding young people are as follows:

- The Government' s Resolution No. 140/2017/ND-CP dated December 05 2017 on policies for attracting and creating human resources from civil servants, excellent graduates, and young scientists;
- Decision No. 1665/QĐ-TTg dated October 30, 2017, approving the project " Student Business Start-up Support to 2025";
- Decree No. 61/2015/ND-CP dated July 9 2015, on job creation policies and the national employment fund;

- Decision No.1758/QD–TTg dated September 30 2013, approving the pilot project of recruiting young cadres to volunteer in communes to participate in the development of rural and mountainous areas in the 2013 – 2020 period;
- Decision No.174/QD–TTg, dated January 29 2010, approving the Scheme of enhancing young volunteers to work in defense economic zones in the 2010–2020 period;
- Decision No. 1956/QD–TTg dated November 27, 2009 of the Prime Minister approving the scheme on vocational training for rural laborers up to 2020, etc.

Health Policy

Based on Law on Youth (2020), policies on health care aims to (i) provide counseling on and support for improvement of youth's health; prevent and fight domestic violence, school violence and sexual abuse; prevent and fight drug addiction and HIV/AIDS; to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, other social diseases and dangers affecting the physical and mental health of youth; (ii) ensure that youth will be provided with information on and have access to friendly services on reproductive health and sexual health protection and care; be provided with premarital counselling and health checkup; (iii) encourage organizations and individuals to invest in and provide medical and healthcare services for youth.

Several specific policies regarding young people are as follows:

- Decision 5914/QD–BYT dated December 29 2021, on promulgating the Project "Reproductive and sexual health care for adolescents and young adults in the 2021–2025 period"
- Decision 3781/QD–BYT dated August 27 2020, on reproductive health care for young people;
- Decision No. 641/QD–TTG dated April 28 2011, on the approval of the Master Plan on development of physical strength and stature of Vietnamese people for the 2011–2030 period.

Participation Policy

The State also encourages the participation of young people in socio-economic development projects; community activities among others while ensuring funding, physical foundations and equipment and facilities necessary for youth volunteers to perform tasks assigned by the State.

Several specific policies regarding young people are as follows:

- Decree no. 13/2021/ND–CP dated March 01, 2021, on dialogues with the youth and mechanisms, policies, and measures for implementation of policies for youths aged between full sixteen and eighteen years old.
- Decree 17/2021/ND–CP dated March 09 2021, stipulating policies for young volunteers and voluntary youth.
- Decision No.57/QG–TTg dated November 16 2015, on policies of youth volunteer activities, etc.

3. Legal Frameworks Underpinning Youth Policies

The current Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (2013) also recognizes and protects young people's rights, as it states the following: "The State, family, and society shall create favorable conditions for young people to study, work, relax, develop bodies and minds and shall educate them in morality, national tradition and civic consciousness for them to be in the vanguard of creative labor and national defense." The enactment of the 2005 Youth Law was a significant step toward ensuring the rights of Vietnamese youth, as it addresses the "rights and obligations of young people" and the "responsibilities of the State, family, and society toward the youth." This creates a legal foundation for establishing government agencies related to young people. The 2020 Youth Law replaced the 2005 Youth Law, establishing a legal framework that allows Provincial People's Committees and youth organizations to address youth issues at the local level within their duties and responsibilities. The revised Law also emphasizes the key role of MOHA at the national and local levels in implementing the Youth Law, national strategies, and action plans towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030.

The Vietnamese Youth Development Strategy for 2011–2020 was another significant development. The Strategy provides a framework for relevant ministries and sectors to provide a comprehensive response to the needs and rights of young people. After the 2020 Youth Law was introduced, the Vietnamese Youth Development Strategy for the 2021–2030 period was issued under Decision No.1331/QĐ-TTg, with six key tasks, (i) increasing their awareness of laws, (ii) providing legal assistance and equal access to education, (iii) improving vocational training quality and creating sustainable jobs, (iv) developing high-quality human resources, (v) protecting and improving their health and spiritual lives, and (vi) maintaining their role in socio-economic development and national defense.

