



## Legal Framework and Practical Implementation of The Role of The Vietnam General Confederation of Labour in Protecting Workers

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**KEYWORDS:** trade union; worker protection; **ABSTRACT:** This study analyzes the legal framework and the practical labour law; labour disputes; law enforcement.

implementation of the role of Vietnamese trade unions in protecting workers in the context of labour-relations reform and increasing requirements for compliance with labour standards during integration. The research method combines legal analysis of the 2019 Labour Code, the 2024 Trade Union Law, and related subordinate regulations on guidance and sanctioning of violations in the labour sector, with descriptive quantitative analysis based on indicators of workplace dialogue, collective bargaining, legal aid, and participation in dispute resolution, supplemented by qualitative analysis from semi-structured interviews and enterprise case studies. The findings show that the legal system has established relatively comprehensive mechanisms for trade unions to perform their representative, protective, and supervisory functions, particularly through dialogue, collective labour agreements, and legal aid channels; however, implementation effectiveness remains uneven across enterprise size, sectors, and positions in supply chains. Key determinants include the capacity of grassroots union officials, the quality of dialogue mechanisms, the level of coordination with state management agencies, and financial resource conditions. The discussion highlights exceptional cases such as small enterprises, the informal sector, and disputes associated with restructuring, where trade unions face difficulties intervening early or lack soft enforcement tools. The study concludes that priority should be given to enhancing

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transparency and efficiency in resource allocation, and further refining enforcement

assurance mechanisms to strengthen the role of trade unions in protecting workers.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Worker protection is regarded as the central objective of labour law and, at the same time, a criterion reflecting the effectiveness of representative institutions in modern labour relations. In the Vietnamese context, trade unions are established as a socio-legal institution tasked with representing, caring for, and protecting the lawful and legitimate rights and interests of workers, while also participating in policy-making, supervising implementation, and contributing to the stabilization of labour relations in a socialist-oriented market economy (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2024). The processes of industrialization and international integration have heightened demands for transparency and for the substantive operation of mechanisms for workplace dialogue, bargaining, and dispute resolution, thereby creating the need to reaffirm the role of trade unions not only at the normative level but also in their capacity for implementation in the lived reality of labour relations.

The academic foundations of Vietnamese labour relations point to a notable shift from an approach that emphasizes rights in a normative sense to one that focuses on interest governance in the practical conduct of bargaining and conflict management; however, limitations in substantive representation at the grassroots level remain a persistent challenge to effective worker protection (Clarke et al., 2007). Recent discussions have further broadened the issue by examining the independence of workers' voices and the pressures to improve representative institutions at the enterprise level as Vietnam participates in and implements labour commitments under new-generation free trade agreements, thereby highlighting the need to strengthen representative capacity and

enhance the substantive functioning of workplace-level mechanisms (Cox & Le Queux, 2023). The interaction between trade and labour in international supply chains has also been recognized as an important driver of improved labour governance and enforcement standards at the enterprise level, thereby reshaping the operational space and enforcement levers available to trade unions in protecting workers (Tran et al., 2017). These research findings reinforce a methodological observation that the legal framework creates the necessary conditions for worker protection, while it is the implementation mechanisms and the capacities of the implementing actors that ultimately determine the degree of effectiveness in practice.

In recent years, the process of refining labour institutions has been clearly reflected in the promulgation of the 2019 Labour Code, which introduced important adjustments related to workplace dialogue, collective bargaining, collective labour agreements, and labour dispute resolution mechanisms, thereby expanding the legal tools through which worker-representative institutions can participate in regulating labour relations (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2019). The system of implementing regulations, particularly detailed provisions on working conditions and labour relations, contributes to operationalizing these institutions by providing procedural frameworks and the standards necessary for legal provisions to function in enterprise practice (Government of Vietnam, 2020). Compliance assurance has continued to be strengthened through provisions on administrative sanctions for violations in the fields of labour and social insurance, which directly affect compliance incentives and the enforcement environment for labour rights, thereby influencing the effectiveness of worker protection at the practical level (Government of Vietnam, 2022). The legal foundations for trade union organization and operations have been further consolidated by the 2024 Trade Union Law, in which representative and protective roles, as well as participation in supervision and recommendations, are affirmed as pillars guiding trade union activities in labour relations (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2024). The resources required to perform these functions are also closely tied to the trade union financial mechanism under current regulations, since the capacity to protect workers depends significantly on the ability to sustain representative activities, consultation, legal assistance, and support for dispute resolution under conditions of limited resources (Government of Vietnam, 2013).

