



UNITED NATIONS
VIET NAM

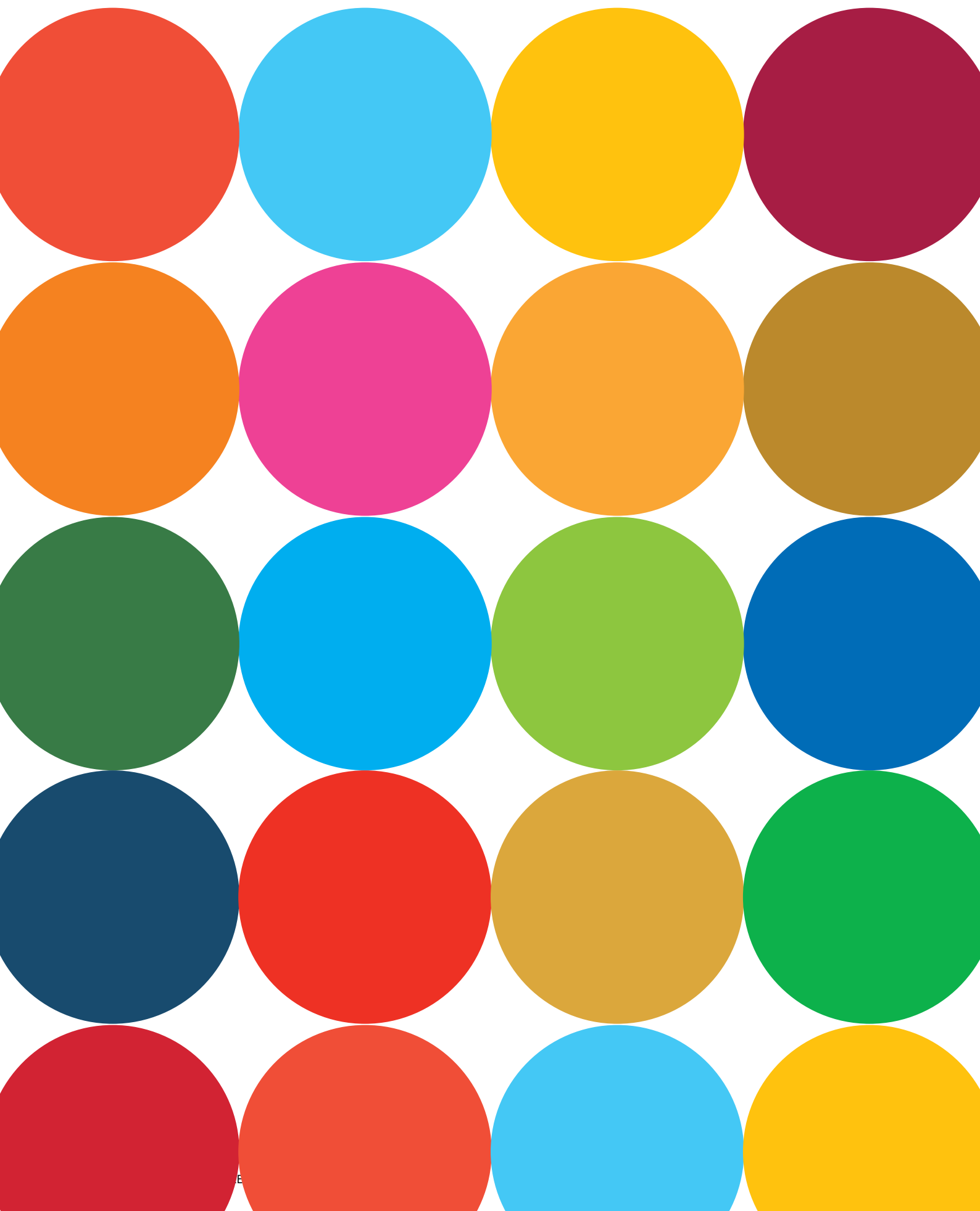


ONE UN RESULTS REPORT 2019

VIET NAM



FOREWORD



In 2019, the United Nations (UN) relied on the genuine partnership built with the Government of Viet Nam (GOVN) over 40 years to continue to turn the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into reality. During this first year of UN Development System (UNDS) Reform and the second full year of the UN-GOVN One Strategic Plan (2017-2021) implementation, the UN worked in a more effective, coordinated, transparent and accountable manner with GOVN ministries and agencies, the National Assembly, development partners, non-government organizations, communities, and other key stakeholders throughout the country to promote equitable, inclusive and sustainable growth through which no one is left behind.

This annual One UN Results Report presents the programmatic and operational results achieved by the UN system in Viet Nam in 2019, particularly on how the UN supported Viet Nam to enhance sustainable poverty reduction; strengthen Viet Nam's social protection systems; foster health and education equity; promote the development of a low-carbon economy; provide timely responses to disasters and improve resilience to climate change; protect environmental and national resources; protect the rights of children, women, workers, and other vulnerable groups; promote an inclusive labour market; facilitate an enabling environment for the business sector; ensure participatory and transparent decision-making; and ensure equal access to justice. As a result, the UN's efforts have contributed to the improvement of the lives of millions of Vietnamese people. For this, I express my deep gratitude to all UN staff and personnel who have worked tirelessly to support Viet Nam's efforts aimed at achieving the SDGs and its national targets.

2020 is a year which has already proven to be unprecedented in nature. It is a year which requires rapid, decisive and effective action by Viet Nam and the UN in Viet Nam on several significant challenges simultaneously. 2020 also calls for a forward-looking attitude in Viet Nam, whether this be as the Chair of ASEAN, Member of the UN Security Council, on SEDS and SEDP development, in the preparations for the 2021 Party Congress, or in implementing plans for medium- and long-term responses and recovery from COVID-19. Viet Nam has made impressive progress in 40 years in terms of development, and 2020 will be a test of its resolve and ability to continue to work towards achieving the 2030 Agenda – a test that the country has so far risen to. The UN in Viet Nam, as always, will work closely with the GOVN to defend all that we have worked together to achieve. Our focus must be on building back better, on leaving no one behind, and on creating a new normal in Viet Nam that results in a more just, equal, inclusive and green society



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kamal Malhotra'.

Kamal Malhotra
UN Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank	MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
AMR	Antimicrobial Resistance	MPSARD	Master Plan on Social Assistance Reform and Development
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy	MPSIR	Master Plan for the Social Insurance Reform
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action	MSM	Men who have sex with men
CCA	Common Country Analysis	NA	National Assembly
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation	NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	NGO	Non-governmental Organization
CEMA	Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs	NTP	National Targeted Programme
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership	ODA	Official Development Assistance
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	OPF	One Plan Fund
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations	OSP	One Strategic Plan
CTN	Counter Trafficking Network	PAPI	Public Administration Performance Index
DaO	Delivering as One	PLHIV	People Living with HIV
DPG	Development Partners Group	POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
DRM	Disaster Risk Management	PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
ECD	Early Childhood Education	RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
EU	European Union	REDD	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
EU JULE	EU Justice and Legal Empowerment Programme	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
EVAC	End Violence against Children	SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan
EVFTA	EU-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement	SEDS	Socio-Economic Development Strategy
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	SPC	Supreme People's Court
FbF	Forecast based Financing	SRGBV	School-related Gender-based Violence
GBV	Gender-based Violence	SSC	South-South Cooperation
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
GHG	Greenhouse Gas	TOT	Training of Trainers
GOUNH	Green One UN House	TrACSS	Tripartite AMR Country Self-assessment Survey
GOVN	Government of Viet Nam	UHC	Universal Health Care
GSO	General Statistics Office	UN	United Nations
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers	UN Women	United Nations Entity for the Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City	UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
HDI	Human Development Index	UNCG	UN Communications Group
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	UNCT	UN Country Team
HPPMG	Harmonized Programme and Project Management Guidelines	UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
HRCtte	Human Rights Committee	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IAGGP	Informal Ambassador Group on Gender Policy	UNDS	UN Development System
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	UNEP	UN Environment Programme
ICTT	Information Communications Technology	UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
IMF	International Monetary Fund	UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
INFF	Integrated National Finance Framework	UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
INGO	International Non-governmental Organizations	UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
IPSARD	Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development	UNOSSC	UN Office for South-South Cooperation
IR 4.0	Industrial Revolution 4.0	UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
ITC	International Trade Centre	UNV	United Nations Volunteers
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
LNOB	Leave No One Behind	UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	VAC	Violence and Abuse of Children
MDP	Multidimensional Poverty	VCCI	Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry
MOCST	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism	VDMA	Viet Nam's Disaster Management Authority
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training	VEPG	Viet Nam Energy Partnership Group
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	VNMAC	Viet Nam Mine Action Centre
MOH	Ministry of Health	VSDG	Viet Nam's SDG
MOIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs	WB	World Bank
		WHO	World Health Organization

UN ENTITIES IN VIET NAM



UN IN VIET NAM 2019 AT A GLANCE

Financial Support by SDG



Our Key Partners

- GOVN Ministries, Agencies
- National Assembly
- Development Partners
- Communities
- Private Sector
- NGOs + Mass Organizations
- Research Institutes, Academies



19% of 2019 budget or **USD 12.9 million** was joint work;
8.4% were Joint Programmes



CHAPTER 1

VIET NAM'S CONTEXT IN 2019 AND THE UN DELIVERING AS ONE (DAO) IN VIET NAM

- 2019 General Development Context
- UN Development System (UNDS) Reform and Delivering as One (DaO) in Viet Nam

2019 GENERAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Viet Nam achieved all the 12 key national development goals it had set for 2019. According to the UN Sustainable Development Report 2019, Viet Nam's SDG index ranked 54th among 162 countries, up three positions from 2018. In comparison to the East and South Asia averages, Viet Nam performed well on 12 out of 17 SDGs, but lagged behind on SDGs 8 (decent work and economic growth), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). Viet Nam's Human Development Index (HDI) continued to increase in 2019, reaching 0.693 – only 0.007 point below the High Human Development Group's threshold.

Viet Nam continued to show robust economic growth in 2019 with an annual GDP growth rate of 7.02 per cent – among the highest GDP growth rates worldwide – and a low inflation rate, contained at 2.01 per cent. Labour productivity (GDP per hour worked) increased by 6.2 per cent between 2018 and 2019, however the increase continued to be due to increases in the labour force and employment, rather than to innovation. The country gained a trade surplus of USD9.9 billion, the highest level in four continuous years of recording a trade surplus¹. This surplus result is due in part to the effectiveness of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) which represents an important milestone for Viet Nam's further integration with the world economy. Despite being among the top third of countries in terms of employment rates, Viet Nam was among the bottom third of countries in terms of skilled labour force and vulnerable employment. This position reflects a reliance on simple skilled labour and poses a serious risk of Viet Nam losing jobs to automation, potentially deepening inequalities in the next development period².

In 2019, the GOVN revised Viet Nam's GDP with UN and others' advice. This is a major revision to capture updated data from recent censuses/surveys and administrative data, as well as the 2008 State National Accounts (SNA) methodology, which resulted in an average increase of 25.4 per cent annually in GDP size between 2010-2017³. The revision aims to provide better macro-economic evidence for the development of the 2021-2030 ten-year Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) and 2021-2025 five-year Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP).

2019 was also a year in which Viet Nam adopted a number of important laws with UN engagement, including the revised Labour Code, the revised Law on Education, the revised Public Investment Law, and the new Law on Harmful Use of Alcohol. Viet Nam also discussed and prepared revisions of the Gender Affirmation Law, the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control, the Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, the Enterprise Law, the Law on Social Health Insurance, the Youth Law, and the Law on the Handling of Administrative Violations, with UN support. Noticeably, the newly endorsed Labour Code reduces the retirement age

gap between men and women, removes a ban on women in some types of jobs, and introduces a comprehensive definition of sexual harassment at work, clearer rules regarding the employment of minors, and consistency with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).

2019 was an important year for Viet Nam as it embarked on the formulation of its SEDS 2021-2030 and SEDP 2021-2025, and preparation for the 2021 Party Congress, which will set strategic directions for the country's development in the next 5-10 year period and for SDG achievement. Key strategic directives will need to address major questions, including how to avoid the middle-income trap; ensure inclusive growth by enhancing productivity and competitiveness of Vietnamese firms; create more productive and safe jobs for all Vietnamese; ensure that socio-economic growth will be accompanied with equality, vulnerability reduction, and leaving no one behind; and address increasing economic complexity and uncertainty, as well as rapid changes in international trade and value chains, especially those induced by IR4.0 and climate change.

In 2019, Viet Nam also conducted active engagement at the regional and global levels, including in UN peace operations and South-South Cooperation (SSC). The country was successful in being elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2020-2021 term (for the second time) and the Chair of ASEAN in 2020. It is expected that these roles will help Viet Nam play an even more visible and influential role on the regional and global stages in 2020.

Despite widespread and sustained economic growth and social improvements, ensuring equality and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) in Viet Nam presented unique challenges. For example, multidimensional poverty rates in the Northern Mountains and Central Highlands regions are more than two times higher than the national average and many times higher for ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups such as children, women, older persons, migrants, and people with disabilities. The proportion of people without education certificates in ethnic minority groups is double that of the Kinh and Hoa ethnic groups. In addition, the gaps in income and expenditure between the ethnic minority and Kinh and Hoa people have widened over recent years⁴. At the same time, many of these and other groups are increasingly vulnerable to climate-change-related shocks. Closing the gap between these groups and the national average has never been an easy task due to the many barriers that exist (e.g. distance, language, culture and norms), which require integrated and innovative policy package solutions. Noticeably, evidence shows that citizens still perceive poverty reduction as the greatest of their concerns⁵.

2019 was also a year with serious environmental disasters, which were largely due to human actions. These included

1. GSO's annual socio-economic report 2019
2. UN Human Development Report 2019
3. GSO's launch on GDP revision in 2019
4. UNDP, Multidimensional Poverty Report (2018)
5. PAPI Report 2019

massive forest fires in the Central regions; serious droughts in the Mekong River Delta provinces, with the lowest water level in 100 years, which continues in 2020; the fierce fire at the Rang Dong light bulb factory causing mercury releases; the alarming fine dust pollution situation, particularly in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City; the unprecedented high tides this year compared to the last 10 years in Ho Chi Minh City; and the disastrous poisoning of the main drinking water sources of Ha Noi. These all created huge economic and health losses, long-term impacts and fear among the population. In fact, Viet Nam was ranked very low in the 2019 Environment Performance Index (132nd out of 180 countries) and even lower regarding Air Pollution (161th)⁶. The country is amongst the bottom third of countries in terms of carbon emissions per capita⁷.

Viet Nam continued to make significant efforts in reforming the public administrative system and combating corruption in 2019. More citizens perceived that corruption, particularly petty corruption, was decreasing, although a substantial number of citizens (ranging from 20 to 40 per cent for different provinces) still continued to perceive corruption as problematic in the public sector. Despite many procedural reforms and Information communications technology (ICT) applications, public administrative procedures were not considered to have improved.

UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (UNDS) REFORM AND DELIVERING AS ONE (DAO) IN VIET NAM

2019 was the third year of the One Strategic Plan 2017-2021 which is the third generation Delivering as One (DaO) UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in Viet Nam, representing the programmatic and operational framework for delivering UN joint support to the GOVN and people of Viet Nam.

2019 was also the second year for the UN Country Team in Viet Nam to support the country in implementing the UN Development System (UNDS) Reform since the issuance of GA Resolution 72/279 on repositioning of the UNDS in 2018. Viet Nam is in a good position to implement this reform given the foundations built since 2006 and the many global and national One UN mechanisms and processes already in place or pioneered in Viet Nam. For example, the UN internal architecture, including different Results Groups and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), have been mainstreamed globally based on the practice and spirit of working together in Viet Nam under DaO. The UN in Viet Nam was the first, and remains among only four countries globally, to have established a common workplace (i.e. the Green One UN House – GOUNH) and back office providing integrated and more efficient services at the country level. The One Strategic Plan 2017-2021 already incorporates many of the UNDS reform's new features (e.g. by being development-cooperation-based rather than development-assistance-based, focusing at the strategic level, incorporating SDG-aligned indicators, and including mandatory evaluation with management responses and actions).

Even with this strong foundation, in order to effectively deliver on the ambitions of the UNDS reform and the 2030 Agenda, the UNCT in Viet Nam still needs to work towards improving joint planning instruments, innovative and strengthened mechanisms and processes, and institutional incentives.