Specifically, by 2030, over 70% of young people will be provided with information on policies and laws via online applications, social networks, and mass media; 80% of the eligible age groups will complete upper secondary education or the equivalent; 70% of young people in ethnic minority areas, mountainous areas, and areas with extremely difficult socio-economic conditions will complete lower secondary education. By 2030, to strive for the target that 80% of young people will receive career orientation and employment counseling; at least 70% of young people with disabilities, HIV-infected people, drug users, victims of human trafficking, and law offenders will be provided with training. In addition, to strive that every year, over 70% of young people will be equipped with knowledge and skills in physical training and health protection; 100% of young girls will have convenient access to modern contraceptive methods, infertility prevention and assisted reproduction.

III. Recommendation and Conclusion

Despite the incredible efforts of the Government, there is still a significant gap that needs to be filled in education, employment, health, and participation, among others

Education Policy

Vietnamese society has always placed a high value on education. To address education issues, the Vietnamese Government should minimize administrative procedures that limit access to education and high-quality education for all young people in the country; at the same time, policies that increase access to quality education at all levels, such as tuition fee exemptions and scholarship should be implemented. Furthermore, the Vietnamese education system should shift its emphasis from imparting knowledge to creating innovative problem-solving and critical thinking skills by developing a comprehensive policy to change the current education system, from learning programs to evaluation methods for learners. This ensures that the education system can provide appropriate learning pathways that are beneficial for all students. As a result, students will be able to increase their learning capacity and meet the demands of labor market and social changes.

Employment Policy

The employment policy is a fundamental social policy of the Vietnamese Government. Through socio-economic development programs, the Government has invested capital and resources in creating new jobs for young people. In addition to the large-scale national programs mentioned above, the Government has also carried out several specific or targeted projects on education and vocational training, thereby bringing more jobs to the underemployed. However, these efforts are not really practical. In this case, it is recommended to develop a comprehensive human resource development strategy that focuses on vocational training and labor market forecasts. This can help young people make decisions about their personal career development and search for future job opportunities. Besides, the Government should conduct regular evaluations of the labor market and legal framework to ensure and strengthen the participation and role of business and industry associations in assisting young workers. This will include an effective communication platform for young people to access all relevant information and connect them with business owners.

Health Policy

Ensuring the healthy development of the youth population plays an essential role in the country's development. In the context of Vietnam, it is advised to develop a national strategy on reproductive health and sexual health for youths concerning sexual and reproductive health and awareness-raising. Extracurricular programs at educational institutions should be conducted to raise the awareness of health issues such as marriage, sexual health, gender equality, drug prevention, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, and

other social diseases. The government and relevant agencies should also remove barriers to access to health services and provide convenient and comfortable health care services for young people. Furthermore, periodic assessments of Vietnamese youth's physical and mental health, such as national youth health surveys or impact evaluations, should be implemented to provide policymakers with up-to-date information about youth issues, thereby adjusting and updating evidence-informed policies and achieving better policy results.

Participation Policy

To enhance the participation of young people in social and political activities, it is suggested that the formation of groups and civic organizations should be encouraged, thereby promoting youth-led and youth-inclusive actions. The main focus is to encourage youth engagement in policy-making processes and raise their roles and voices. To do this, it is essential to have a mechanism that encourages Vietnamese youth to participate in monitoring policies and laws, particularly youth-related policies, and laws, during the drafting, adopting, and organizing the implementation of these policies. The Government should also ensure appropriate human resources to increase the participation of young people in social and political activities with accountability and transparency.