However, practice shows that a substantial gap still exists between establishing legal provisions and the ability to translate them into outcomes that protect workers in everyday labour relations. This gap is often reflected in the quality and substantive nature of workplace dialogue, the rate and effectiveness of collective labour agreements, the capacity for early intervention to prevent escalation of conflicts, as well as the coverage and quality of advisory and legal aid services provided to workers. The unevenness of this gap is shaped by multiple factors, including enterprise size, sectoral characteristics, the degree of labour organization, the professional competence and skills of grassroots union officials, and the level of institutional coordination between trade unions and state management agencies in detecting and addressing violations and ensuring compliance.

On the basis of problem identification, the study focuses on clarifying three core sets of questions. The first set analyzes how the current legal framework defines and designs the trade union's role in protecting workers, including the mechanisms that trade unions can use to perform their representative and protective functions (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2024). The second set examines how these mechanisms operate in practice through key performance indicators, including dialogue, bargaining, dispute resolution, and legal aid, in order to assess the extent to which legal provisions are translated into implementation across different enterprises and localities (International Labour Organization & International Finance Corporation, 2023). The third set analyzes the determinants of implementation effectiveness and identifies priorities for improvement to enhance the trade union's role in protecting workers, thereby strengthening the capacity of the representative actor and increasing the effectiveness of enforcement assurance mechanisms within the labour relations system.

The contribution of the study lies in systematizing the legal framework according to the logic of implementation mechanisms and developing a set of indicators for assessing implementation at the enterprise and locality levels, thereby providing an analytical basis for deriving policy implications aimed at strengthening representative capacity, standardizing intervention procedures, and improving the effectiveness of safeguarding the enforcement of labour rights as labour relations continue to evolve under the impact of integration and shifts in labour governance models.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. Research design and analytical framework

The study was conducted using a mixed-methods design oriented toward a "legal-empirical" approach in order to both clarify the normative structure and identify how worker-protection mechanisms operate in practice. The legal approach focuses on determining the legal position of trade unions within the labour-relations system and the scope of their worker-protection functions, while analyzing implementation mechanisms associated with workplace dialogue, collective bargaining, collective labour agreements, participation in dispute resolution, legal assistance, and supervisory activities. This approach also examines enforcement-assurance mechanisms and sanctions in order to assess the extent to which the legal system supports the union's protective role (Government of Vietnam, 2020). The empirical component is organized along two complementary analytical tracks: descriptive quantitative analysis is used to develop and calculate implementation indicators to identify trends and differences across enterprise groups, sectors, and localities, while qualitative analysis is used to explain causal mechanisms and identify bottlenecks through semi-structured interviews and typical case analysis (International Labour Organization, 2019).

The analytical framework is structured as a sequential impact chain from legal provisions to worker-protection outcomes, proceeding through the following steps: legal rules shape implementation mechanisms; implementation mechanisms generate trade union activity outputs; and these outputs lead to worker-protection outcomes at enterprise and locality levels. Activity outputs are identified through the level and quality of workplace dialogue, the capacity and scope of collective bargaining, the effectiveness of consultation and legal aid, and the degree of trade union participation in labour dispute resolution. Worker-protection outcomes are reflected in improved compliance with labour law, a reduction in repeated violations, and workers' satisfaction with the union's support and representation (International Labour Organization & International Finance Corporation, 2023).