In 2019, the UN in Viet Nam has kept the GOVN, development partners, and other stakeholders well informed about the UNDS reform and its implications for Viet Nam. Various discussions were also conducted to identify the UN's priorities in supporting Viet Nam, the UN coordination structure best-suited to deliver the support, and initiatives for joint implementation and resource mobilization. The UN relatively smoothly completed the delinking of the Resident Coordinator from UNDP. With the GOVN's timely support and action, the accreditation and legal status for a full-time Resident Coordinator and the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) were provided on 26 April 2019. The strengthening of the RCO was also conducted within the stipulated timeframe.

A joint UNCT-GOVN meeting on UNDS reform and ODA management was organized on 15 October 2019 following the GOVN's request. The meeting, which was chaired by the MOFA Vice Minister and the Resident Coordinator with the participation of a broad group of relevant government ministries and agencies, apparently showed that the GOVN continues to consider Viet Nam a flagship country which has been ahead of the curve both on UNDS Reform and One Strategic Plan formulation. The GOVN is well aware that this new phase of UNDS Reform with the delinking of the RC from UNDP (with strengthened authority and resources) represents opportunities for both deepening and strengthening existing practices and structures, as well as expanding the reform into new directions for better responding to the GOVN's expectations for the UN to Deliver as One in implementing the new generation UN One Strategic Plan in line with the SDGs and national development priorities. At the same time, the GOVN has stated that the UN remains a crucial and trusted partner in Viet Nam and it would like to have more strategic policy discussions with the UN, particularly for advancing SDG implementation. However, since Viet Nam today is in an improved economic position to own and steer its development, the GOVN expects the UNCT to shift its role from a provider of international aid to playing a stronger role in providing quality and transformative policy advice and best international practices in close dialogue with the GOVN. The GOVN also appreciates the UN in Viet Nam for its thought leadership provided through the UNCT engagement in the Development Partners Group (DPG), co-chaired by the RC, the World Bank Country Director and the Netherlands Deputy Chief of Mission (and now the German Embassy's Head of Development Cooperation). On the operational side, MOFA expressed that they have observed reduced burdens for the GOVN line-ministries as the UN moves away from working in silos, with UN agencies coming together and providing integrated solutions and harmonized procedures, helping to improve efficiency both for the GOVN and the UN.

6. Environment Performance Index 2019
7. UN Human Development Report 2019

CHAPTER 2

2019 RESULTS OF THE ONE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021

- UN's Support in Accelerating the 2030 Agenda and SDGs' Achievements in Viet Nam
- Challenges
- Outcome 1.1 Poverty and Vulnerability Reduction
- Outcome 1.2 Equity in Health
- Outcome 1.3 Equity in Quality Education, Training and Learning
- Outcome 2.1 Low Carbon, Climate and Disaster Resilience
- Outcome 2.2 Sustainable Management of Natural Resource
- Outcome 3.1 Economic Growth
- Outcome 3.2 Inclusive Labour Market
- Outcome 4.1 Decision-making, Responsive Institutions
- Outcome 4.2 Human Rights Protection, Rule of Law and Strengthened Access to Justice

UN'S SUPPORT IN ACCELERATING THE 2030 AGENDA AND SDGS' ACHIEVEMENTS IN VIET NAM

In 2019, the UN in Viet Nam continued to be a critical and trusted partner of the GOVN and provided coherent, coordinated and joint support to foster SDG mainstreaming and achievement in Viet Nam.

In the context of supporting the country's acceleration of SDG achievement, it is important to note that 2019 was a major year for the GOVN. The GOVN finalized key documents regarding SDG implementation, monitoring and reporting, for example on indicator formulation, data collection and guiding documents on monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, the UNCT focused its support around the development and implementation of these documents.

The GOVN issued the **Viet Nam SDG (VSDG) statistical indicators** in January 2019, which consists of 158 nationalized indicators to measure 17 VSDG goals and 115 VSDG targets with a significant contribution from the UN in Viet Nam over the last two years. As a result of the UNCT's joint support and advocacy in coordination with UNSD and UNESCAP, the VSDG indicators were developed in line with Viet Nam's socio-economic context and data availability as well as in a manner consistent with international standards. It is also a great success that non-governmental data sources have been accepted as credible data sources in this new indicator framework, as this data will complement the existing insufficient and expensive official administrative reporting system and surveys. The UN also supported the General Statistics Office in developing the VSDG indicator manual to provide detailed guidance concerning the indicator concept, methodologies, and implementation roadmap.

In line with the National SDG Action Plan issued in 2017 with UN support, the UNCT extended its joint support to GOVN ministries, agencies and provinces in developing and implementing their respective **SDG action plans**. Currently six ministries and 10 provinces have issued their action plans with the support of UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, and other agencies.

In 2019, the UN in Viet Nam led significant efforts to identify entry points and provide technical inputs for **SDG mainstreaming in the draft socio-economic development strategy (SEDS 2021-2030) and plan (SEDP 2021-2025)**. Particularly, the UN Resident Coordinator and the WB Country Director, as co-chairs of the Development Partners Group, co-led together with the bilateral co-chair, the development of seven position papers which provided key messages and policy recommendations for strategic and transformative change by addressing potential bottlenecks and breakthrough solutions for SDG and national target achievement. The policy papers cover: (i) restructuring Viet Nam's agriculture and rural economy; (ii) sustainable development, including climate change and the circular economy; (iii) circular economy development models relevant to Viet Nam's context; (iv) the role of the private economic sector; (v) human capital and social development in education, health and vulnerable sectors; (vi) strengthening institutions and governance; and (vii) restructuring Viet Nam's financial and banking sector. In total, ten UN agencies (FAO, IFAD, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNIDO, UNICEF, ILO, UNFPA,

UNESCO, and WHO) participated directly in the preparation of seven papers of which five were led or co-led by UN agencies. The papers were shared with the MPI Minister as well as with the SEDS and SEDP drafting teams in September 2019 as inputs to the strategy and plan development.

In support of the GOVN's design of the **SDG M&E framework** in line with the National SDG Action Plan, the UN jointly participated in consultations and provided comments to the draft decree and guidance on SDG M&E. The UN strongly advocated having an integrated M&E framework in Viet Nam, in which the SDG M&E is mainstreamed into the SEDS-SEDP M&E system.

The UN also supported **SDG data collection and reporting** through joint UN and agency-specific support. As illustration, UN agencies worked together in supporting the preparation of the National SDG Report, which is to be developed in 2020; UNAIDS provided technical support to the Viet Nam Administration for HIV/AIDS Control (VAAC) to generate annual estimated HIV data as an input to the HIV-related VSDG indicators; UNIDO supported strengthening national capacity for developing the industrial performance index and eco-industrial park indicators; WHO worked on SDGs 6.2, 6.3, and SDG 11 to monitor water safety plans and wastewater, and the development of a database of health impacts from air pollution; ILO worked on SDG 10.7.1 to pilot data collection on the migration cost born by migrant workers, developed an SDG profile for Viet Nam, raised stakeholder's awareness, and enhanced statistical capacity on SDGs; UN Women provided technical support to GSO for the calculation of gender indicators for the annual report on gender statistics, launched the 2019 gender statistics publication and supported the creation of a gender data portal for uploading gender data on the GSO website; UNDP supported data collection and reporting on multidimensional poverty, governance and justice, and environment and climate change; UNICEF supported MPI in integrating child sensitive SDGs into national and sectoral SEDPs and sectoral plans, in developing a child-focused budget analysis, as well as in GSO's development of a handbook on metadata of SDG child-focused indicators; UNFPA supported GSO in analyzing and disseminating the 2019 Population Census results, including for VSDG indicators, while UNICEF and UNESCO jointly supported SDG4 monitoring and reporting on education. UNFPA and WHO also prepared for joint work with the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in supporting GSO's survey on children and women SDG indicators in 2020. The UN Ethnic Minority Working Group worked on a joint initiative on developing a joint UN Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) database with six agencies (including FAO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UN Women) pooling funds and data into a common database in cooperation with UNESCAP (see more information in the section on innovation).

The Resident Coordinator, in cooperation with the EU Ambassador, wrote to the top leadership of Viet Nam (i.e. Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy) on the possibility of Viet Nam's possible joining **the EU-UN Integrated National Finance Framework (INFF)** initiative. The initiative, to be led by the RC supported by UN-DESA and UNDP on the UN side, aims to support countries to accelerate action to establish a framework for financing the SDGs and Viet Nam

has been identified as one of eighteen potential pioneers. In this context, the UN supported GOVN staff participation in a recent workshop in Brussels. The UN and EU will continue to work towards supporting the GOVN's participation in the initiative, which the GOVN formally agreed to do late in 2019. ILO in collaboration with other key stakeholders developed the report "Decent Work and the Sustainable Development Goals in Viet Nam", providing evidence and recommendations for Viet Nam's achievement of the SDGs by creating decent work.

The UN, particularly UNDP and UNICEF, also contributed to the IMF's detailed costing exercise of selected SDGs, under the IMF's SDG country partnership in which Viet Nam is one of the pilot countries.

Internally, the UNCT continued to enhance SDG mainstreaming in all UN agency strategic documents and workplans, including the integration of SDG goals and targets into the 2019-2020 Results Group joint work plans in the UN Info database to better track UN contributions to the SDGs. At the same time, in order to achieve better coordination among the UN agencies and coherence of agency-specific and Results-Group-specific SDG interventions on SDG-related work, the UNCT reorganized its internal coordination structure to form one SDG Task Force (SDGTF). The SDGTF is the result of the merging of two inter-related subgroups, the SDG Technical Working Group and the Data for Development Working Group. The new consolidated Task Force provides demand-driven advisory support to the Programme Management Team (PMT), facilitating the coherence of the UN's support and advocacy regarding SDG integration into national plans, budgets, monitoring and reporting. In line with the UN SDG guidelines and experiences in Viet Nam, this work focuses on crosscutting topics such as whole-government and whole-society governance, integrated financing and planning, and integrated SDG monitoring and reporting. The SDGTF will contribute to the coherence of agency-specific and Results-Group-specific SDG interventions.

CHALLENGES

Despite the strong commitment and leadership of the GOVN and strong support by the UN and other partners on the SDGs, major challenges remain which hinder their achievement.

First, it is challenging to ensure **coordinated, cross-sectoral, integrated and innovative actions**, following whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. It is notable that with the disbanding of the National Office for Sustainable Development in early 2019, which was the SDG focal point under the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), it has become more difficult to coordinate inter-agency actions on SDG implementation within the GOVN. In addition, the SDG focal point function now is under MPI's Department of Education, Science, Environment, and Natural Resources, while two different MPI bodies are in charge of the development of the SEDS and SEDP. This structure and its resulting dynamics have made SDG mainstreaming into these important documents much more challenging.

Second, the ambitious 2030 Agenda and SDGs require significant investments from the GOVN and all stakeholders including from the private sector. However, the GOVN

budget is limited and effective mechanisms and a conducive national regulatory framework for resource mobilization from the private sector and some other partners are not yet in place. More challenges are presented by the sharply decreasing grant ODA landscape. There is a need to mobilize and effectively utilize financial resources from all sources, especially domestic private sources for achieving the SDGs, following the whole-of-finance approach of the 2030 Agenda under an integrated national financial framework (INFF) as recommended in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on SDG financing.

Third, ensuring **leaving no one behind** in Viet Nam presents a unique challenge. Despite widespread and sustained economic growth and social improvements, some groups still lag behind in many dimensions of wellbeing such as income, health, education, and water and sanitation, particularly ethnic minority groups in remote areas, temporary migrants and people with disabilities and other chronic health issues. At the same time, many of these groups are increasingly vulnerable to climate-change-related shocks. Closing the gap between these groups and the national average has never been an easy task due to the many existing barriers (e.g. distance, language, culture and norms) which require integrated and innovative policy package solutions.

Finally, there is a lack of a robust system for information and data collection and management, especially for **disaggregated data** necessary to monitor LNOB and SDG progress. GOVN efforts aimed at strengthening socio-economic development, reducing poverty, and achieving the localized SDG targets nation-wide need to be accompanied by monitoring systems and practices that provide timely, high quality and, especially, disaggregated data. Such data, together with their wide dissemination and thorough analysis, will enable evidence-based progress assessment to achieve the SDGs, realize the LNOB principle, and better inform policy and programme development and adjustment.



Photo: WHO Viet Nam

OUTCOME 1.1

POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY REDUCTION

By 2021, all people benefit from inclusive and equitable social protection systems and poverty reduction services, which will reduce multi-dimensional poverty and vulnerabilities

CONTEXT

In 2019, Viet Nam showed strong momentum to embark on poverty reduction and increased social protection. Poverty reduction efforts maintained progress toward the GOVN's targets for 2016-2020 with a 1.1 percentage point reduction in the multidimensional poverty rate (from 6.8 per cent in 2018 to 5.7 per cent in 2019). Meanwhile, Viet Nam seems to face challenges in reaching the Master Plan for the Social Insurance Reform's (MPSIR) ambitious target of including 35 per cent of the working-age population in social insurance schemes; the rate was increased slightly from 26.5 per cent in 2018 to about 27.2 per cent in 2019. In order to expand coverage and effectively finance social protection, the GOVN also needs to address the challenging issue of social assistance and social insurance policies being fragmented and independently designed and implemented. In addition, there is an urgent need for the social protection framework to introduce innovative and inclusive instruments (e.g. electronic payment, tools) that make social protection services accessible not only to the easy-to-identify and easy-to-reach population, but also to those more vulnerable to poverty and various forms of economic, legal and social exclusion.

The country fostered poverty reduction via implementation of several instruments including the two National Targeted Programs on Sustainable Poverty Reduction and New Rural Development in the period 2016-2020; the Master Plan for Social Assistance Reform and Development (2017-2025) and Vision to 2030 (MPSARD), issued in 2017; and the MPSIR issued in 2018. The Action Plan for the implementation of MPSARD, endorsed by MOLISA in May 2019, sets out prioritized and specific actions for the 2020-2025 period. The Action Plan calls for the UN's support on various fronts, including: raising the awareness of decision makers and the public on the benefits of social protection; increasing the efficiency of existing and new schemes; accelerating the implementation of the Prime Minister's decision on the master plan for building a national database on social protection; and applying information technology to implement the social protection policies by 2020 and development orientations till 2030. The GOVN also reviewed the National Targeted Programme for Sustainable Poverty Reduction and started revising the National Multidimensional Poverty Line for the period 2021-2025 to increase its alignment with international standards and to better reflect rights to basic social services.

In addition to the poor and near poor, other groups of people have been identified as being vulnerable due to existing barriers in accessing inclusive and equitable social

protection systems and poverty reduction services, including ethnic minority groups, children, women, elderly, migrants, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ, sex workers, and people living with and most affected by HIV. In 2019, the GOVN issued a number of important legal documents on ensuring inclusive and equitable benefits for these groups of the most vulnerable people. The first National Action Plan on Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children (VAC) 2020-2025 was approved by the Prime Minister in December 2019. Viet Nam approved the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and is developing the National Plan for GCM implementation. The GOVN has also been developing the first National Project on Health Care for Older Person to 2030.

According to the Population Census 2019, Viet Nam is experiencing a period of demographic dividend, recording the highest proportion of young people in the country's history: 20.4 million people aged 10-24 accounted for 21 per cent of the population. The working-age population was 65.4 million (68 per cent) in 2019 and is estimated to reach 68 million by 2030. This demographic window of opportunity presents Viet Nam with a unique opportunity to develop a next generation of leaders who will be the chief drivers of economic, social, environmental and economic progress. Nevertheless, barriers exist preventing youth and adolescences from fully realizing their potential. For example, 18.7 per cent of girls of school age in Ha Giang province, a poorer and mountainous area largely inhabited by many ethnic minorities, do not go to school. The adolescent birth rate has slightly increased from 31 per 1000 women in 2014 to 35 in 2019⁸. More than one-third of the youth said that young people's opinions had not been taken into account by state agencies⁹.

KEY RESULTS

The UN in Viet Nam continued to support the GOVN in addressing the above development issues and achieved significant results contributing to the achievement of OSP Outcome 1.1.

