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What is a social injustice I have noticed across my campus or community which resonates with me?

Having moved to Vietnam only 9 months ago, I have already recognized a form of social injustice not only in the local communities but within my school. The particular issue I have realised is the role of men and women in society, or rather women's rights in general.

At school, I have noticed that all the cleaners on campus are female. This shouldn't really concern me if these women signed up for the job because they enjoy it, however, I can really start to see the disparity between men and women's roles when other jobs which are deemed "more important" such as security guards and technicians are dominated by men. This trend also reflects the kind of sexism and job discrimination I see outside of school. All the cleaners I see on the streets and at my apartment block are female. On the other hand, the security officers, guards, policemen and taxi drivers I see are constantly positions operated by men.

Curious about other forms of gender equality in Vietnam, I found the following information which shocked me quite a bit:

- Women are not allowed to file divorces.
- Having a son instead of a daughter is considered one of the most respectful things a woman can do for her husband, hence why there are many more girls who are put up for adoption.
- Women tend to be restricted to domestic work such as cleaning and doing lower level service such as being secretaries and waitresses. Men are less restricted and tend to get higher-level positions such as monks, professors and government workers.
- Only 17% of Vietnam's national parliament are women.
- The rate of prostitution has increased since the late 90s and although it is illegal in Vietnam, remains a persistent issue.

Why does this social injustice matter?

I think that supporting women's rights is so important, especially in countries like Vietnam where society is still very conservative about issues as such and are not as willing to change.

Although gender equality may be “unintentional” or just a part of Vietnamese culture, I think there needs to be more recognition of women, and less of a job/rights disparity between the two sexes.

One factor which I believe could be stopping Vietnamese women from speaking up about these issues is because of their husbands or other men’s power over them. If they try to address this problem, they may feel humiliated or threatened by what the men may say or how they might act in response.

Another factor which I believe could be influencing their minimal say are traditions and social norms. As women have always been perceived as “weaker” and less successful people in general, they may be afraid of how the public or their family might react when they try to take the roles of men. They may feel that burdening their cultural traditions and opposing the status quo is a wrongdoing.

What might already be happening on my campus or community (a group, club, non-profit org) or do I need to start my own club?

At this current stage I am not aware of any groups or clubs at school which support women’s rights in Vietnam, however, when I visited my school website I found that there was a previous Service Learning group called the *‘Feminist Photography Foundation’* which was a club organised by four female students to eliminate gender inequality faced by women across the globe. I am not sure what has happened to that group and whether it is still running as of now, but that is the only organisation I know of within the school.

To take action, I could try to do a bit more research on whether there are any more clubs which support women’s rights at my school, and possibly make my own if I can’t find anything. To do this, I could speak to the Service Learning manager to inform him about the issue and see if there is any sort of group we could make.

Tell us how you take your issue and create an action plan to address it. Share your next steps.

My action plan to address this issue is to present what I already know to my homebase class and tell them why I think it is important. The reason why I would like to tell my homebase is because they are a group of people I can trust, and know will listen to what I am saying. From there, I could inform them about upcoming dates about women’s rights movements, campaigns or festivals taking place in the community so they can participate and raise awareness as well.

To even reach a wider audience, I could email these upcoming events to my year group or the entire high school student body so those who are interested can take part too.