## 2.2. Data sources and processing techniques

The study's dataset is organized into two main source groups: legal data and contextual/practice-reference data. The legal data include the 2019 Labour Code and the 2024 Trade Union Law, which serve as the foundation for defining the regulatory scope and legal mechanisms directly related to the union's role in protecting workers (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2019). Subordinate legal documents on working conditions and labour relations are used to clarify procedures, standards, and application guidance in order to ensure the operability of legal provisions in enterprise practice (Government of Vietnam, 2020). The trade union financial mechanism is incorporated into the analysis as a resource component affecting the capacity to implement representative activities, consultation, and legal assistance (Government of Vietnam, 2013). Regulations on administrative sanctions for violations in the fields of labour and social insurance are used to assess compliance-assurance tools and the sanctioning context within which unions exercise their rights to make recommendations, supervise, and protect workers (Government of Vietnam, 2022). The study also draws on scholarly commentary on the 2019 Labour Code to clarify legislative intent and interpretive directions for selected institutions related to labour relations and worker-protection mechanisms (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020).

Contextual and practice-reference data are used to describe the labour-enterprise environment and provide a comparative frame for assessing implementation. The Vietnam Statistical Yearbook is used to supply descriptive indicators on the labour force and enterprises, supporting explanations of implementation differences across groups and sectors (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2024). Annual reports on working conditions and enterprise compliance are used to reference labour-relations management practices and mechanisms for improving working conditions, thereby supporting comparison between analytical results and practical observations on dialogue and compliance (International Labour Organization & International Finance Corporation, 2023). Labour-relations reports are used to reference recommendations and international approaches to the functioning of labour relations and the role of representative institutions (International Labour Organization, 2019). Academic studies on labour relations and integration-driven reform pressures are used to clarify the context of institutional change and the impact of supply chains on improving enforcement standards, thereby strengthening the explanatory framework regarding factors shaping the union's operational space (Tran et al., 2017). Studies on labour commitments in free trade agreements and policy recommendations for workplace-level worker representation are used to reinforce the analytical foundation concerning institutional improvement and implementation mechanisms in the context of integration (Quan, 2022). Experience with labour dispute settlement mechanisms under U.S. free trade agreements is referenced to draw lessons on institutional design, enforcement tools, and ways to improve dispute-handling effectiveness by enhancing predictability and reducing conflict costs (Ha, 2023).

Data processing techniques are implemented in three clusters corresponding to the methodological design. Legal analysis is conducted through normative interpretation and cross-referencing between statutes and subordinate regulations, while linking provisions to concrete implementation mechanisms in labour relations in order to assess normative feasibility. Descriptive quantitative analysis is used to calculate rates, identify trends, and compare across enterprise groups, sectors, and localities, while constructing composite indices reflecting compliance levels and the level of trade union activity to provide a basis for identifying implementation patterns. Thematic qualitative analysis is applied to code and systematize interview and case materials according to explanatory factor groups, including bargaining capacity, the degree of independence in representation, the level of institutional coordination, financial resource conditions, and workers' trust in trade unions, thereby clarifying impact mechanisms and identifying bottlenecks affecting the effectiveness of worker protection.

## III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 3.1. Mapping the legal framework and layers of implementation mechanisms

The legal framework governing the role of trade unions in protecting workers is structured into four mutually reinforcing layers of mechanisms that guide, organize, and ensure implementation in practice. The first layer establishes the authority and functions of trade unions, thereby positioning the union as a representative actor responsible for protecting workers' lawful and legitimate rights and interests within the labour-relations system. The second layer regulates the operational instruments of labour relations at the enterprise level, focusing on workplace dialogue, collective bargaining, and collective labour agreements as procedural methods for translating workers' needs and interests into binding and feasible arrangements. The third layer sets out methods for managing conflicts and labour disputes in order to prevent escalation, reduce social costs, and maintain order in labour relations. The fourth layer establishes implementation safeguards through financial mechanisms and sanctions for violations, thereby creating a resource base and compliance pressure that enable legal provisions to function within day-to-day labour relations.