Regarding UN support for **poverty reduction**, UNDP continued to support the GOVN (MOLISA, MARD and CEMA) and two provinces of Bac Kan and Dak Nong in accelerating multidimensional poverty reduction and social economic development in ethnic minority areas. This included specific activities, such as (i) updating Viet Nam's multidimensional poverty (MDP) measures for 2021-2025 to be institutionalized in 2020; (ii) empowering women and strengthening their position in the market through the introduction of information technologies and innovative solutions for

8. Viet Nam's Population Census 2019

9. Youth Research Institute, Youth Research Report (2018) Ha Noi Viet Nam



*Ms. Le Quyên, Director of Thiên An Cooperative in Bach Thong district, Bac Kan province, applies digital technology for expanding her business.
Photo: UNDP2019\Nguyen Viet Lan*

ethnic minority women (e.g. e-commerce, e-pay, social media and multi-stakeholder networks); and (iii) evaluating the National Targeted Programs for Sustainable Poverty Reduction (NTP-SPR). UNDP also provided policy advice and technical assistance during the preparation of the National Target Programme (NTP) on Social Economic Development for Ethnic Minority Groups and Remote Areas (2021-2030) and the revision of the national multidimensional poverty measures for the period 2021-2025. UNDP conducted the 2019 updates of the Human Development Index (HDI) and Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, UNAIDS, and UNESCO – jointly developed an ethnic minority database to monitor LNOB in SDG progress, which will be uploaded to the UN in Viet Nam website. FAO supported the GOVN in implementing the Viet Nam National Action Plan on Zero Hunger Challenge. This assistance was provided through successful pilots of quick-impact projects on livelihoods, climate resilience, and agroforestry in the poorest communities of Tra Vinh, Quang Ngai and Lao Cai, in-depth analysis of national and provincial pro-poor policies, and the formulation of an national operational framework for nutrition-sensitive agriculture. All of these products provided substantial inputs for the formulation of Viet Nam’s next generation of NTP-SPR.

The UN contribution to poverty and vulnerability reduction was also reflected in UN Women’s support to the GOVN (MARD, NCO NRD, and IPSARD) in enhancing the gender responsiveness of the National Targeted Programme for New Rural Development (NTP-NRD). This assistance resulted, in particular, in: (i) the integration of gender equality in the GOVN’s survey on people’s satisfaction on the NTP NRD; (ii) a gender assessment of the NTP-NRD; (iii) the inclusion of recommendations on gender mainstreaming in the first draft revision of the New Rural Criteria. These activities contributed to the further inclusion of gender equality in the NTP-NRD to ensure that it provides inclusive and equal benefits for vulnerable groups including the poor and near-poor, ethnic minority groups, and female farmers.

On **social protection**, the UN continued to focus on supporting the MPSARD and MPSIR implementation. ILO worked with MOLISA in assessing the feasibility of introducing a multi-

tiered child-benefit approach and developing short-term benefit packages for informal workers. ILO also supported MOLISA in developing the Social Insurance Communication Master Plan which was approved by the Prime Minister in November 2019. This was the first public communication plan on social protection, introducing a more client-oriented approach for better accessibility, clarity and positivity.

With UNICEF’s intensive support, the MPSARD Action Plan highlighted the following key actions: (i) the amendment of the current Decree on cash assistance to expand the coverage to more beneficiaries, including children aged 0-3, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and older people; (ii) ensuring that the regular cash assistance has the flexibility to respond in a timely manner during crises, such as economic shocks, climate change-related natural disasters and disease outbreaks; and (iii) shifting towards community-based care for people in vulnerable situations, including children, persons with disabilities and older people. Joining the effort to support the MPSARD, UNDP provided Training of Trainer (ToT) material on designing and implementing social protection policies in Viet Nam, which became a GOVN official document in 2019.

Contributing to ASEAN’s efforts to strengthen resilience-orientated social protection and experience exchange in the broader Asian region, the first ever study on shock responsive social protection with a focus on children was conducted by UNICEF, FAO and UN Women, with inputs to inform the current revision of Decree 136/2016/ND-CP on social protection. This study also provided further opportunities for the three agencies to scale up Forecast based Financing (FbF), Early Warning Early Action and Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) to develop options and roadmaps to close existing legal and policy gaps, particularly in drought situations, also providing guidance for strengthening shock resistant social protection.

In response to the Joint SDG Fund’s 2019 call for proposals, four UN agencies (ILO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA) in cooperation with MOLISA submitted a Joint Programme proposal on “Accelerating Viet Nam’s transition toward inclusive and integrated social protection”. This UN Joint Programme was

awarded a grant of USD 2 million for two years, 2020-2021. The Joint Programme will support Viet Nam in developing an integrated multi-tiered social protection system using the life-cycle approach, including an extended social care services system and an innovative e-service delivery system.

In the area of **child protection**, the first National Action Plan on Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children (VAC) 2020-2025 was approved by the Prime Minister in December 2019 with substantive support from UNICEF. Providing a more robust national framework with specific measures and promoting an inter-sectoral approach, the VAC clarifies roles, responsibilities and interventions by MOLISA, MOH, MOET, law enforcement agencies and other actors for prevention and responses to VAC at home, in schools and in communities. In 2019, UNICEF also embarked on a critical 'whole-system' strategic planning process to strengthen the social workforce for child protection, by supporting two activities. The first activity was the standardization of the roles, competencies and training structure of the child protection workforce, including those of managers, social workers, teachers, health workers, cadres of mass organizations and collaborators to avoid the unrealistic over reliance on volunteer workers. The second activity focused on the development of various training programs on competency-based child protection social work for better responsiveness to girls' and boys' protection needs. UNICEF used talk shows and media interviews to successfully inform the public on the risks and consequences of violence against children and to call for government action to invest and strengthen the child protection system. With UNICEF support, the UK-based Children's Legal Centre released a study on child trafficking that provided important evidence on the limited availability and use of support services for exploited or trafficked children.

UNICEF's strong advocacy and technical support to the GOVN and the National Assembly resulted in clearer provisions in the Labour Code on preventing child labour, prohibiting all forms of hazardous and exploitative child labour, and protecting minor workers, especially those in the informal economy. As a result, Viet Nam's Labour Code is more aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international standards. Viet Nam was selected in 2017 to be a pathfinder country for Alliance 8.7 – an inclusive global partnership which aims to catalyze action, drive innovation, and leverage and maximize resources in order to achieve SDG Target 8.7. ILO and UNICEF helped Viet Nam, as a pathfinder country, in developing a feasible plan of action through four thematic workshops during March-May 2019 (on business and supply chains, trafficking and migration, education and agriculture) which was approved by the National Committee for Children at the end of 2019.

In **protecting vulnerable migrants**, the UN in Viet Nam actively supported the GOVN in approving the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and developing a GCM national plan. Upon this approval, IOM provided technical and financial support to MOFA's Consular Department to conduct three workshops to widely introduce GCM to all stakeholders and get inputs for the development of a GCM National Plan. UN Women and ILO, through the "Safe and Fair" joint program, also supported MOLISA in mapping labour migration services and accessibility for women, and enhancing the capacity of foreign service officials to address violence against women migrants, especially women migrant workers, as inputs for the GCM National Plan development.

In **combating human trafficking**, the Counter Trafficking Network (CTN) co-chaired by IOM and UNDP provided substantial financial and technical support to the GOVN to

bolster efforts in prevention, prosecution, and protection of human trafficking, through (i) capacity building for GOVN taskforces to implement the revised Penal Code and inputs to MOLISA's revision of Decree 09 on the protection of victims of trafficking; (ii) the development of the mechanism for victim referral and identification supported by UNDP, which linked up with regional efforts to ensure greater coordination to combat trafficking in the Mekong region; and (iii) IOM's support to the GOVN in implementing the MOU between Viet Nam and the UK on counter-trafficking through an inter-agency project addressing modern slavery issues in the context of irregular migration, especially after the tragic death of 39 Vietnamese nationals in the UK. The year 2019 also featured stronger engagement of the GOVN with the CTN, as evidenced by the GOVN's invitation to network members to participate and share concerns for the first time in the National Commemoration of Human Trafficking Day on the 30th of July.

UNFPA provided technical support and evidence on care needs of **older persons**, especially older persons with disabilities, to inform the development of the first National Project on Health Care for Older Persons to 2030. The National Project addresses both health care and social care needs of older persons, seeking healthy ageing and social protection for all.

The UN has been working towards substantially **addressing Youth and Adolescence** issues. In 2019, under the coordination of the Youth and Adolescence Thematic Group chaired by UNFPA, policy advice and technical assistance from the UN was provided to MOHA and the National Assembly to revise the Youth Law 2005. These efforts advocated for realizing youth's equal rights and responsibilities to comprehensive development regardless of ethnicity, sex, social classes, beliefs, religions, educational levels or occupations, as well as the responsibility of the State, families, schools and the society for creating an enabling environment to enable youth to realize their rights and fulfill their responsibilities in line with the existing Constitution and Laws. It is expected that the National Assembly will appraise and approve the revised Youth Law at the May 2020 session. The joint work of UNFPA, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNAIDS, and ILO helped deliver the UN contribution to (i) the development of the National Report on Youth by MOHA and line ministries; (ii) the incorporation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in the newly approved national education curriculum from pre-school to secondary education levels based on the International Technical Guidance on sexuality education approved by MOET in November 2019; (iii) trainings for Youth Advisory Group members to promote full and meaningful participation of young people in many UN-supported programs in areas including the Youth Law and Policy development, health and sexual and reproductive health care, gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence, inclusive and transformative education and culture, as well as environment protection; (iv) the development of the SafeYouth@Work Action Plan aiming at raising knowledge and awareness of Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) hazards and risks; and (v) the celebration of the 2019 International Youth Day in Ha Giang province, providing 150 ethnic minority youths with an opportunity to discuss local challenges and make recommendations to leaders and policy makers at national and sub-national levels (the event was reported in 24 media articles and reviewed by 96,392 social network followers).

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

Despite significant social protection reform in Viet Nam, there remain key weaknesses preventing further progress.

These obstacles include a fragmented approach of social insurance for formal workers and social assistance, limited fiscal space, missing a very large low middle income group (known as the “missing middle”) of informal workers, and categorical (not universal) programs that exclude a large number of children, older people and persons living with disabilities as well as some groups of people who lack ID documents. There is also a lack of coordination and linkage between two key policy pillars which are social insurance and social assistance. Possible challenges may arise due to the still relatively weak governance and institutional capacity in relation to social protection.

The UN Viet Nam aims to support the GOVN in addressing the above challenges over the next few years by forming a more integrated, rights-based and multi-tiered social protection system, with the four elements. First, linking social insurance and social assistance through a Multi-Tiered System (MTS) including multi-tiered child benefits, maternity/paternity benefits, old-age pensions and disability benefits. These efforts will focus on making the system more inclusive for informal workers and their families, groups who are currently insufficiently covered or at risk of being left behind. Second, unifying and simplifying the social assistance system by applying the lifecycle approach, in addition to advocating for

UN-GOVN Partnership for Formation of National Plan of Action on Prevention of Violence and Abuse against Children 2020-2025 in Viet Nam

In November 2018, UNICEF and the Global Partnership on Ending Violence Against Children jointly advocated for the GOVN to join the global effort to end violence against children (EVAC) including the development of a National Action Plan on EVAC. Through a regional workshop and different dialogues, the GOVN was introduced to INSPIRE (seven strategies for EVAC), good practices in Asia-Pacific and conceptual thinking were introduced to the GOVN. In parallel, public awareness and pressure for action to deal with VAC in Viet Nam increased as a result of several UNICEF-supported media activities and UNICEF’s close engagement with INGOs and local civil society organizations.

These efforts paid off when, in January 2019, the Prime Minister issued a directive to instruct the development of the National Plan of Action on Prevention of Violence and Abuse against Children (VAC) for the period 2020-2025. After almost a year, in December 2019, the National Plan of Action was officially approved by the GOVN. Aiming to protect thousands of children who are victims or at risk of violence every year, the new plan of action embeds three major breakthroughs. First, a multi-sectoral approach in responding to VAC with connected services for children in prevention, early interventions and recovery. Second, strengthened specialized services for abused children including social welfare, health facilities and schools across the country as well as a stronger connection between child-friendly investigation and justice. Third, physical and online networks to protect children from violence.

The National Plan of Action means that children will be better protected and that they and their parents will benefit from enhanced parenting skills and life skills education, as well as the strengthened capacity of a child protection workforce in the social welfare, health, education and law enforcement sectors. The integration of EVAC objectives and indicators into sectoral plans and local social-economics development plans, together with an increased budget allocation for child protection will also help to keep children safe from violence.



a more rights-based, progressive and efficient use of state resources. Third, supporting the integration of the social care system and its increased link with social assistance and social insurance policies. This support will focus on making the system more inclusive and accessible for the most vulnerable as complementary to income support. Fourth, experimenting and designing a menu of feasible, tested solutions for developing an e-system to facilitate and support service delivery and M&E. These four elements will help contribute to the achievement of Outcome 1.1 as well as specific SDG targets 1.2, 1.3, 5.4, and 10.4.

Ethnic minorities are considered by the GOVN as prioritized groups in the country's efforts in combating poverty and improving socio-economic development. This is evidenced through the GOVN's proposal (which was approved by the National Assembly) to develop the National Targeted Program for Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas in the 2021-2030 period. In 2020 and onward, the UN will extend its support to the GOVN in designing and implementing this NTP.

Regarding **child protection**, the current legal framework defines a child as a person under 16 while the age of majority is 18. This creates a gap where 16 and 17-year-olds are not eligible for child rights and protections under the Law on Children, but at the same time do not have the legal rights and responsibilities of an adult. Thus, these groups are excluded from different child-related policies and programs, such as the National Action Plan on Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children and the National Programme on Child Protection 2016-2020. The UN will need to continue advocacy for further reform, including the amendment of the definition of a

child in the Law on Children to include all persons under 18 years of age, in line with the CRC and ensuring that children between 16 and 18 years of age are able to access full care and protection.

Regarding **youth development**, it remains difficult to mobilize the meaningful participation of young people in policy dialogues, particularly vulnerable youth groups such as ethnic minorities, youth with disabilities, LBGTIQ, etc. In addition, gender-based violence and stigma and discrimination against young LBGTIQ and youth with disabilities remain concerns, for example hindering the inclusion of policies supporting young LBGTIQ people in the Youth Law. Although persons aged 16 and 17 are entitled to empowerment opportunities and support under the Youth Law, as explained above, they lack legal protection under the Law on Children. The UN will continue working with different stakeholders to advocate for youth rights. Efforts will focus on strengthening youth participation and capacity to participate in various socio-economic spheres, particularly in policy dialogues, to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are fully addressed in relevant policy documents.

Basic Social Security for All: Vietnamese Government Officials Translate Principles into Action Pushing the Boundaries of Social Assistance

Viet Nam is highly determined to develop an inclusive social protection system that ensures basic social security for all, especially for children, elderly and persons with disabilities. The GOVN assured their commitment by approving the Master Plan on Social Assistance Reform and Development (MPSARD) in the period 2017-2025 with vision to 2030 in April 2017, marking a milestone to progressively achieve SDG Target 1.3 on social protection for all.

While the MPSARD is an essential guiding document for long-term social assistance reform, the GOVN experienced difficulties in translating the principles, goals, objectives into reality. In order to bridge the gap between "principles" and "practice", the UN in Viet Nam, particularly UNDP, ILO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNWOMEN, jointly worked to improve national capacity and help realize the promise of reforms contained in the MPSARD.

A full Training of Trainer (TOT) Curriculum on designing and implementing social protection policy in Viet Nam was developed, tested in 2017 and 2018 and finally institutionalized in 2019, with UN support. The Curriculum

has been acknowledged by national partners as the vehicle to transfer knowledge and skills regarding MPSARD's targets. It has contributed substantially to policy advocacy to policy makers, technical staff and local practitioners, gradually moving the social assistance system in Viet Nam toward a rights-based, life-cycle approach with universal coverage.

UNICEF, with technical support from other UN Agencies, introduced a Theory of Change (TOC) approach to policy changes into the GOVN's development of the MPSARD Action Plan. This innovative approach enabled a participatory and comprehensive planning process, which involved both inter-Departmental and inter-Ministerial discussions among MOLISA, MOET, MOH, MOF, MPI, the National Assembly, local authorities, and other stakeholders. As a result, the MPSARD Action Plan approved by the MOLISA Minister in May 2019 reflects prioritized actions with time-bound targets and responsibilities of different Departments. Based on this Action Plan, MOLISA has initiated specific reforms including the amendment of the cash assistance decree to expand coverage to more beneficiaries, including children, persons with disabilities and older people.

