

## Gender and Citizen Participation at the Local Governments: A Case of Vietnam

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**Abstract :** Citizen Participation has been largely considered as an important objective of improving democracy and government decision-making in Vietnam recently. The Public Administration Performance Index Survey data (PAPI) indicated that citizens in provinces that have a higher proportion of male often less participate in local governance than those in provinces that have lower proportion of male. That means Vietnamese women more actively participate at the local governance rather than men. Thus this study will explore factors involving gender differences that impact on citizen participation at the local level. Applying qualitative approach, mainly in-depth interview, this study explores four diverse perspectives on enhancing citizen participation for both women and men at the local governance including civic knowledge; the trust of citizens; suitable policies of local government; and the role of NGOs. Furthermore, this study also points out two crucial reasons that are leading to the gender differences of citizen participation at the local level. Firstly, because Vietnamese women play the main role in family financial management; then they are willing to highly contribute to 'voluntary contributions'; one of the four sub-dimensions of the concept 'citizen participation' of PAPI. Secondly, in Vietnam, women are deeply prone to be interested in the small issues at the local governance; whereas men are much keen on the bigger issues at national and international governance.

**Keywords :** citizen participation, gender, women, local governance, PAPI, Vietnam

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