Annex

LIST OF TASKS, PROGRAMS, SCHEMES, PROJECTS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE 2021–2030 VIETNAMESE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

(Attached to Decision No. 1331/QĐ-TTg dated July 24, 2021 of the Prime Minister)

No.	Line agency	Name of task, program, scheme, project	Coordinating agency	Submission to	Time for submission	Implementation time
1.	Ministry of National Defense	“Strengthening young intellectuals to voluntarily work in economic – defense zones for the 2021 – 2030 period” Project	Ministries: Home Affairs, Planning and Investment, Finance, Education and Training, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs; The National Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee	Prime Minister	2020	From 2021 to 2030
		“Support to create jobs for demobilized youth” Scheme	Ministries: Home Affairs, Planning and Investment, Finance, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee	Ministry of National Defense	December 2021	January 2022
2.	Ministry of Public Security	“Drug prevention among Vietnamese youth” Scheme	Ministry of Home Affairs; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee	Ministry of Public Security	December 2021	From 2022 to 2030

	<p>“Training and fostering to improve governance management capacity for young state employees at the commune-level by 2030” Scheme</p>	<p>Ministries: Planning and Investment, Finance; Government office; The National Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs; Central Organization Commission; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee</p>	<p>Prime Minister</p>	<p>March 2022</p>	<p>June 2022</p>
<p>3. Ministry of Home Affairs</p>	<p>“Selecting young intellectuals to voluntarily participate in socio-economic development in rural, mountainous and borderland and island area” Scheme</p>	<p>Ministries: Planning and Investment, Finance, Agriculture and Rural Development; Government office; Central Organization Commission; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee</p>	<p>Prime Minister</p>	<p>June 2022</p>	<p>October 2022</p>
	<p>“Consolidate the state organization for performing the task of governance management of youth nationwide in order to meet the requirements of youth development in the new period”</p>	<p>Ministry of Finance; Government office; Central Organization Commission; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee Youth Union</p>	<p>Government</p>	<p>October 2022</p>	<p>January 2023</p>

4.	Ministry of Justice	<p>“Strengthening propaganda and dissemination of resolutions of Party, policies and laws of State to youth, especially the issues directly related to the life, study and employment of youth”</p>	<p>Ministry of Information and Communications; other relevant ministries and branches</p>	<p>Ministry of Justice</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Annually</p>
		<p>“Fostering the laws dissemination and education in order to raise the youth’s awareness of law observance; linking laws education with education on political ideology, ethics and moral lifestyle”</p>	<p>Ministry of Information and Communications; other relevant ministries and branches</p>	<p>Ministry of Justice</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Annually</p>
		<p>“Strengthening application of information technology and digital transformation in laws dissemination and education to raise young people’s awareness of law understanding and observance.” in the new period” Scheme</p>	<p>Ministries: Home Affairs, Education and Training, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs; The National Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee</p>	<p>Prime Minister</p>	<p>September 2022</p>	<p>January 2023</p>
		<p>“Improving access to law for vulnerable youth, self-employed youth and youth in ethnic minority and mountainous areas” Scheme</p>	<p>Ministries: Public Security, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs, Home Affairs; The National Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee</p>	<p>Prime Minister</p>	<p>December 2022</p>	<p>March 2023</p>
5.	Ministry of Education and Training	<p>“Strengthening education of revolutionary ideals, ethics, lifestyle, life skills for pupils and students in the period of 2021–2025, vision to 2030” Scheme</p>	<p>Ministries: Home Affairs, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs, Information and Communications; Voice of Vietnam; Vietnam Television; Vietnam News Agency; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee</p>	<p>Prime Minister</p>	<p>June 2022</p>	<p>September 2022</p>

6.	Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs	“Training and developing soft skills for youth and students and vocational education” Scheme	Ministries: Home Affairs, Education and Training; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee	Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs	December 2021	January 2022
		“Building cultural, sports and vocational education centers for the period of 2021–2025” Scheme	Ministry: Home Affairs, Education and Training; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee	Ministry of Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs	December 2021	January 2022
7.	Ministry of Science and Technology	Issuing specific guiding documents to unify the implementation of the Decree No. 27/2020/ND-CP dated March 1, 2020 of the Government on amending and supplementing a number of articles of the Government’s Decree No. 40/2014/ND-CP dated May 12, 2014 regulating the using and appointing talents for science and technology activities and the Government’s Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP dated September 22, 2014 stipulating the talent attraction who are overseas Vietnamese and foreign experts to participate in science and technology activities in Vietnam	Ministries: Ministry of Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs	Ministry of Science and Technology	December 2021	January 2022