OUTCOME 1.2

EQUITY IN HEALTH

By 2021, all people, particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from inclusive and equitable health systems, services and the promotion of healthy environments

CONTEXT

In 2019, the health status of the Vietnamese population continued to improve, but not significantly, as evidenced by the level of achievement of key health indicators. The maternal mortality rate declined to 46 cases per 100,000 live births (from 54 cases in 2015 and 79 cases in 2009), placing Viet Nam in a strong position to reach its national SDG target of less than 45 cases by 2030. Both under-five and infant mortality rates also witnessed constant decreases to 21 and 14 per thousand live births, respectively, and life expectancy increased slightly to 73.6 years. Health insurance coverage reached 88.8 per cent of the population in 2019, compared with 86.9 per cent in 2018. However, there are still discrepancies between geographic areas and groups of people, with lower achievement for people, particularly ethnic minorities, in the Northern and Mountainous Region and Central Highlands¹⁰.

2019 saw the accelerated implementation of Central Party Resolution No. 20, which set the overall direction of the health sector and goals for the next decade, and of MOH's Decision No. 2348 on Grassroots Reform for Strengthening Primary Healthcare. In addition, a new Law on Harmful Use of Alcohol was adopted in June 2019 by the National Assembly and came into effect in January 2020. The revisions of the Laws on Health Insurance and on Examination and Treatment towards a quality assurance system made further progress in 2019 and are expected to be finalized in 2020-2021.

The National Action Plan on a Healthy Viet Nam program, approved by the GOVN in 2018, began implementation in 2019. The program, launched on Viet Nam Physician Day by Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, is a nationwide campaign to promote positive behavioural changes towards a tobacco-free lifestyle, healthy eating and a physically active lifestyle, as well as the elimination of the harmful use of alcohol.

A new Circular on Water Quality Standards was issued by MOH, which is seen as a turning point for the water supply sector to better protect public health through improved risk management.

Viet Nam's political commitment on HIV remains strong and 20 years of HIV treatment was celebrated in 2019. However, translation of commitment into investments and action needs to be consolidated and fast-tracked, particularly with recent institutional changes within MOH and the ongoing integration of HIV into the general health system structure. The amendment of the Law on HIV and the development of the new National HIV Strategy 2021-2030 are key to shaping

the next decade. Sustainability continues to be a high priority for the national HIV program, especially for prevention services which remain highly dependent on external funding, with human resource capacities that are very stretched in the ongoing health system transition.

KEY RESULTS

The UN in Viet Nam continued to jointly support Viet Nam in developing a resilient, responsive and transformative health system to meet the changing health needs of the population and achieve Universal Health Care (UHC).

Regarding improving the policy and legal framework for equity in health, the UN (ILO and WHO) partnered with the WB to support the GOVN in amending the Law on Health Insurance, aiming to advocate for the GOVN to preserve the current mandatory social health insurance scheme and not offer a diversified benefit package to meet the demand of better-off population groups. WHO and FAO continued their efforts to support Viet Nam in advancing the country's capacity to implement International Health Regulations (IHR) and health emergency preparedness, resulting in the development of the IHR Master Plan by MOH which is expected to be approved in 2020. For the first time ever, the GOVN (MOH) decided to perform satisfaction assessments by health staff and patients on the quality of health services. These assessments showed that hospitals must further invest and strengthen service quality to meet client demands and national health quality criteria. With WHO's support, MOH developed and approved the National Guidelines on Hepatitis B virus (HBV) Treatment and HBV & hepatitis C virus (HCV) Testing. These efforts helped improve patients' access to hepatitis diagnosis and treatment, particularly with new HCV medicines registered and included in the health insurance reimbursement list. Regarding health systems' response to gender-based violence, as a result of WHO and the UN Gender Thematic Group's joint advocacy and technical guidance to MOH, the essential service package and training toolkit for the health sector using multi-sectoral approach were launched in 2019.

On **nutrition**, as a result of the UN's advocacy efforts, led by UNICEF, MOH agreed to prioritize maternal nutrition and complementary feeding in the National Nutrition Strategy 2021-2030. MOH also agreed to develop a framework of priority actions to improve nutrition for pregnant women and children, particularly those in ethnic minority groups. Despite strong opposition from the business sector the GOVN's decree on mandatory food fortification (instead of voluntary), was upheld in 2019 as a result of sustained

10. Population Census 2019

advocacy by UNICEF.

Regarding **early childhood development (ECD)**, with UNICEF's support, the GOVN's commitment on comprehensive ECD was enhanced. For example, the 2019 Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) was successfully organized in Ha Noi, hosting 600 international participants from 35 countries and resulting in the Ha Noi Call for Action for ECD. At the conference, the GOVN galvanized to implement the national ECD scheme and guided provincial governments to develop their provincial ECD action plans. As a result, 53 out of 63 provinces in Viet Nam developed provincial ECD plans in 2019. In addition, WHO and UNICEF joined MOH's efforts to help build institutional capacity and increase investment in Early Essential Newborn Care (EENC) and Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC). With the UN's continued support in 2019, 26,495 newborns received EENC, 9,398 pre-school children benefited from social emotional learning, 6,021 pre-school and primary school-aged children benefited from the community-based child-friendly library initiative, 4,500 children aged 6-23 months received micronutrient powder supplements, and 12,440 parents and care givers gained better knowledge of early child nurturing and care, including holistic parenting. The National Assessment of EENC implementation of the health system was conducted in 2019 for the third time in 15 selected provinces and will be disseminated in 2020 for EENC quality improvement.

In relation to **immunization**, the UN (through WHO and UNICEF) supported the GOVN in vaccine supply and capacity building on equity planning for immunization, as well as conducting campaigns and integrated immunization-nutrition-communication sessions in 17 districts with low immunization coverage. As a result, approximately 1.5 million (94.3 per cent) under-1 children were fully immunized, and about 1.5 million (94.8 per cent) 1-5-year children received measles and rubella vaccines. The national Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) was able to start implementing the first Cold Chain Equipment Optimization Platform (CCEOP), and obtained GAVI's (the Vaccine Alliance) approval for a second CCEOP and a post-transition engagement plan for implementation in 2020. WHO supported the GOVN's application of a multisectoral approach in the process of developing the National Financing and Procuring Mechanism for HPV vaccines, as well as the National Roadmap on HPV Vaccination for 2020-2025 with Vision till 2030, with the engagement of different stakeholders from relevant sectors.

On **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**, UNICEF led the UN effort to enhance the sectoral partnership, noticeably through the joint implementation of the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) Mutual Accountability Mechanism involving various partners, including MOH, MOC, MARD, international NGOs and private sector representatives. Concrete targets were achieved regarding community-led total sanitation, WASH, the promotion of hand washing with soap in schools, and household water treatment and storage in focused communes of Dien Bien, Gia Lai, Kon Tum and Ninh Thuan provinces. About 16,400 people from 42 new open-defecation free villages had access to improved sanitation, 4,050 children from 20 schools improved their knowledge and skills in hand washing through school-based activities, and approximately 8,000 people in rural areas had

access to clean water. MARD issued national guidelines for the implementation of the National Programme of Water Safety Plan in rural areas, contributing to improved water in rural communities. UNICEF also supported analyses of WASH financing modalities, which will serve as a basis for further advocacy and technical assistance in 2020.

In supporting Viet Nam in combating **HIV**, as a result of UN advocacy and guidance through the HIV Thematic Group led by UNAIDS, Viet Nam retained strong political commitment to the 90-90-90 Goals, and registered progress towards both ending AIDS as a public health threat and ensuring inclusive and quality services in an enabling environment for people living with and most affected by HIV. The UN support contributed to the GOVN issuance of many GOVN legal and policy documents in 2019, such as the Standard Operating Procedure and 13 provincial action plans for implementation of the National Plan for the Triple Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV, Hepatitis B and Syphilis; the National Guideline Framework on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE); the National Action Plan on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) among HIV key populations especially Men who have sex with Men; the updated national guidelines on HIV care and treatment with PrEP included; the updated Opioid Substitution Therapy guideline which introduced the use of Buprenorphine; new national guidelines for treatment of Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS) use, for HIV interventions among ATS users, and increased capacities on (ATS) use and HIV related risks; and the updated National HIV Testing and Counselling (HTC) guidelines covering all available testing options and linkage to care. Preparation of amendments to the Law on HIV began, with UN support, and the UN actively advocated for a Gender Affirmation Law. The UN also advocated and provided technical support for the development of the National HIV Strategy 2021-2030, with the goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat. The UN contributed to capacity building of the networks of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and key populations for the community's meaningful engagement in human rights reporting and law and policy development; provided training in 11 provinces, 25 prisons and 4 pre-trial detention centres for implementation of HTC guidelines; and supported seven prisons and four pre-trial detention centres in successfully registering for full ART (Antiretroviral Therapy) provision, while others qualified for ART continuation for prisoners already on ART upon entry. Noticeably, the Treat All policy further expanded access to HIV treatment with increased sustainability, thanks to the operationalization in 2019 of a historic transition of funding from external support to Social Health Insurance. UN joint efforts were convened to raise awareness on HIV, zero discrimination, GBV and the contribution of communities, through communication campaigns around key events including Zero Discrimination Day, the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, 16 Days on Violence Against Women, World AIDS Day and the first community-led National LGBTI Summit.

Regarding **sexual and reproductive health**, in 2019, UNFPA supported Viet Nam to prepare and actively participate in the Nairobi Summit ICPD+25, where Vietnam's delegation officially made a national commitment to ensure zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning information and services, and zero sexual- and gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls by 2030. In addition, UNFPA supported MOH in

developing national and provincial plans on rolling out cervical cancer prevention, with the application of innovative financing mechanisms. This resulted in the development of six provincial plans on early screening of cervical cancer and five provincial plans on HPV vaccination, of which two were approved in 2019. Moreover, indicators on cervical cancer screening and maternal neonatal health were expected to be included in the health management information system of Viet Nam in the near future.

In 2019, the UN also entered in the new area of **medical physics** education, through IAEA's support to Viet Nam in developing a training programme and syllabus. The priority was to harmonize high-education syllabuses on medical physics and provide supplementary knowledge of medical physics to practitioners who do not have an adequate academic background in medical physics. The National Education Programme Framework for medical physics was developed by the designated Nguyen Tat Thanh University which will be further refined and submitted for MOET's approval in 2023.

Multiple efforts were made by the UN in 2019 to support the national **health information** system. The UN worked with the GOVN to strengthen existing information and monitoring systems, such as the monitoring of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Antimicrobial Use (AMU), residue and drug quality in livestock (FAO), the surveillance system for influenza and other respiratory diseases, and the national avian influenza and rabies control programs (FAO and WHO). The UN also supported various studies and capacity development such as the health workforce data study (WHO), the antibiotic consumption and expenditure study (WHO), creating an

online training platform for health workers, the Viet Nam health emergency information and risk assessment (WHO), and the Global AIDS monitoring report and policy review (UNAIDS) as inputs to the development of the new National HIV strategy for 2021-2030. Under UNICEF's cooperation with MOH, **mobile technologies in maternal and child health (MIECD) were applied for the development of the IECD mobile phone-based tracking system (MIECD) to provide real-time data and information to health workers and their clients. The MIECD enables timelier and more effective follow-up, particularly for pregnant women and new-borns, with the first module 'Pregnancy - new-born nutrition tracking' tested in December 2019.**

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

In December 2019, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) emerged, first causing deaths in China and then starting the most widespread and severe global pandemic in the last many decades. Although without creating any impact on the 2019 OSP results, this pandemic breakout in 2020 has resulted in new priorities for the UN joint work in the first two quarters of 2020, with a focus on evaluating and responding to the pandemic's impact. The pandemic is also predicted to create delays in OSP implementation, as well as possible changes to UN support in Viet Nam in the coming years.

Despite significant efforts by the GOVN with the UN's support, reaching out to hard-to-reach populations, particularly ethnic minority groups and people living in difficult and mountainous areas, and other vulnerable groups as highlighted above, COVID-19 remains a great challenge and critical issue for the health sector. The spread of communicable diseases

A More Enabling Legal and Policy Environment for Ending AIDS in Viet Nam by 2030

After the justification for the amendment of the Law on HIV Prevention and Control was approved by the GOVN early in 2019, the UN in Viet Nam through its HIV Thematic Group and the Human Rights Thematic Group were closely engaged in providing support and guidance to the GOVN in the development of the amended law. The amended Law, scheduled to be adopted by the National Assembly in May 2021, will mark a significant milestone in Viet Nam's efforts to ensure that no one is left behind in the HIV response aimed at Ending AIDS by 2030.

Several inclusive consultations on the proposed amendments were held with UN support to key ministries, partners and civil society, including representatives of people living with HIV and key population groups. The UN also made comments on the draft amendments, advocating for greater alignment of the Law with international human rights standards and good practices.

A key proposed policy change, advocated for and supported by the UN, is to ensure universal access to a continuum of HIV services. These services range from HIV prevention to care and treatment for all Vietnamese citizens, including transgender people as an emerging key HIV-affected population not yet fully covered by the Law, as well as people in closed settings. In addition, there is a rising HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men (MSM) and mostly young MSM in Viet Nam. As a result, the UN also advocated for the introduction of flexible policies regarding the age of consent, to enable greater access to HIV counselling, testing and treatment when needed, for youth.

The latest draft amendment of the Law, to be re-submitted to the GOVN and subsequently to the National Assembly

(NA) for the first hearing scheduled in October 2020, includes many of the amendments proposed and/or supported by the UN. These include more official recognition of the role of communities, the reduction of the age of consent for testing, and the inclusion of transgender people among the population groups at risk of HIV.

"We highly appreciate UN policy and technical support for the advocacy for and amendment of the Law on HIV," said Mr. Dang Thuan Phong, Vice Chair of the NA Social Affairs Committee. "International standards and good practices that are based on evidence, shared by the UN, are extremely useful for our reference in considering the proposed amendments."



Ms Pham Thi Hue, a woman living with HIV shared community feedbacks on the implementation of social health insurance financed HIV treatment at a dialogue hosted by the National Assembly Social Affairs Committee with UN support in 2019
Photo: UNAIDS Viet Nam

has become more frequent and serious, as evidenced by the outbreak of dengue fever, seasonal flu A/H1N1 and, in particular, the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. Nevertheless, in general, GOVN resources for combating communicable diseases and health emergencies have been limited, and donor funding has reduced. Legal frameworks for the Health Sector need to be improved to foster inclusive access to health services for the most vulnerable or marginalized groups. Together with strengthening public health facilities, it is crucial to ensure the close engagement of the private sector in Viet Nam's health system as well as to enhance community participation to promote health-seeking behaviours and user-friendly community-led health services. It is also important that community-led services are officially recognized in the health system and funded through domestic resources. These approaches are key to reaching more marginalized populations to ensure no one is left behind.

In 2020, UN agencies will continue to strengthen their joint work in health equity, highlighted by the support lent to the GOVN in developing the National Action Plan for Migrant Health in Viet Nam; reviewing the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) National Action Plan and multi-sectoral coordination mechanism; applying a multi-sectoral approach in the development or update of key national strategies such as the National HIV Strategy; revising the Health Partnership Group mechanism and establishing the Global Health Office; scaling up access to quality services and sustainable financing for priority public health programs (immunizations, HIV, TB); developing the new National Nutrition Strategy 2021-2030,

accelerating implementation of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement; and developing the Ageing and Health National Action Plan with its coordination mechanism.

The UN will also increase foster its joint advocacy in many areas, including on the organization of the 2020 Antimicrobial Awareness Week and the celebration of the world rabies day; the H6 partnership between the UN and the World Bank Group to advance the Global Strategy for Every Woman Every Child (EWEC); the enforcement of a sugar tax, alcohol law, and the implementation of communication and advocacy campaigns on social health protection; and the reform of the Law on Health Insurance. Importantly, joint UN comments and advocacy will continue to be undertaken in 2020 and 2021 to ensure that key legislation adopted/revised (e.g. Law on Health Insurance, Law on Examination and Treatment, Law on HIV Prevention and Control, Law on Handling of Admin Sanctions, and Law on Drug Prevention and Control) is in line with international standards and best practices.

