

Profile of a rural Vietnamese woman in a palm leaf sunhat

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A rural Vietnamese woman wears a traditional style, broad-brimmed palm leaf sunhat. The hat is shaped like a wide cone, and it is held on by a dark cloth chin strap. The woman is a farmer or other rural laborer who lives in central Vietnam in what was called the Demilitarized Zone or DMZ during the Vietnam War. Rural women, men, and children throughout Southeast Asia commonly weave their own hats, sleeping mats, and baskets from a variety of palm leaf, bamboo, and rattan fibers. Mountain groups or highlanders are less involved in the national cash economy (often they are designated as the poorest citizens), but they usually are able to produce most of what they need to live from their family's ancestral land. Rural women living in highland Southeast Asia also typically scale high mountains and do hard outdoor physical labor, which keeps them physically fit and strong. The use of traditional style, broad-brimmed sunhats by both men and women indicates local understanding of the need for skin protection against the rays of the tropical sun.



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