8.	Ministry of Health	Implementing policies to reduce the consumption of cigarettes and e-cigarettes, funky balls and other substances used to inhale, smoke, and smell causing illusion and addiction among youth	Ministries: Ministry of Home Affairs, Industry and Trade, Public Security, Justice	Ministry of Health	June 2022	September 2022
		Issued communications and educational materials on reproductive health and sexual health for health workers and the community	Ministries: Home Affairs, Education and Training, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee	Ministry of Health	June 2022	November 2022
		Developing a national target program to communicate on the harmful effects of salt and sugar abuse in the diet, metabolic disorders caused by lack of nutrition and inactivity, prevention of some common communicable and non-communicable diseases	Ministries: Home Affairs, Education and Training, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs, Information and Communication, National Defense, Public Security	Ministry of Health	January 2022	March 2022
9.	Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism	Program to develop reading culture and improve ICT skills for young people	Ministries: Ministry of Home Affairs, Education and Training, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs, Information and Communications; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee	Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism	December 2023	From 2024 – 2030
10.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	“Training and educating diplomatic knowledge and skills for Vietnamese youth” Scheme	Ministries: Ministry of Home Affairs, Planning and Investment, Finance; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee; People’s Committees of provinces and cities under central government; youth unions of provinces	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	February 2022	June 2022

11.	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	<p>“Supporting rural youth to start a business, developing rural economy in association with the program – One Commune, One agricultural – forestry – fishery Product (OCOP)” Scheme</p> <p>“Strengthening capacity for youth in borderland and island areas to serve the construction of new rural areas, the environment protection and climate change adaptation” Scheme</p>	<p>Central ministries and branches; provinces and cities under central government; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee</p> <p>Central ministries and branches; provinces and cities under central government; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee</p>	<p>Prime Minister</p> <p>Prime Minister</p>	<p>December 2021</p> <p>December 2021</p>	<p>From 2022 to 2030</p> <p>From 2022 to 2030</p>
12.	Vietnam Television	<p>Developing a series of communication programs on moral education, lifestyle, career orientation and future skills for Vietnamese youth on the infrastructure of national educational television channel VTV7</p>	<p>Ministries: Home Affairs, Education and Training, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee</p>	<p>Vietnam Television</p>	<p>December 2022</p>	<p>From 2023 – 2030</p>
13.	Vietnam News Agency	<p>Strengthening communication and propaganda work on the Vietnamese youth development strategy for 2021–2030 period</p>	<p>Ministries: Home Affairs, Information and Communications; Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee</p>	<p>Vietnam News Agency</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Annually</p>

14. Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee	“Educating revolutionary ideals, ethics, and moral lifestyles for young people in the cyberspace” Scheme	Ministries: Home Affairs, Education and Training, Information and Communications, Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism	Prime Minister	December 2021	From 2022 – 2030
	“Discovering, nurturing and promoting young Vietnamese talents in the 2021 – 2025 period” Scheme	Ministries: Home Affairs, Science and Technology	Prime Minister	December 2021	From 2022 – 2025
	“Improving capacity for Vietnamese youth in the digital world in the period 2022 – 2025” Scheme	Ministries: Home Affairs, Information and Communications; Education and Training, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs	Prime Minister	January 2022	2022 From 2022 to 2025
	Supporting youth start-up Scheme	Ministries: Home Affairs, Education and Training, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs	Prime Minister	December 2021	From 2022 to 2030
	Stablishing fund to support initiatives for community development Scheme	Relevant ministries, branches, organizations, and individuals	Prime Minister	December 2021	From 2022 – 2030
	“Improving foreign language ability and international integration for Vietnamese youth in the period 2022 – 2030” Scheme	Ministries: Ministry of Home Affairs, Education and Training, Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs	Prime Minister	January 2022	2022 From 2022 to 2030
	“Strengthening capacity to manage and coordinate volunteer activities for staff of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, Vietnam Youth Union, Vietnamese Students’ Association at all levels” Scheme	Ministry of Home Affairs; and relevant agencies	Prime Minister	December 2021	From 2022 – 2030

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