There is consensus within the UN that in order to successfully deliver the above agenda, a number of factors are crucial: the UN's close collaboration and joint actions with GOVN ministries, the National Assembly, agencies, development partners and other stakeholders (especially on cross-cutting issues); good communication strategies to engage all stakeholders; strong UN leadership; strengthened technical expertise; and the maintenance of the UN's neutrality.

Three-year Journey to Improve Food and Health in Viet Nam through a Joint Call for Action

To address the deficiencies of common micronutrients in the Vietnamese population, food fortification is vital, including the iodization of food grade salt used in food processing, fortification of wheat flour used in food processing with iron and zinc, and fortification of cooking oil with vitamin A. This food fortification was made mandatory, as a result of UNICEF and Global Iodine Network (IGN) support, by the GOVN through its Decree No. 09/2016/ND-CP, which went into effect in March 2017. However, as a result of business pressure, in May 2018, MOH was requested by the GOVN to change the use of fortified ingredients for processed food regulated in Decree 09 from mandatory to voluntary, as part of the Prime Minister's Resolution No. 19/2018/CT-TTg on measures to remove several regulations which are claimed as barriers for their business operations.

Unfortunately, since its birth, Decree 09 had been strongly opposed by food producers with persistent complaints about difficulties caused by the mandatory food fortification (particularly the use of iodized salt and wheat flour fortified with zinc and iron in the production of processed foods) for their business. Food producers used the GOVN's priority for economic development as an excuse to not comply with the Decree. This happened despite various advocacy and knowledge sharing efforts by UNICEF and WHO, such as providing technical support in organizing GOVN-private sector dialogues and sending a joint UNICEF-WHO letter to MOH's Vice Minister, which confirmed that there was no evidence of negative effects of iodized salt on the organoleptic properties of food products.

In response to this pressure and the request to make Decree

09 voluntary, the UN, led by UNICEF and WHO, jointly called for action to keep the Decree 09 regulations unchanged. Another joint UNICEF-WHO letter was sent in June 2019 to the Prime Minister, five Deputy Prime Ministers, President of the National Assembly, Vice President of the National Assembly, and MOH asking for maintenance of the mandatory use of iodized salt and fortified wheat flour for processed food also offering UN support to companies to implement Decree 09. In the meantime, a joint UNICEF-WHO press statement was disseminated through mainstream media, putting pressure on the GOVN's leaders to maintain Decree 09 for the sake of public health. An important turning-point was a meeting organized in May 2019 by the MOH Viet Nam Food Administration, between the GOVN and the private sector. In that meeting, the UN provided global evidence and practices on food fortification in preventing micronutrient deficiencies and the consequences of voluntary regulations. This information was incorporated into the Viet Nam Food Administration's report to the GOVN, emphasizing Decree 09's important role in protecting public health.

The UN's strong joint efforts together with effective cooperation with MOH and other stakeholders led to the GOVN's decision in November 2019 to retain all the content of Decree 09. In doing so, the GOVN emphasized the importance of food fortification in protecting public health, its feasibility and cost effectiveness in Viet Nam's context, and importantly, its role in ensuring strong human capital in Viet Nam. Once again, by advocating and raising their voices together, UN agencies' joint efforts resulted in a significant impact, improving the GOVN policy framework to protect public health.

UN Working Together to Promote Responsible Use of Antimicrobials for Human Health and Agricultural in Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, the irresponsible use of antimicrobials is widespread throughout the health care system, livestock, and aquaculture industries. Overuse and misuse of these drugs by health professionals, consumers and farmers are key drivers of high antimicrobial resistance (AMR) rates in the country. Without effective antimicrobials, medical procedures and major surgery become riskier. AMR also increases the cost of health care with longer stays in hospitals and even death.

In the past five years, the UN has been supporting MOH and MARD in implementing the Viet Nam National Action Plan (NAP) on AMR which was launched in 2013. The plan is modelled on the WHO/FAO Global Action Plan on AMR. The UN will continue to support Viet Nam in renewing the NAP in 2020 to ensure the NAP better aligns with global actions on AMR. The UN will also work to ensure the NAP's improved ability to address the gaps identified in the Tripartite AMR Country Self-assessment Survey (TrACSS), which is organized annually by the GOVN, WHO and FAO (fourth round in 2020) to understand NAP implementation progress. The TrACSS also provides a platform to drive multi-sector collaboration and political commitment to enhance AMR surveillance in the public health and livestock production industry, and to strengthen regulation and education on antimicrobial use.

The UN also put significant effort into raising awareness of AMR across society, through different campaigns and advocacy events in cooperation with the GOVN. These activities include the annual World Antibiotic Awareness Week (WAAW) event to call for accelerated and better coordinated actions from all sectors, organized, through WHO and FAO support, by the Viet Nam National Steering Committee for AMR. At the 2019 WAAW event at Bach Mai Hospital, WHO and FAO pledged their continued support to Viet Nam in tackling AMR. "In the coming years, WHO will focus on reinforcing the roles of health professionals in the fight against overuse and misuse of antibiotics," said Dr Kidong Park, WHO Representative in Viet Nam. Dr Albert T. Lieberg, FAO Representative in Viet Nam, emphasized that, "antibiotics are not always the answer for all infectious diseases in animals, therefore it is important that farmers, drug sellers and even veterinarians are better aware of the risks caused by AMR, and only use antibiotics responsibly." The WAAW event raised awareness on AMR. In particular, it also promoted responsible use of antibiotics in the Vietnamese community, focusing on caregivers, livestock producers and health care workers across the country.



Music video of health care workers in 8 hospitals dancing to a AMR jingle



Results of TrACSS 2016 - 2019

Photo: WHO Viet Nam



OUTCOME 1.3

EQUITY IN QUALITY EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LEARNING

By 2021, all people, particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from inclusive and equitable quality education systems, services, and expanded life-long learning opportunities

CONTEXT

In 2019, the Government's strong commitment and long-standing cultural and social support for the improvement of the education sector continued to uphold trends in education achievements. According to the Viet Nam Population and Housing Census 2019, the net enrolment rates (NER) at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels were 98.0, 89.2, and 68.3 per cent respectively, while the adult literacy rate was estimated to be 95.8 per cent. The proportion of out-of-school children was 8.3 per cent, equivalent to half of the 2009 proportion. Girls were doing well and got even slightly higher outcomes in education indicators. Nevertheless, there exist significant gaps in all education outcomes among urban and rural areas, ethnic minority and Kinh groups, as well as between the Northern Midlands and Mountain, Central Highlands, and Mekong River Delta regions in comparison with other regions in the country.

In 2019, the National Assembly approved the revised Law on Education with many important addendums such as allowing provincial level to select a relevant book (within an MOET identified list) for teaching each subject in the province, and upgrading the qualification requirement of teachers. The revised Law on Higher Education also went into effect from July 1, 2019, aiming at improving the quality of higher education, promoting the autonomy of higher education, ensuring international integration, and better meeting the needs of the labour market. MOET is currently in the process of developing a new 10-year education development strategic plan 2021-2030 with technical and financial support from the UN and other development partners. The national education database was also launched by MOET in 2019 with rich information on approximately 53,000 schools, 1.5 million teachers and education staff, and 23 million students, which will provide information for education policy making, planning and implementation. IT application in teaching and learning was fostered with the development of an e-learning warehouse of about 5,000 lessons.

KEY RESULTS

In 2019, the UN continued to work with the GOVN and different stakeholders to improve different aspects of education in Viet Nam. The UN, especially UNESCO and UNICEF, provided technical assistance to MOET and the National Assembly's Committee for Culture, Education, Youth and Children (CEYC) for their review and revision of **the Law of Education**, which was approved in June 2019. This joint assistance led to MOET's and CEYC's consideration and inclusion in the revised law of policy options to develop a more inclusive education system,

including to remove tuition fees for 5-year old pre-school children and lower secondary school children.

Since 2018, the UN, especially UNESCO and UNICEF, in collaboration with other development partners have continued dialogues with MOET and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) about how to **strengthen Viet Nam's education sector planning and monitoring mechanism**, and provided significant support to MOET's application for the GPE Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG). As a result, GPE approved a grant of USD467,000 for 2019-2021 for MOET to conduct an education sector analysis and develop a **new Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) 2021-2030**, with support from the UN and other development partners. In addition, UNICEF supported MOET in conducting a sub-sector inclusive and gender responsive analysis of early childhood education. The analysis will feed into the whole education sector analysis for the development of the new EDSP.

With a view to strengthening Viet Nam's monitoring framework for the education sector, the UN, especially UNESCO and UNICEF, also supported MOET in reviewing SDG4 indicators that are part of the SDG indicators proposed by the General Statistics Office (GSO). GSO included these revised SDG4 indicators that MOET proposed in **the List of Sustainable Development Statistical Indicators of Viet Nam**, published in January 2019. UNICEF also provided technical support to strengthen the capacity of staff members in charge of statistics in MOET and the provincial Departments of Education and Training (DOETs), especially in monitoring and reporting SDG4 indicators.

The UN, in particular UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNAIDS, jointly supported MOET in incorporating **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)** into the newly approved school curriculum, starting from pre-school to secondary education level. This was done through the development of guidelines, based on the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO, 2018). These guidelines were finalized and approved by MOET in 2019. They are expected to raise awareness of the necessity of CSE among teachers, education administrators and textbook writers. Based on the approved guidelines on CSE, guidelines for teachers will be developed to provide them with CSE contents and methods of teaching and assessing students on CSE.

UN Women and MOET have piloted the **Connect with Respect Model** in 23 secondary schools in Viet Nam. This is a joint curriculum tool developed by the regional offices of

Plan International, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and the East Asia Pacific UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), to assist teachers to advance gender equality, social cohesion and respectful relationships among young people. It draws on the scientific literature around violence prevention, gender norms change, and the programmatic experience of school-based interventions in the region and beyond. Nearly 100 teachers and educational managers have had their capacity strengthened on gender equality to implement the Connect with Respect model. The experience and lessons learnt from this pilot have been used to revise and advocate for gender responsiveness of a MOET circular on positive disciplines for pupils and students, which will be approved in 2020. UNESCO and MOET have also been implementing a new project on promoting gender equality from which ethnic minority children in 24 lower secondary schools in three provinces will benefit.

There is a critical need to **improve vocational education and training to provide the skills** needed for gainful employment. These skills, in turn, help build local and national development and contribute to preventing and eliminating child labor. In this regard, the ILO-ENHANCE project has been supporting MOLISA to develop a set of documents on **Career Orientation and Vocational Counselling Guidance**. The documents aim to strengthen school-to-work transition and support efforts to prevent child labour by preparing boys and girls to understand their own competencies and professional aspirations so that they can choose appropriate vocational training courses. In 2020, the project plans to pilot the application of the aforementioned documents in at least 5 lower and upper secondary schools and at continuing education centers for around 250 boy and girl students. The project also aims to build the capacity of teachers at piloted schools and vocational training institutions on how to use the set of materials. After undertaking the pilot, the project will support the finalization and verification of the materials in order to scale up their application nationwide.

Since the beginning of the 2019 school year, Vietnamese students at all education levels are benefitting from a new child-centered curriculum called **"Safe School"**, with increased Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) awareness and resilience. The curriculum developed by UNICEF and Plan International was rolled out by MOET with UNICEF support. Building on this, UNICEF and MOET are introducing green habits and climate-smart school standards and developing sustainable environmental learning packages to limit the negative impact of climate change and (air) pollution on education and learning.

As of September 2019, 4.6 million pre-school children benefitted from teachers who were able to facilitate learning through play, as a result of the gender-responsive social emotional learning curriculum supported by UNICEF. The curriculum was designed to promote gender socialization, enable children to relate more harmoniously with others,

and develop children's ability to make responsible decisions. UNICEF supported the integration of the adapted 'East Asia Pacific ECD Scales' and the 'Global Guidelines Assessment' tool into the curriculum to monitor its actual impact on children and their communities.

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

In achieving equity in education for all, there are still a lot of challenges causing discrepancies in education and learning outcomes among regions, ethnic groups, and other groups. Ethnic minority children, children living in remote areas, children living in poverty, migrant children and children with disabilities are among the most vulnerable and behind groups. Gender issues in the education sector, such as school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) and gender inequality in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, are growing concerns. Additional concerns have been raised on the mismatch between the outputs of secondary education, TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) and higher education and the requirements of the labour market, as many new graduates lack necessary transferable skills, technical skills, digital skills, interpersonal skills at workplace and foreign language skills. Furthermore, education management and coordination capacities need to be further improved to effectively and efficiently design and implement education policies. Inadequate teacher recruitment and deployment are prevalent, which results in teacher shortages in some areas and excesses in others in terms of geographical areas and teaching subjects. There is a lack of systematically disaggregated data collection and analysis for education policy making. A more evidence-based and comprehensive understanding of disparities is needed to ensure equality in education for all.

In the coming year, the UN will continue to strengthen its multi-stakeholder and inter-agency cooperation approach in providing coherent policy support to Viet Nam on education and training. This approach has proved to be extremely relevant, particularly in the context of limited fiscal space, lengthy process of policy implementation, and emerging challenges such as COVID-19 and other pandemics and shocks in Viet Nam. The 'Leaving No One Behind' principle of the SDGs will be continuously used to formulate the UN joint position in supporting MOET in developing the new 10-year Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) to ensure equity in education. The UN's common position is that the new EDSP should be equity-focused and universal, focus on inclusive and lifelong learning, and embrace young children and most-vulnerable child groups. In addition, the budget for education, including for ethnic minorities and children with disabilities, should be considered as investment in human capital, not costs. This common position will be jointly advocated by UN agencies with key national partners, such as the National Assembly, MOET and provinces in 2020 and onwards.

Student, Tuyen, Avoids Falling into Child Labour and Goes on to Excel at School

15-year-old Tran Thi Bich Tuyen lives with her parents, three older sisters and younger brother in a small rented room in Tan Binh District, Ho Chi Minh City. The family used to own a house in a province south of the city, but when Tuyen's younger brother was diagnosed with a heart problem, the family had to sell their house and left their hometown to pay for his treatment. To make ends meet, Tuyen's parents sell lottery tickets and vegetables on the city's busy streets. Despite their difficult circumstances, they strive to prioritize the education of their children in the hopes of securing a better life for them. However, the two oldest girls had to drop out of school to help provide for the family and it seemed likely that Tuyen would have to do the same.

However, the family was connected by local authorities to Saigon Children's Charity (SCC), which assessed Tuyen's educational needs. SCC arranged for her enrollment in grade 10 at a continuing education centre with her school fees and bus travel covered by the project. Despite additional family commitments, Tuyen is excelling academically, and she recently won an award from her school for her impressive achievements. SCC also provided career orientation and guidance for her to persuade her dream to become a designer or a teacher. Tuyen attended life skills training once a month where she built communication and teamwork skills. "Through my studies, I am learning to develop strong principles", said Tuyen. She hopes to continue studying at the education centre for a further two years during which time she can gain the knowledge and skills she needs to work towards a better life for herself and her family.

The SCC support to Tuyen is within the ILO ENHANCE project on Enhancing National Capacity to Prevent and Reduce Child Labour in Viet Nam, funded by the US Department of Labor. The Project operates in partnership with MOLISA and other stakeholders to assist national level efforts to prevent child labor, including through direct intervention models in Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City and An Giang. This involves support for 5,000 children engaged in or at risk of child labour through education, vocational and skills training and other social protection assistance, and 2,000 children's families through livelihood assistance for income generation.



*ILO beneficiary of educational support, Tuyen, is excelling at her studies
Photo: ILO Vietnam/Vu Ngoc Dung*

OUTCOME 2.1

LOW CARBON, CLIMATE AND DISASTER RESILIENCE

By 2021, Viet Nam accelerates its transition to sustainable development and green growth towards a low-carbon economy and enhances its adaptation and resilience to climate change and national disasters, with a focus on empowering poor and vulnerable groups

CONTEXT

Despite rapid progress in economic growth and human development, Viet Nam is facing increasing impacts of climate change, air pollution and environmental degradation, urbanization and migration. Globally, Viet Nam ranks as the sixth most affected country by climate change over the period 1999-2018¹¹, and as the 15th worst affected country by outdoor air pollution. Ha Noi ranked as the 7th most polluted city in the world¹². Vulnerable people, particularly women and children, in both urban and rural areas are uniquely exposed to air pollution. They face critical challenges due to the lack of understanding of the links between poor air quality and child health, learning and development, and the absence of policies that limit the use of dirty energy and promote clean energy¹³.