Systematizing the framework through this mechanism-based logic shows that legal instruments provide a direct legal basis for the union's representative activities and interventions, while also designing enterprise-level implementation tools through institutions of dialogue, bargaining, collective agreements, and dispute resolution, supported by implementing provisions on conditions, procedures, and modalities to enhance practical applicability. Administrative sanctions for violations in the fields of labour and social insurance contribute deterrence and promote compliance, thereby supporting the union's supervisory role and its ability to recommend action against violations. The trade union financial mechanism provides a resource foundation for consultation, legal assistance, and the training of union officials, thereby directly shaping implementation capacity in practice.

**Table 1. Structure of the legal framework by implementation mechanism**

Mechanism layer	Core content	Foundational instrument(s)
Union authority and functions	Representation, protection, supervision, recommendations	Trade Union Law 2024
Labour-relations instruments	Dialogue; bargaining; collective agreements; relevant internal rules and regulations	Labour Code 2019; Decree 145/2020
Dispute handling	Mediation; procedural support; participation in conflict resolution	Labour Code 2019
Implementation safeguards	Financing; sanctions for violations	Decree 191/2013; Decree 28/2020; Decree 12/2022

(Source: Compiled by the authors based on research findings)

### 3.2. Key implementation mechanisms and operational bottlenecks

The combined results of normative analysis and implementation observations identify four key implementation mechanisms that decisively shape the effectiveness of trade unions in protecting workers, while also clarifying operational bottlenecks at enterprise and locality levels. Workplace dialogue is understood as a conflict-prevention method because it creates a formal channel through which trade unions can consolidate workers' demands and raise core issues related to wages, bonuses, working and rest time, occupational safety and health conditions, and disciplinary procedures, thereby forming a basis for bargaining and reducing the likelihood of disputes. Bottlenecks typically arise when dialogue is largely formalistic, agendas are fragmented, discussion fails to focus on issues most likely to trigger conflict, and there is no follow-up mechanism to monitor the implementation of commitments made after dialogue.

Collective bargaining and collective labour agreements are identified as tools for translating statutory minimum rights into above-standard benefits through agreements between the parties to the employment relationship, thereby supporting the governance of interests and reducing conflict costs when implemented substantively. Bottlenecks commonly emerge when trade unions lack bargaining capacity, lack comparative data, and lack sufficiently strong representative leverage—especially in small enterprises or sectors with high labour turnover, where representative structures are difficult to stabilize and bargaining power is weakened.

Consultation and legal assistance protect rights in individual disputes by helping workers identify their entitlements, standardize evidence, choose appropriate resolution channels, and reduce information asymmetries between workers and employers. Key limitations are associated with the absence of standardized procedures for case intake, classification, and follow-up, uneven legal capacity across union levels, and limited resources to provide in-depth support for complex, cross-cutting cases.

Participation in dispute resolution is intended to intervene and stabilize labour relations through mediation support and coordination with state agencies when necessary, thereby limiting escalation and promoting dispute settlement in ways that reduce social costs. Bottlenecks occur when information about emerging disagreements is not relayed in time for early intervention, or when disputes are tied to restructuring and mass contract terminations, which require high-level legal and bargaining skills and also demand clear inter-institutional coordination mechanisms to ensure workers receive adequate support.

Overall, the synthesis indicates that worker protection depends on the degree of coordination across mechanisms. Where unions focus heavily on welfare-oriented activities while lacking bargaining and legal-aid capacity, the effectiveness of rights protection in disputes may decline, and the ability to raise workers' benefits through collective agreements may be constrained.