Natural disasters in 2019, including 12 level-three disasters (of which eight were typhoons and four were tropical depressions) caused heavy economic losses and left 133 people dead and missing¹⁴. Most recently, drought and saline intrusion, which started in late 2019, affected 137,000 children and 305,000 women in the Mekong Delta¹⁵. From late 2019 early signs of drought and saltwater intrusion were detected in the Mekong Delta and their impact was expected to be worse than that of the one experienced in 2015-2016. Women and girls are at greater risk of negative impacts from these crises, including an increase in the burden of unpaid care work and domestic work, as well as the reduction of paid work. These challenges cause long-term impacts to their health and increase the risk of violence against women and children.

In 2019, the GOVN reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, prioritizing its actions on the revision of the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and the establishment of the Partnership for Disaster Risk Reduction with the UN, INGOs, development partners, and mass organizations. Following the GOVN's Resolution No. 120/NQ-CP of 17 November 17, 2017 on sustainable development of the Mekong Delta to adapt to climate change, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 417/QD-TTg on 13 April 13, 2019. That decision approved the Overall Programme of Sustainable Agriculture Development

Adapting to Climate Change in the Mekong Delta Region to 2030 with a Vision to 2045 with a committed programme budget of VND5 trillion from the GOVN and VND12 trillion to be mobilized from the private sector. Viet Nam has also been in the process of developing the next 10-year SEDS, 5-year SEDP and sectoral plans since early 2019. These processes have a clear vision that Viet Nam's sustainable development will largely depend on how the country can further strengthen institutions to ensure that they can withstand the impacts of climate change, and as well as build resilient communities, taking into account the ongoing drought and saltwater intrusion and the outbreak of COVID-19.

KEY RESULTS

In 2019, the UN placed significant efforts on supporting Viet Nam in implementing its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction.

UN Supporting Viet Nam's Transition to Sustainable Development and Green Growth Towards a Low-Carbon Economy

UN agencies including UNDP and UNICEF provided significant technical contributions to the amendment of the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control in 2019, focusing on improving various aspects of it, including but not limited to risk-informed development, disaster recovery, non-state and business actor engagement, post-disaster rehabilitation, emergency assistance coordination and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) funding. As the a result of UN assistance, such as in organizing consultations, reviewing the current law and other countries' laws, providing access to experts and capacity building, the draft amended law presented a significant shift from emergency towards a stronger emphasis on DRR, resilience building and accountabilities in risk management at all administrative levels, including the community level. UNICEF provided support to Viet Nam's Disaster Management Authority (VDMA) under MARD to develop the first ever National Behavior Change Communication Strategy for DRR. The Strategy aims to effectively deliver actionable messages to people, particularly the most vulnerable, to reduce disaster risks, increase preparedness and response, and "build back better". Priority was given to the development of a communications action plan for the Mekong Delta

11. Germanwatch's report "Global Climate Risk Index 2020"

12. 2019 World Air Quality Report

13. According to revised-PDP7, Viet Nam has one of the world's largest coal-fired power pipelines

14. Central Steering Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control (CCNDPC) May 2020

15. Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority (VNDMA), MARD 2020

region, due to the region's ongoing drought and saltwater intrusion crisis. UNDP provided support to the poor and near poor in the Mekong Delta to cope with drought and saltwater intrusion by providing 400 water tanks for storage of clean water and enhancing their livelihoods, and also by supporting provinces in planting and rehabilitating 1,221 ha of mangrove forests to protect houses and infrastructure, and providing assistance to improve livelihoods of 400 families living near mangrove forest areas.

In 2019, the UN continued to jointly support the NDC review and update led by MONRE and line ministries to be submitted in 2020. UNDP supported the development of four out of five chapters of the NDC draft report. UNDP also cooperated with GIZ in supporting the GOVN to model and define NDC targets for their integration into the next SEDS and SEDP as well as for the GOVN report to the UN Convention on Climate Change in late 2020. UNDP, UN Women, and UNEP actively promoted gender mainstreaming into the NDC review through the UN-NGO Gender Working Group on Climate Change. FAO supported MARD to identify suitable adaptation options through an in-depth vulnerability assessment and cost benefit analysis (CBA) for crop, livestock, aquaculture and water resources which informed the NDC revision in agriculture. UNDP as co-chair with the MOIT of the Energy Efficiency (EE) Working Group of the Viet Nam Energy Partnership Group (VEPG) coordinated support for the development of the National EE Action Plan (NEEAP) to implement the Viet Nam National Energy Efficiency Programme (VNEEP III) and technical inputs for the organization of the 3rd high-level meeting and 1st stakeholder forum of the VEPG.

In supporting the formulation of Viet Nam's 10 year Social Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) 2021-2030, development partners led by UNDP and the German Embassy prepared a background paper "Sustainable development, including climate change and the circular economy: Policy recommendations for Viet Nam in the period of 2021-2030". The paper is one from a package of seven papers shared by the UN and development partners with the MPI Minister, as well as with the SEDS drafting team.

FAO, in collaboration with UNDP, supported MARD in undertaking key activities to support the integration of climate change adaptation in national and sector strategies for the 2021-2030 period. IFAD supported 11 provinces in Viet Nam in implementing a number of initiatives, including revolving funds. It also supported the diversification of agriculture services and provided competitive small grants for the Agriculture Sector Restructuring Programme and the National Target Programme for New Rural Development (NTP-NRD). IFAD also contributed to the implementation of the GOVN's Action Plan Framework for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Agriculture and Rural Development Sector 2008-2020 and Resolution 120/NQ-CP on Sustainable Development of the Mekong Delta Resilient to Climate Change issued in 2017. Through these activities, IFAD assisted about 367,000 poor and near-poor households of 1.7 million people (45 per cent are women and 49 per cent are ethnic minorities).

Within the UN system, UNDP and UNIDO led efforts to support businesses and authorities in enhancing low-carbon and energy-efficiency production, including through awareness and capacity building and the application of

new technologies. With technical support from UNIDO, the gradual transformation of industrial zones into eco-industrial parks (EIPs) was promoted. As a consequence, 45 out of 72 companies in three industrial zones applied 546 resource efficient and cleaner production (RECP) measures. This resulted in average annual savings of USD 3.33 million and energy savings of 17.8 million kWh, a reduction of 29,773 tons of CO₂e per year, and the reduction of wastewater and solid waste by 429,572 m³ and 3,843 tons per year, respectively. UNIDO also supported the widespread adoption of energy efficiency boilers and best operation practices in industry, creating direct energy savings of 1,482,823 GJ per year and direct GHG reduction of 331,601 tons of CO₂e per year. Plastic waste recycling technology was also piloted with UNIDO's support, showing both environmental and financial benefits with no secondary pollution or waste generation (gas emission and solid waste), and less electricity and water energy consumption. Through its Global Environment Fund (GEF) programme, UNDP continued to provide technical support for the development and application of LED lighting and non-fired brick production technologies, as well as energy efficiency solutions in existing and new buildings, resulting in an emission reduction of 124,471 tons of CO₂e in 2019. The first ever online training programme in Viet Nam on LED technology was developed with UNDP support and transferred to the Ho Chi Minh City Technology University.



A video clip introduces the EIP concepts with significant benefits on resources efficiency and emission reduction in Viet Nam



A video clip highlighting UNDP/GEF support to develop LED market and the contribution of LED lights to greenhouse gas emission reduction in Viet Nam

Enhanced UN Support for Viet Nam's Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change and Natural Disasters

In 2019, the UN assisted the GOVN, in collaboration with the Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience (DRR4R) Results Group, in shifting the emphasis from a DRM to a DRR approach. The establishment of the DRR Partnership in Viet Nam in 2019 represented a great success of the UN's support to the GOVN (MARD) by strengthening coordination and collaboration, promoting information exchange and experience sharing on DRR in Viet Nam and with other countries. UNDP's technical support to MARD in reviewing good practices, lessons learnt, and drawbacks of the previous DRR Partnership back in early 2000 was an important basis for the GOVN, development partners, NGOs, and the UN to come up with consensus for establishing the partnership. Currently, FAO, UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women are active members of the partnership, with UNDP acting as the co-chair of the technical working group on private sector engagement in DRR.

Children, particularly poor and ethnic minority children and children with disabilities, are among the groups most vulnerable to climate change and extreme environment/weather events. The GOVN's draft 2021-2025 National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction and Prevention, supported by UNICEF, explicitly mentions climate change actions and gender responsive interventions for most vulnerable groups. As a result of that mention, more than 21 million children in Viet Nam could benefit. A UNICEF-supported study on a Shock Responsive Social Protection System in Viet Nam, with a focus on children, was completed in 2019. The study identified gaps and proposed options for improving the existing social

assistance system. UNICEF also provided support in the development of guidelines and tools on a Safe and Clean Community Model, designed to create an ecosystem where community-based institutions come together to strengthen climate actions and disaster risk reduction. At both the national and sub-national level, UNICEF supported the integration of child-related Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and DRR indicators into annual SEDP and sectoral plans. Further UN activities were conducted to improve capacity and knowledge on safe schools, DRR and CCA, resulting in, for example, 119,768 school children in Ninh Thuan province benefiting from a resilient and safe learning environment. Through many public advocacy initiatives, such as a national comic contest on International DRR Day and the 'Kids Meet the Gods' application, the UN raised awareness and changed the behaviors of children and young people on climate change, the environment and natural disasters.

Women are also identified among vulnerable groups in this context and, furthermore, play a crucial role in their families and communities in relation to adaptation and resilience to climate change and natural disasters. In 2019, the UN, led by UN Women, worked to increase the knowledge and capacity on gender and climate change of 20 women's organizations and CSOs. These efforts aimed to promote gender equality and women's participation in different areas, including waste management, agriculture and renewable energy. UN Women also worked closely with the Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority (VDMA) and General Statistic Office (GSO) to promote gender responsive data in disaster management. This was done by reviewing national data collection/analysis/management systems; recommending that data gaps be closed; also proposing prioritized indicators regarding gender, climate change and DRR data; and advocating for the integration of these indicators into national indicator and data collection systems.

The UN provides constant support to the GOVN in the development of monitoring and information systems regarding climate change and natural disasters. FAO helped develop and pilot an online monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system and indicators for adaptation in the agriculture sector in five of Viet Nam's eight agro-ecological regions, which will be integrated into MARD's overall M&E system. FAO and UN Women successfully completed the pilot of the Forecast-based Financing (FbF) approach and improved the drought forecasting system through a localized drought forecast model. The agencies established effective channels for dissemination of early warnings approach to communities in Gia Lai and Ca Mau provinces and developed the Early Warning Early Action Plan relating to food security, livelihood and WASH in the context of drought. These results will benefit the institutionalization of the FbF approach within the GOVN disaster monitoring system, led by the Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority. UNDP, in collaboration with MPI and VCCI, set up the Climate Business Index <http://cbi.undp.org.vn>, which is a web-based voluntary assessment and reporting tool for companies and a network platform for climate change projects and investors. By the end of 2019, more than 100 companies had joined. UNDP also led the UN effort in undertaking a Climate Change Bottleneck Analysis as an input to the GOVN for its participation in the UN Secretary General's Climate Summit during the High Level Segment of the UN General Assembly in September 2019¹⁶.

Specifically, in the agriculture sector, FAO, UNDP, UNEP,

and CIAT provided technical assistance for the development of the National Adaptation Plan for the agricultural sector (NAP-Ag) and its roadmap, and completion of UNREDD Phase II. Following Viet Nam's accession to the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) in January 2019, FAO helped the country address illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; promote the up-scaling of innovative rice-fish farming and climate resilient tilapia pond culture practices; implement the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) for forest law enforcement, governance and timber trade (FLEGT); and support farmers and foresters' organizations in sustainable forest management under the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF). In the cultural sector, UNESCO cooperated with MOCST and stakeholders in organizing a national training workshop and mentoring sessions on the Development of Policies and Procedures for Disaster Risk Reduction of Cultural Heritage to strengthen national and local procedures and capacities for disaster risk reduction of cultural heritage, including emergency preparedness and response.

Last, but not least, UN support contributed directly to businesses and people at the grassroots level improving their adaptation and resilience to climate change and natural disasters. UNDP support built resilience for vulnerable people in 214 coastal vulnerable communes of five provinces through the completion and hand-over of 1,241 resilient houses to the poor and near poor during 2019. UNDP's Tsunami and disaster risk management awareness campaign resulted in enhanced understanding and response skills of 578 students and teachers, of which 175 were female, in Quang Nam province. The community-based disaster risk management training helped enhance knowledge and skills of more than 16,000 local vulnerable people, of whom 51 per cent of them were female. IFAD helped increase the private sector's investment in pro-poor climate-smart agriculture (CSA) value chains. As a result, more than USD 5 million was invested together with IFAD's USD4 million matching grant to help farmers shift from rice to higher value and climate-resilient crops, livestock and fisheries. IFAD also supported farmers' groups and poor women in accessing finance and microfinance services, such as the Climate Change Adaptation Fund (CCAF), Women's Development Fund (WDF) and its women's savings and credit groups (SCGs). Consequently, in Tra Vinh province, 193 farmers' groups, 11 cooperatives, 10 business households representing 3,345 farmers (of whom 38 per cent are poor or near poor, 43 per cent are female, and 41 per cent are Khmer) invested VND89.5 billion in CSA. In Ben Tre province, 1,336 SCGs with 5,059 members (1,699 of whom are poor and 4,047 of whom are women) supported poor households to access total outstanding loans of more than USD6 million.

Humanitarian Efforts

The UNCT, with support from the Disaster Response Management Team (DRMT), significantly heightened real-time awareness of developing emergency events. This was evidenced by the regular monitoring of developing natural disaster incidents, issuing real-time Situation Reports and liaising with GOVN ministries, UN agencies, the Viet Nam Red Cross Society, OCHA regional focal points and other humanitarian partners in preparation of response efforts to storms presenting threats of disaster in 2019. This included rapid assessments in Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh provinces in connection with Typhoon Nakri and Typhoon Matmo. The UN also actively built knowledge of disaster management and

16. The Bottleneck analysis paper is available at https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/environment_climate/bottlenecks-assessment-and-solutions-to-accelerate-implementation.html

disaster risk reduction among relevant UN staff and disaster response partners, resulting in a reduced response time.

The UN in Viet Nam provided technical support to VDMA to strengthen the institutional system for disaster recovery and long-term rehabilitation by leading an institutional capacity assessment, development of Standard Operating Procedures for disaster recovery, and adapting a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) methodology to suit the Vietnamese context. The UN conducted training courses on PDNA, which contributed to improved disaster recovery planning. It also strengthened capacities for assessments of damage, loss, impact and needs following disasters across multi-sectors, in line with Priority 4 of the Sendai Framework: Enhancing build back better in recovery.

In 2019, the DRMT completed the development of the Data Layering for Disaster Preparedness project, which aims to reduce the time needed to generate an assessment report following a natural disaster from the current 3 weeks to within 36 hours of a disaster. The field testing of the tools began in the 2019 storm season and will continue into 2020.

In 2019, the UN in Viet Nam provided assistance to MOH to establish a network of Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) at the provincial level, through development of training materials and sessions for 80 key health staff of 20 selected provinces.

With the DMWG Cash Working Group, a partnership between the UN, the Viet Nam Red Cross, NGOs and development partners, the DRMT led a training workshop and field assessment on Minimum Expenditure Baskets, a method for determining and coordinating appropriate amounts for unconditional cash assistance in humanitarian responses. Following up on recommendations from the 2018 Damrey response, the workshop helped build NGO and Viet Nam Red Cross capacity on market assessment and on harmonizing the value of cash grants for future responses by the UN,

NGOs and the Viet Nam Red Cross.

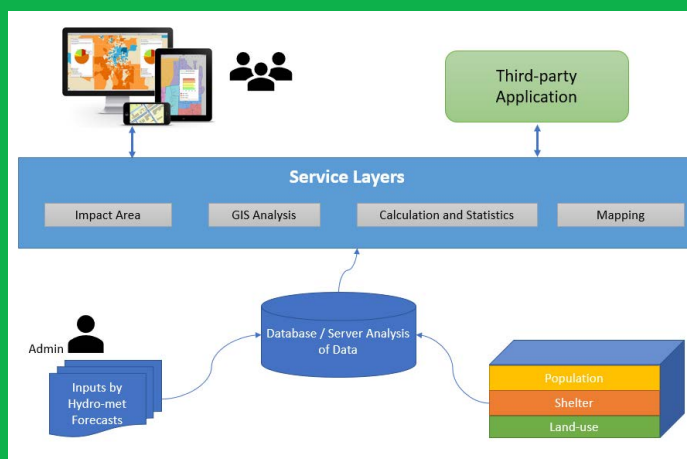
The DRMT also facilitated a training on Gender in Humanitarian Action in May 2019, bringing together a cross section of NGOs, the Viet Nam Red Cross, the Viet Nam Women's Union and other regular members of the DRMT Gender and Protection Working Group. The training presented key theoretical concepts on gender and vulnerability, humanitarian coordination and disaster response management frameworks in Viet Nam. The training also provided practical tools to increase participants' capacities to implement gender and protection responsive programming in the context of disaster response.

Additional joint work supported by the UN included work on forecast-based financing (FbF) to help communities respond effectively to slow onset and sudden onset disasters. FbF effectively releases humanitarian funding based on forecast information for pre-agreed activities. The joint regional project by FAO, UNICEF and UN Women, "Scaling up Forecast based Financing (FbF)/ Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) and Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) with innovative use of climate risk information for disaster resilience in ASEAN" with MOLISA started in July 2019. Running until 2021, the project will undertake a feasibility assessment and provide recommendations to revise national decrees and other related frameworks to make them better prepared and adapted to natural disaster shocks.

Within the UN, the DRMT also continued its support of the UN Emergency Communications Team (ECT) to ensure a rapid, coordinated and accurate communications response whenever an emergency or contingency requires an urgent positioning of the UN system, by providing a training on communications roles during emergencies to ECT.

Disaster Impact Visualization Tool: An Innovative Tool for Disaster Response Decision-Making

Viet Nam's central and southern provinces are known to be highly exposed to severe seasonal typhoons and floods. In 2017, typhoon Damrey caused 300 deaths and left approximately 400,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance. Because of these stark realities, at the UN in Viet Nam, we constantly seek ways to support the GOVN to make quicker and timely disaster-response decisions, based on accurate data on when typhoons are heading towards Viet Nam.



In 2019, through the Data Layering for Disaster Preparedness project with a small budget from the Delivering Together for Sustainable Development Facility, the UN jointly produced the Disaster Impact Visualization Tool. This web-based mapping application presents officially available baseline data through an interactive map interface, providing storm tracking, housing, land use, population data overlays – all disaggregated by sex and age.

First, the baseline data is entered and regularly updated in the tool. When a typhoon forms and heads towards Viet Nam, forecast data (including track, windspeed and rainfall) provided by the national weather forecast agency are regularly updated in the tool to build a real time exposure level. Then, both data on vulnerability and exposure is overlaid to generate an estimate of impacts for the specific areas where the typhoon is forecast to make land fall.

Having this data rapidly on hand provides a contextualized picture of the potential disaster impacts that Viet Nam Disaster Management Agency (VDMA), the UN and development partners can use to plan for relief, response and recovery activities. The VDMA has set out to explore this prototype tool and has pledged funding to develop a comprehensive national disaster information management system.

Resilient Houses to Protect Lives and Assets of Vulnerable Poor

Houses are considered the most valuable asset of local people, particularly the poor in coastal communities who have been frequently hit by severe rains and storms, which threaten their families' lives and assets. In 2018 alone, more than 31,000 houses were flooded and damaged by natural disasters in Viet Nam.

Since 2017, under the project "Improving the Resilience of Vulnerable Coastal Communities to Climate Change Related Impacts in Viet Nam", largely funded by the Green Climate Fund, UNDP have built storm and flood resilient houses for the poor and highly disaster-exposed people in 100 communes of five coastal provinces including Quang Ngai, Hue, Thanh Hoa, Quang Nam, and Quang Binh. The resilient houses are based on simple designs to create a stronger structure, including a mezzanine level for flooding protection, reinforced roofing and the use of strong cement.

The mezzanine level allows residents to comfortably stay in their houses during a disaster, safe from high flood levels. This level can also be used as an area to store valuables during disasters and avoid them being washed away or spoiled by flood waters.

By the end of 2019, over 2,400 resilient houses had been built, benefiting about 9,600 vulnerable poor people, representing 60 per cent of the overall project target. Close to 65 per cent of these houses belong to female-headed households.

"Without the support, we would never dream of having a house like this. My children are happy too and they can continue dealing with their own life. Living in the new house, we are no longer worried about storms and floods," said Ms. Mai Thi Nung, 70 years old, in village No.1, Nga Tien commune, Nga Son district, Thanh Hoa province.



Ms. Mai Thi Nung and her husband Mr. Nguyen Van Ban in front of their new house.
Photo: UNDP2019/Wu Ngoc Dung

OUTCOME 2.2

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCE

By 2021, Viet Nam has enhanced sustainable management of natural capital, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and improved the quality of the environment, while contributing to the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements

CONTEXT

Despite the overall progress in implementing the SDGs in Viet Nam, the country's results in the sustainable management of natural resources are still limited. This conclusion is evidenced by the fact that SDG 14 on life under water and SDG 15 on life on land are among five SDGs which Viet Nam has not made progress in achieving over recent years.

In the formulation of Viet Nam's Social Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) 2021-2030 and Social Economic Development Plan 2021-2025, the GOVN in 2019 continued to reaffirm its commitment to the Paris Agreement and achieving SDGs through its focus on quality growth, green and inclusive development, and building a modern and integrated market economy.

Progressive efforts have been made to improve responses to climate change and environmental challenges, including i) the Disaster Risk Management Law revision and National Adaptation Plan formulation; ii) the Prime Minister's call at the G20 Summit 2019 on addressing marine plastics and ocean pollution; iii) the issuance of the National Action Plan on Marine Plastics in December 2019; iv) the deployment of renewable energy by increasing the Feed-In Tariff for wind energy and adjusting the Feed-In Tariff for solar energy; v) the ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol for reducing GHG emissions; v) the issuance of the National Programme on Energy Efficiency (VNEEP3) 2019-2030; vi) the on-going formulation of the Power Development Master Plan for 2021-2030 and outlook to 2045; vii) the on-going revision of the Disaster Risk Management Law and formulation of the National Adaptation Plan; and viii) the on-going revision of the Law on Environmental Protection. These policies and actions are important for a transformation towards green, low carbon and climate resilient development.

In 2019, Viet Nam became Chair of ASEAN and a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (2020-2021). Priorities in these important fora are development issues including peace and stability, climate change and climate security, and South-South Cooperation, which provides the UN with important opportunities to provide policy advice and assist the country in accelerating SDG achievement.

KEY RESULTS

The UN made a lot of contributions in 2019 to the achievement of sustainable management of natural resources.

Partly as a result of the UN's support for the implementation of the National Action Plan on Marine Plastics, the GOVN Resolution 26/NQ-CP on implementation of the National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Vietnam's Marine Economy by 2030, with a vision to 2045 was issued in 2019. UNDP also supported the inclusion of the circular economy into the on-going revision of the Law on Environmental Protection and advocated for the inclusion of energy efficiency in the draft Law on Construction. In 2019, UNESCO started supporting MONRE in strengthening its capacity on ocean governance and marine spatial planning, contributing to the implementation of the above Strategy.

UNDP's support for the treatment of obsolete chemicals/persistent organic pollutants, which included various interventions, aimed at reducing environmental and health risks through Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and harmful chemicals release reduction. Specially, UNDP supported Quang Binh province to dispose of 200 m³ POP contaminated soil. As a result, thousands of people were released from the risk of POP contamination. UNDP also facilitated the introduction of two provincial management plans on POP: Decision 142/KH-UBND of Nghe An PPC dated 14/3/2019, and Official Document 6029/STNMT-CCBVM dated 12/12/2019. At the national level, the agency provided support to MOIT to complete a National Assessment of mercury in products.

With UNIDO's support, a new technology for plastic recycling was piloted in the production of many products such as bricks, tiles, pallets, and fences. The technology aims to bring about both environmental and financial benefits including no secondary pollution, no generation of gas emissions and solid waste, and less electricity and water energy consumption.

The UN also contributed to the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources through UNDP's support for the finalization and issuance of the Wetland Conservation Management Decree, as well as the establishment of Wetland Conservation Areas of 6,590ha in Thai Binh Province. UNESCO provided technical assistance to the World Man and Biosphere Reserves (which consists of nine Biosphere Reserves across the country with a total area of 4,344,441 ha) to develop guidelines and toolkits relating the Biosphere Reserves Management Framework.

UNDP supported MONRE in issuing the Circular on management of access to genetic resources and benefit-

sharing arising from their utilization to promote fair and equal access to natural resources, following the issuance of the Decree on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) in 2017.

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD FOR OUTCOME 2.1 AND 2.2

Challenges in 2019 will persist in 2020, including Viet Nam's status of being among the countries most affected by climate change, and the various risks faced by vulnerable people (e.g. the poor, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, women, children) due to natural disasters and negative environmental issues. The continuous occurrence of extreme natural disasters also reveals limitations in Viet Nam's legal frameworks, monitoring and analysis system, capacity for rapid responses, social protection, and management capacity at both national and local levels regarding a low-carbon economy, and climate and disaster adaptation and resilience.

2020 will be an important year, when Viet Nam will finalize the next 5-year SEDP and 10-year SEDS, implement the NDC review and decide on possible revisions of NDC targets, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak and other natural disasters which have greatly impacted on the most vulnerable families. The UN will continue to support Viet Nam (i) first to accelerate and expand immediate support to vulnerable families, employees, workers working in informal sectors, children, the elderly, and employees recovering from impacts of drought, saltwater intrusion in the Mekong Delta and Central Coast regions and COVID-19; (ii) incorporate green and risk factors into government's stimulus packages to support the most vulnerable families and children and enhance their resilience to shocks and stresses in the longer term; (iii) incorporate climate, disaster, environmental risks and green growth targets into the next SEDS and SEDP at national, sectoral and provincial levels, and the amendment

of the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control; (iv) develop the disaster risk reduction and preparedness plan for 2020-21 (focusing on WASH, nutrition and education), revise the national programme for disaster risk reduction 2021-30, and strengthen the Community-based DRR Programme with an additional focus on environmental protection; (v) promote gender mainstreaming, women's participation and leadership in the implementation of policies and programs on DRR and climate change; (vi) scale up the adoption of clean energy and circularity for sustainable industrial zones in Viet Nam, with a focus on heating/cooling districts and mini-grids, as well as on waste and air pollution reduction; (vii) promote and stimulate market demand, and increase the adoption of energy efficiency practices by industry for greater energy performance, reduced carbon footprint, and enhanced productivity and competitiveness; (viii) promote application of clean technologies, BAT/BEP interventions, RECP options in industry to reduce input materials consumption, saving resources and wastes released to the environment; and (ix) support the integrated management of water resources and marine ecosystems, accelerating Viet Nam's climate resilience.

The UN – through its co-chair or member positions in the Viet Nam Energy Partnership, Disaster Risk Management Partnership, Climate Change Partnership, and other informal partnerships – will further deepen its collaboration and partnership with the GOVN (particularly MARD), VCCI and the private sector, development partners, NGOs, and experts (e.g. through a joint workplan on DRR) to mobilize stronger roles and resources from enterprises, business networks, and chambers of commerce to promote integrated solutions for the development challenges of poverty reduction, climate change, and environmental protection.



*A couple in Ha Tinh are relieved after a cleanup of a pesticides store nearby their home
Photo: UNDP Viet Nam*

Overcoming Viet Nam's Toxic Legacy through Safe Management of Hazardous Chemicals

Persistent organic pollutants, or POPs, are highly toxic chemicals that take many years to break down in the environment. Due to a combination of historical factors and a lack of awareness, more than 1,000 POP pesticide-contaminated hotspots have been identified within Viet Nam in recent years, where the contaminants have slowly been leaching into its soil, water, and air for almost half a century. POPs pollute groundwater and living areas, slowly build up in ecosystems and organisms, and have a terrible effect on human health, bringing widespread disability, disease, and the risk of early death.

UNDP has been working closely with the GOVN for more than a decade to build capacity for the management, treatment, and eventual elimination of POPs and other dangerous chemicals from the country. Its most recent collaboration is the Global Environment Facility-funded Viet Nam Persistent Organic Pollutants and Sound Harmful Chemicals Management Project, which began in 2015.

In the five years since its inception, the project has helped to ensure that thousands of people are able to live without fear of exposure to POPs. This has been done through activities

such as the introduction of provincial POP management plans, the safe disposal and isolation of hazardous waste and soil from contaminated sites, and the development of software to register and track POP releases.

In addition, more than 1,000 people in Lam Hoa commune, Tuyen Hoa district, Quang Binh province, can now enjoy a clean, safe environment thanks to the excavation and treatment of more than 50 tons of pure POP waste and more than 200m³ of heavily contaminated soil. These people, who used to live in or near a place known as a toxic hotspot, have been able to improve their economic situation along with their health, happiness, and quality of life.

Continued partnership with government ministries and agencies will be vital to completely eliminate POPs from Viet Nam. While the road ahead is still a long one, the UN's success thus far has nevertheless already brought hope to many Vietnamese people still living with the poisonous effects of chemical contamination.



Pesticides clean up in Thai Nguyen
Photo: UNDP Viet Nam

Boys and Girls in Viet Nam Created a Superhero to Fight Natural Disasters and Climate Change¹⁷

In September 2019, over 16,000 boys and girls between 10 and 15 years' old, from 40 provinces and diverse backgrounds, including children from the remote and most marginalized ethnic minorities and children with disabilities, participated in a national comic contest.

Organized by UNICEF Viet Nam, the Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority (VDMA) and the Young Pioneer Council (YPC), the comic contest 'Saving the Earth - Children create superhero to fight against natural disasters and climate change', asked children to create a superhero and write a story about their supernatural power to fight against natural disasters, climate change, and pollution.

The inspirational submissions¹⁸ dealt with a wide variety of situations, such as the impact of drought in the Central Highlands, saltwater intrusion in the Mekong Delta, and storms and flooding in the central coast and northern provinces. Several city children expressed their concerns regarding air pollution and waste management, and called for an end to plastic waste. To paraphrase one child – "the GOVN can rule tomorrow to eliminate plastic bags and we will all support and be happy. Our grandparents functioned without plastic and so must we."

The submissions show how deeply children care about climate change, how passionate they feel about the need for change and to do things differently. Children demonstrated their desire for each and every one of us to feel responsible for making a difference to protect and preserve our environment, as well as to respond better and more efficiently to natural disasters.

These creative young people also expressed the fact that climate change and disasters impact on children's nutrition, health, education, protection and security and stall their development, which can cause lifelong negative consequences. These impacts call for further work and attention to be paid to create resilient communities, climate actions, awareness, preparations and risk reduction.

Children and young people have a stake in the future of Viet Nam and are present and future agents of change. When we give children the opportunity to create, their imagination is without limit. When we ask them to solve problems with us – their solutions will amaze.

17. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psidT5gqy-c&feature=youtu.be>

18. <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/stories/9-best-super-heroes-made-it-online-voting-final>



"Super Artist" by the comic contest's 1st prize winner- Nguyen Tran Pha Le, 13 years old from Nha Trang City, Khanh Hoa province.

This is a story about a little kind-hearted girl who loves drawings and is determined in bringing happiness to people. Overcoming tons of challenges, she found a Holy book on top of the highest mountain of Vietnam - Fansipan. The book gives her superpower so that she can draw her wishes and turn them into reality. She draws all the best things for everyone that she meets. However, the interesting thing in this story is she draws herself and turns all her 'multiple editions' into real girls. These girls continue to draw and multiply many good things for this world.

OUTCOME 3.1

ECONOMIC GROWTH

By 2021, Viet Nam's growth policies and institutions support a new economic model, which is inclusive, sustainable and more productivity-led, reaping gains from trade liberalization, international integration and migration.