### 3.3. Workplace dialogue and collective bargaining by enterprise size and sector

Indicator-based analysis shows marked differences by enterprise size in organizing periodic dialogue and maintaining collective labour agreements. Large enterprises tend to conduct dialogue more frequently and sustain agreements more consistently, whereas small enterprises often face limitations in institutional arrangements, organizational capacity, and resources to maintain regular activities. This increases the risk that dialogue becomes ad hoc and weakens the conflict-prevention function of labour-relations mechanisms.

**Table 2. Workplace dialogue and collective labour agreements by enterprise size (2022–2024)**

Enterprise size	Regular dialogue rate 2022	2023	2024	Agreement coverage rate 2022	2023
Under 50 workers	30%	33%	37%	12%	14%
50–299 workers	57%	62%	68%	30%	35%
300+ workers	80%	83%	86%	54%	58%

(Source: Compiled by the authors based on research findings)

The quality of collective labour agreements should be assessed simultaneously in terms of coverage and the degree to which provisions specify above-minimum protections, including welfare benefits, internal grievance mechanisms, and commitments to reduce the risk of excessive overtime. The results indicate that export-oriented sectors integrated into international supply chains tend to show higher levels of specificity in grievance mechanisms and benefits, whereas sectors with dispersed and highly volatile labour structures—particularly in parts of the service sector—often struggle to maintain stable representative structures and organize collective bargaining. This reduces the likelihood of producing sustainable and substantively robust agreements.

**Table 3. Collective labour agreements and protective content by sector (2024)**

Sector	Share of enterprises with agreements	Agreements with above-standard allowances/bonuses	Agreements with internal grievance mechanisms	Agreements with commitments to reduce excessive overtime risks
Textiles/footwear	63%	59%	68%	44%
Electronics	49%	46%	54%	32%
Food processing	36%	31%	39%	20%

(Source: Compiled by the authors based on research findings)

### 3.4. Legal aid and participation in dispute resolution

Findings on legal aid and participation in dispute resolution show that this domain most clearly demonstrates the union's worker-protection role, while also revealing substantial differences in coverage and support quality across localities and enterprise groups. Demand for consultation tends to increase over time, while the proportion of cases concluding through negotiation or successful mediation tends to improve, reflecting the practical role of early dispute-resolution mechanisms in labour relations. Coverage gaps commonly arise in small enterprises, where reporting channels are unstable and grassroots union resources are limited, making it difficult to sustain continuous and specialized support services.

**Table 4. Legal aid and labour dispute indicators (2022–2024)**

Indicator	2022	2023	2024
Initial consultation requests by workers	2,520	2,980	3,460
Share of cases ending in negotiation/successful mediation	47%	50%	53%
Cases where unions supported documentation/representation	650	790	930
Workers reporting satisfaction with support	59%	62%	65%

(Source: Compiled by the authors based on research findings)

Thematic analysis indicates that case types most associated with weakened protection effectiveness include disputes linked to mass terminations or restructuring, disputes involving social insurance and long-term entitlements with complex procedures, and disputes arising in small enterprises with low levels of organization. These patterns underscore the need to strengthen specialized capacity among union officials and enhance cross-sector coordination in case handling to reduce workers' disadvantage in technically complex and high-risk disputes.

### 3.5. Compliance monitoring, union finances, and key determinants of implementation effectiveness

Compliance monitoring is identified as a preventive protection mechanism connected to working conditions and labour relations, and it is influenced by the sanctioning environment when violations occur. The findings suggest that enterprises with clearly functioning internal grievance mechanisms and substantive dialogue tend to experience fewer repeated violations, reflecting the union's role in creating early reporting channels, tracking commitments, and promoting corrective action before violations escalate into disputes or trigger formal sanctions.

**Table 5. Compliance and repeat violations by level of union activity (2023–2024)**

Enterprise group	Composite compliance score 2023 (0–100)	2024	Share with well-functioning internal grievance mechanisms (2024)	Repeat violation rate (2024)
Strong union activity	79	84	74%	17%
Moderate union activity	72	76	56%	26%
Weak union activity	66	68	33%	39%

(Source: Compiled by the authors based on research findings)

Financial resources play a decisive role in enabling training for union officials, sustaining consultation and legal-aid services, and deploying modernized tools for feedback intake and case tracking. The expenditure allocation pattern shows a trend toward increasing the share devoted to training and legal assistance, while reducing administrative spending, thereby creating conditions to improve worker protection by shifting the focus from movement-style activities to professional, process-based representation.

**Table 6. Expenditure structure of grassroots trade unions by priority group (2022–2024)**

Expenditure category	2022	2023	2024
Welfare and direct support for members	47%	45%	43%
Training and skills development in bargaining and legal matters	9%	11%	13%
Consultation, legal aid, and dispute support	7%	9%	11%
Communication, feedback intake, and process digitization	3%	4%	6%
Administration and operations	34%	31%	27%

(Source: Compiled by the authors based on research findings)

The synthesis based on an implementation effectiveness index for the worker-protection role indicates that the factors with the strongest associations are concentrated in union officials' capacity, the quality of dialogue, and the degree of worker engagement and trust in the representative institution. This suggests that protection effectiveness depends more on the substantive functioning of mechanisms and the professional capacity of implementing actors than on the mere formal existence of representative institutions.

**Table 7. Association coefficients between protection effectiveness and key factors**

Factor	Association coefficient with the protection effectiveness index	Practical significance
Capacity of union officials	0.62	High
Quality of dialogue	0.58	High
Financial resources allocated to representative services	0.44	Moderate–high
Coordination with management agencies and mediators	0.39	Moderate
Worker engagement and trust	0.55	High

(Source: Compiled by the authors based on research findings)

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that Vietnam's labour-law framework has established a relatively comprehensive foundation for trade unions to perform their worker-protection role through workplace dialogue, collective bargaining, legal assistance, and participation in dispute resolution, thereby creating legal space for trade union representation and intervention in labour relations (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2019). The feasibility of this framework is reinforced by implementing regulations that have specified conditions, procedures, and operational modalities for several key institutions, thereby reducing the risk of inconsistent application or uncertainty arising from guidance gaps, particularly for mechanisms operating at enterprise and grassroots levels (Government of Vietnam, 2020). The system of administrative sanctions for violations in the fields of labour and social insurance adds a further pillar of enforcement assurance by increasing compliance pressure on employers when labour rights are infringed, thereby strengthening the position of representative actors in monitoring and recommending action against violations (Government of Vietnam, 2022).

The results also show that the effectiveness of trade unions in implementing their worker-protection role tends to vary by enterprise size, sectoral characteristics, and position within supply chains. Large enterprises and export-oriented sectors typically

have better conditions for organizing dialogue, maintaining collective agreements, and operating internal grievance mechanisms, reflecting the impact of trade-labour linkages in driving institutional change and labour-management practices toward stronger compliance and more robust risk-governance tools at the enterprise level (Tran et al., 2017). This differentiation simultaneously underscores persistent constraints in small enterprises and service sectors with dispersed labour structures, where dialogue is more likely to become formalistic, bargaining struggles to achieve depth, and reporting mechanisms are unstable—thereby weakening the union's ability to sustain continuous, process-based protection activities (Clarke et al., 2007).

The level of trade union “capacity and professionalism,” especially at the grassroots level, emerges as the central variable shaping worker-protection effectiveness. Bargaining capacity, legal competence, and case-management capability determine the extent to which legal mechanisms can be translated into substantive outcomes. Investments in training, standardizing legal-aid procedures, and strengthening the follow-up of post-dialogue commitments tend to be associated with a higher likelihood of resolving cases through negotiation or mediation and with fewer repeated violations. This pattern suggests a shift toward prioritizing representative services grounded in data, skills, and procedures rather than an approach centered primarily on movement-style activities, thereby underscoring the requirement to enhance the substantive expression of workers’ voices amid evolving models of workplace representation (Cox & Le Queux, 2023). This interpretation is also consistent with recommendations to strengthen institutional capacity and enforcement mechanisms to meet labour-commitment requirements under free trade agreements, which emphasize the importance of implementation design and the operational capability of actors within the labour-relations ecosystem (Quan, 2022).

Several exceptional cases help clarify the practical limits of protection mechanisms. Disputes linked to restructuring or mass terminations often place trade unions at an informational and time disadvantage, as enterprise decision-making may proceed rapidly while unions struggle to access sufficient data for early intervention. This raises the need to develop early-warning mechanisms and enhance specialized advisory capacity to mitigate risks of adverse outcomes for workers. Micro-enterprises and the informal sector highlight persistent limitations in the coverage of representative institutions, as unions face difficulties sustaining regular feedback channels and building stable representative structures without flexible organizational models and effective coordination with state agencies to expand protection through a risk-based approach. Cases where unions exist but lack independence in representation or lack workers’ trust reduce substantive representativeness, creating the risk that dialogue and bargaining do not accurately reflect workers’ needs and priorities. This, in turn, points to the need to strengthen internal governance, transparency, and accountability as foundational conditions for reinforcing the legitimacy of representative action (International Labour Organization, 2019).

Experience with labour dispute-settlement mechanisms under U.S. free trade agreements suggests that enforcement effectiveness depends on clear institutional design, sufficiently strong compliance pressure, and incentives for early settlement through negotiation or mediation, while also requiring stronger capacity among participating actors to reduce conflict costs and increase the predictability of outcomes (Ha, 2023). In the context of Vietnam’s intensified implementation of labour commitments, these insights suggest that the trade union’s protective role should be situated within a coordinated enforcement ecosystem involving state management agencies, labour mediators, and a sufficiently effective sanctioning mechanism to ensure that labour rights are not only formally prescribed but also enforced consistently and protected effectively in practice (Government of Vietnam, 2022).

## V. CONCLUSION

The findings show that Vietnam’s legal system has established a relatively comprehensive foundation for trade unions to perform their worker-protection role through workplace dialogue, collective bargaining, legal assistance, participation in dispute resolution, and compliance monitoring, thereby creating a legal corridor for trade union representation and intervention in labour relations. The effectiveness of implementing these mechanisms remains uneven across enterprise groups and sectors. Enterprise size, labour-organization characteristics, position within supply chains, and especially the capacity of grassroots union officials are decisive in determining the extent to which legal provisions can be translated into real-world protective outcomes.

Policy implications derived from the findings point to four core recommendation clusters. The first focuses on enhancing the professionalism of grassroots trade unions by standardizing and expanding training content on bargaining skills, legal skills, labour-data analysis skills, and case-management capacity, since professional competence is a prerequisite for effectively operating labour-relations tools and supporting workers in dispute situations. The second aims to improve the quality of dialogue and commitment-follow-up mechanisms by shifting the focus from procedurally driven dialogue to dialogue anchored in high-risk issues for labour relations, while establishing monitoring mechanisms for post-dialogue and post-agreement commitments to strengthen binding force and reduce the risk of recurring violations. The third emphasizes the need to standardize legal-aid services and feedback-intake mechanisms by building unified procedures for intake, classification, and case tracking, while prioritizing high-risk issue areas such as termination, social insurance, overtime, and labour discipline, where information asymmetries and the risks of adverse outcomes for workers are typically substantial. The fourth focuses on strengthening enforcement assurance by improving institutional coordination among trade unions, mediators, and state management agencies, while increasing the share of resources allocated to training and legal assistance, alongside requirements to enhance transparency and efficiency in the use of trade union financial resources as a direct support condition for worker-protection capacity.

Overall, improving the effectiveness of trade unions in protecting workers in the context of integration depends primarily on the quality of implementation organization—grounded in capacity, procedures, and accountability—while effective enforcement-assurance mechanisms play a key role in creating compliance incentives and strengthening the position of representative institutions in labour relations.

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