CONTEXT

Viet Nam has been achieving remarkable economic growth at relatively high rates since the late 1980s. Viet Nam made great progress in improving its competitiveness in the industrial sector, constantly climbing up in the global ranking as evidenced by UNIDO's Competitive Industrial Performance (CIP) Index which was at the 43rd position in 2017 compared with the 79th position in 2000¹⁹. More importantly, its economic growth has been accompanied by relatively low inequality, as well as demonstrated improvements in income distribution²⁰. Despite some gaps in fostering inclusiveness in the country's development, the relatively inclusive nature of Viet Nam's development has been recognized by the international community as one of the keys to the country's great success in poverty reduction.

The GOVN identifies the foci in the formulation of Viet Nam's SEDS 2021-2030 and SEDP 2021-2025 as quality growth, green and inclusive development, and building a modern and integrated market economy. The development processes for the next 10-year SEDS (2021-2030) and the next five-year SEDP (2021-2025) started in 2018 and continued in 2019 at an advanced level. In early 2021, the SEDP will be endorsed by the National Assembly and the SEDS will be endorsed by the XIII Party Congress.

In August 2019, the Politburo issued Resolution 50-NQ/TW, which aims to address existing shortcomings and obstacles in designing, improving, and implementing mechanisms and policies on foreign investment cooperation by 2030. It seeks to create a business environment and competitiveness that allow Viet Nam to join the ASEAN 4 group before 2021 and the ASEAN 3 group before 2030. Besides the goal of attracting USD30-40 billion of foreign investment per year, the Resolution sets high targets to promote enterprises' use of advanced and green technologies, and to increase the rate of localization and number of trained laborers.

Viet Nam and the European Union (EU) signed the EU-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) and the EU-Viet Nam Investment Protection Agreement (EVIPA) in June 2019 which are expectedly to be officially ratified in 2020. The EVFTA will eliminate nearly all customs duties on goods traded between the two sides and contains specific provisions to remove technical obstacles. The EU and Viet Nam have also agreed on strong sustainable development measures, including commitments to implement the Paris climate agreement

effectively and to respect and effectively implement the principles of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) concerning fundamental workers' rights. The EVIPA includes modern rules on investment protection, enforceable through the new Investment Court System, and preserves the right of the governments on both sides to regulate in the interest of their citizens. These agreements are expected by the GOVN to give a big push for trade and investment in Viet Nam.

KEY RESULTS

The UN through the Development Partners Group and together with the WB, convened the development of seven position papers as the international community's collective response to a request of the Vice Minister of MPI (the GOVN's SEDS/SEDP focal point). (See the above section on "UN's Support in Accelerating the 2030 Agenda and SDGs' Achievements in Viet Nam".)

UNDP brought international expertise and experiences and supported high level policy dialogues (such as with Party's Central Theoretical Council and Central Commission on Economic Affairs, MPI/CIEM (Central Institute for Economic Management), VASS (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences)) on the topics of IR4.0, Anticipatory, Adaptive and Agile (AAA) governance, and inclusive innovations. These, together with UNDP key policy advice products – such as the analysis on productivity and competitiveness of manufacturing enterprises in Viet Nam, the Inclusive IR4.0 paper, the paper on ODA, and the DFA Report – contributed to the formulation of the GOVN IR4.0 Strategy, ODA Directions and SEDS 2021-2030.

In 2019, the GOVN revised Viet Nam's GDP to capture updated data from recent censuses/surveys, administrative data as well as the 2008 State National Accounts (SNA) methodology. The revision aims to provide better macro-economic evidence for the SEDS and SEDP development. Being aware of the exercise's importance and implications for different political, social and economic dimensions in Viet Nam, the UN directly led by the Resident Coordinator and UNDP provided technical support for the development of an analytical report on international experiences and possible impacts. The report was used by GSO in finalizing its report for the GOVN's approval in 2020.

In October 2019, the first ever White Paper "Viet Nam Industry 2019 – Manufacturing and Subsector competitiveness" was

19. UNIDO's Competitive Industrial Performance (CIP) Index 2019

20. UNDP-VASS National Human Development Report 2016

released by MOIT and UNIDO, with financial support by the Republic of Korea. The White paper analyses and evaluates the current status of manufacturing and processing industries in the country. At the same time, the paper identifies key macro and sub-sector issues and suggests relevant policy recommendations in order to strengthen the role of the manufacturing sector. UNIDO also supported Viet Nam's economic growth through the agency's technical support for the development of pro-poor agro value chains and the scaling-up of the Centers of Excellence (COE) approach in the Northern Mountainous, Central Highlands and Mekong river delta provinces. These efforts have contributed to the implementation of Viet Nam's National Target Programme on New Rural Development (NTP-NRD) and the Agricultural Restructuring Plan (ARP) for food security and income generation. UNIDO continued supporting the government to expand the national business registration system for cooperatives through its engagement in the April-2019 promulgation of amended Circular 07/2019/TT-BKHĐT and its supplementary Circular 03/2014/TT-BKHĐT which guide cooperative registration and reporting. At the same time, the National Cooperative Registration System and its accompanying ICT system were established to accommodate the inter-ministerial regime for tax registration and business registration for cooperatives.

Through its cooperation with Viet Nam Women's Union, the UN, led by UN Women, worked to strengthen women's livelihoods and participation for greater resilience to disasters and climate change in Viet Nam. Out of four selected climate resilient livelihood models, one was successfully implemented in Phu Yen province to support female rice farmers (whose fields were affected by floods) to convert from rice to lotus plantations. By the end of 2019, the production group formed by these female farmers was granted a VietGAP (National standard for Good Agricultural Practice) certificate and they were trained on business development and market access enhancement. As a result, their income increased by 1.5-2 times compared to their previous income from rice cultivation. More importantly, the model contributed to increasing female farmers' voice and role in their families and communities.

ILO in collaboration with the GOVN, Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour, Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Viet Nam Cooperative Alliance organized a series of advocacy events for raising the public awareness and strengthening the capacity of key stakeholders on EVFTA's Chapter 13, "Trade and Sustainable Development", including assessing the compatibility and alignment of national labour laws and policies as well as closing the gap between national and international labour standards.

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

In the transition to its new development stage, Viet Nam faces some key risks and challenges, including challenges of avoiding the low middle income trap and sustaining high growth with relatively low inequality in the context of economic uncertainty, "re-shoring manufacturing" back towards developed economies, "trade wars" accompanying rising nationalism, the effects of climate change and IR4.0 induced changes in global value chains, employment and human development. In addition to such challenges, Viet Nam must address a number of specific issues related to balancing continued growth, maintaining a focus on inclusion, while pushing for greener growth and enhancement in productivity and competitiveness of its enterprises and their ability to create more productive and greener jobs for all²¹. Especially, the COVID-19 outbreak would certainly create serious impacts on the country's socio-economic development which need strategic and timely actions to ensure a quick recovery with attention and priority to most vulnerable population groups. In relation to this, the UN will conduct COVID-19 socio-economic impact assessments as an input to support the GOVN in identifying relevant short and longer-term recovery actions to assist the most affected people and businesses.

In 2020, the UN will continue its engagement in the SEDP and SEDS development process, focusing on advocating for SDG integration, a more inclusive, leaving no one behind, sustainable, productive growth model, and addressing the above-mentioned challenges. Particularly, the UN plans to strategically work to improve '21st century skills' for children and workers to create new drivers of growth and seize job opportunities that emerge; to strengthen Viet Nam's social protection system together with health and education services to help protect those who cannot be as easily reskilled; build resilience against income and health shocks; and promote children and workers to further develop. These are considered by the UN to be crucial for Viet Nam to be able to continue its future growth with a low level of inequality, ensuring that no one is left behind.

21. UNDP Viet Nam discussion paper "Inclusive fourth industrial revolution for achieving SDGs in Viet Nam, May 2019

Support to Viet Nam's goal to be a modern and competitive industrialised country

The Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT) released the first ever Viet Nam Industry White Paper 2019 (<https://bit.ly/2AnIses>) as one of its efforts in response to Resolution No.23-NQ/TW (2018) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Viet Nam on the orientation for the formulation of a national industrial development policy by 2030 with a vision till 2045. The White Paper 2019 provides information on the current status of Viet Nam's manufacturing and processing industries and identifies key bottlenecks to be addressed. Importantly, the paper suggests policy recommendations to achieve the GOVN's objectives to speed up the country's industrialization process through value addition and technological upgrading, taking into consideration the impact of the fourth industrial revolution and aging population.

The development of the White Paper showcases UNIDO's successful capacity building when it was carried out fully by one National Task Team of representatives from different ministries who were trained by UNIDO as well as the use of UNIDO's EQuIP toolkits for formulating quality industrial policies. "The White Paper provides policy makers, researchers and companies with useful information about different industries in Viet Nam and effective toolkits to be used for industrial policy analysis and planning," said MOIT Vice Minister Do Thang Hai.

EQuIP - Enhancing the Quality of Industrial Policies

The EQuIP toolkits helps policymakers in developing countries formulate evidence-based strategies for inclusive and sustainable industrial development. The aim is to strengthen the ability of lower income countries to manage their own future and to enable them to improve their strategy-setting, policy formulation and their engagement with development partners. UNIDO and GIZ have joined forces to develop the EQuIP toolbox, an integrated methodological and capacity-building package for industrial diagnosis. <http://www.equip-project.org/>

The Viet Nam Industry White Paper 2019 was developed within the framework of the project "Support to the Government of Viet Nam in the formulation of Sub-Sector Industrial Strategy and of the related Implementation Policy through Institutional Capacity Building" for which UNIDO provided technical supports through building institutional capacities, designing industrial reports for the public and private sector and proposing sub-sector strategy and specific policies to enhance the country's industrial competitiveness.



OUTCOME 3.2

INCLUSIVE LABOUR MARKET

By 2021, a fairer, inclusive labour market ensures decent work and opportunities for all, particularly for excluded groups and disadvantaged geographic areas.

CONTEXT

In 2019, trends in employment growth remained relatively aligned with trends in growth of the working-age population, due to a combination of high levels of labour force participation and a significant informal employment rate. Trends in employment growth by broad sectors observed over the past decade were confirmed in 2019, with manufacturing and services gaining in share over agriculture. The participation in the labour force of women and men remained remarkably stable at 76 per cent. The unemployment rate further declined to 1.6 per cent. Overall, 2019 confirmed the relatively easy access to jobs that characterizes Viet Nam's labour market. The share of vulnerable employment (the sum of own account work and contributing family work) decreased by four percentage points, and the informal employment rate declined by more than one per cent points compared to 2018. While these signs of progress are encouraging, more needs to be done to advance decent work objectives in the country. More than 38 million workers are still in the informal economy, and vulnerable employment still accounts for half of Vietnamese workers²².

2019 marked a milestone at the National Assembly through its adoption of the revised Labour Code which embeds important changes in order to be more aligned with ILO international labour standards and responsive to global integration. Viet Nam also ratified ILO Convention 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, Convention 88 on Employment Services, and Convention 159 on vocational rehabilitation and employment as the great steps towards protecting and benefiting labourers in the workplace.

KEY RESULTS

The **revised Labour Code** was adopted by the National Assembly on 20 November 2019, an achievement reflecting the UN's great technical support to MOLISA, the National Assembly, and workers and employers' organizations throughout the revision process since 2016. This fifth edition of the Labour Code (following its 1994, 2002, 2006 and 2012 versions) creates an improved legal framework for employment relations, working conditions, and the representation of employers and workers. As a result of the UN (especially ILO) support, the revised Labour Code provides workers in enterprises with the ability to exercise their right to form or join a representative organization of their own choosing, which does not have to be affiliated with the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour. Another big improvement is the expansion of the scope of the Labour Code to protect workers who are employed but have not

been provided with written employment contracts.

The revised Labour Code also makes a significant shift from an approach of "protection of women" to the "promotion of gender equality" for both male and female workers in labour and employment. This improvement is partly as a combined result of the technical support and multi-stakeholder advocacy by UN Women, the Australian Embassy, and the Informal Ambassadors and Heads of Agencies Group on Gender Policy (co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator and the Spanish Ambassador). The specific changes are (i) narrowing the gap in the retirement age between men and women from 60 and 55, respectively, to 62 and 60; (ii) ensuring equal rights to reproductive health care and child-rearing by recognizing male workers' entitlement to paternity leave; (iii) removing the list of prohibited occupations for female workers given the risk to their reproductive and child-rearing functions; (iv) supporting workers (both male and female) in childcare; (v) and preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.

With the UN/ILO technical assistance, the following results have been achieved:

In June 2019, National Assembly deputies voted yes to the GOVN' dossier for **ratification of ILO Convention 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining**. Convention 98 is one of the eight ILO core conventions under the ILO's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which covers: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The ratification of Convention 98 will accelerate the spread of genuine collective bargaining for win-win solutions at Vietnamese workplaces, which is likely to result in better working conditions, higher productivity and shared prosperity, contributing to sustainable development.

MOLISA launched its **Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Agriculture** in November 2018. The SSC is an institutional mechanism for skills governance at the sector level. Given how Viet Nam's economy and labour market are changing rapidly, SSCs will be important to bring together tripartite partners (MOLISA, MARD, VCA, VCCI and VGCL²³) and other relevant stakeholders to improve coordination between emerging skills needs and the skills development response. The new Labour Code ratified in November recognizes the role of sectoral skills bodies for the first time.

22. GSO Labour Force Survey 2019

23. Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA); Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD); Viet Nam Cooperative Alliance (VCA); Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI); and Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL).

The GOVN adopted in February 2019 a **national list of Viet Nam's SDG (VSDG) indicators**, which includes 24 labour indicators representing a medium-term framework for the country's promotion and monitoring of Decent Work. In order to make it possible to collect data to monitor the VSDGs, Viet Nam revised and improved the Labour Force Survey, which is the main channel for SDG-related data collection. The GOVN has also established an SDG implementation plan that is designed to ensure the implementation of the VSDG as well as monitor their progress.

In January 2019 Viet Nam ratified **Convention 88 on Employment Services**. MOLISA subsequently took steps towards the implementation of the Convention. These included a review of existing laws on the subject, as well as a national assessment of operational capacity of the employment service system. In addition, MOLISA and the General Statistics Office (GSO) worked in a coordinated manner to develop and legalize a standard classification of occupations for Viet Nam. A Decision by the Prime Minister on the standard classification of occupations will be issued by mid-2020.

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

2019 showed that Viet Nam's determination to pursue international economic integration can bring significant opportunities to expand decent work to all. Viet Nam has been creating relatively more high-skilled jobs, which are better paid and more likely to come with a formal contract. However, international integration has also brought challenges, such as that of meeting the requirements of international competition, whose burden is carried disproportionately by workers, often through excessive working hours. This requires the GOVN's efforts to undertake further policy reform in social protection, skills development, and employment.

The year concluded with a clear set of priorities for Government work on employment and labour issues. At the end of Viet Nam's 2019 Labour Forum, MOLISA stated that skills development, industrial relations and social protection were three priority areas for their policy work in the immediate future. On many of these priorities, the Labour Code adopted last November has introduced changes and progress that will require policy work in 2020 to make the Labour Code's provisions applicable in the day-to-day life of workers.

However, in order to achieve Viet Nam's socioeconomic goals, the GOVN and social partners will need to work towards a stronger and faster inclusion of disadvantaged groups in the enjoyment of the gains that structural transformation and international integration are bringing to the economy. Half of women and men working in Viet Nam are still engaged in vulnerable employment. Migrant workers are still affected by rights abuse. Women, who play a remarkably high role in Viet Nam's economy while being the primary providers of household care, are still facing significant labour market challenges. The new Labour Code has removed the exclusion of women from certain jobs, includes measures and a timeline to progressively reduce the retirement age gap between women and men. However, a lot more needs to be done for women to be able to attain equal opportunity in Viet Nam. A national discussion on the newest ILO convention, C 190 on Violence and Harassment in The World of Work, would be an excellent next step to undertake in 2020.

In 2020, the UN will continue to strengthen its partnership with GOVN agencies, development partners, the business sector and other relevant entities to support Viet Nam in addressing the above-mentioned challenges.

UN Support to Revised Vietnamese Labour Code, Helping Everyone Gain a Fair Share of Economic Growth

On November 2019, Viet Nam made its latest move to bring its legal framework closer to international standards by adopting a revised Labour Code. This represents significant progress, as it will substantially improve Viet Nam's employment and industrial relations and create a solid foundation for fair international integration and trade.

The revised Labour Code paves the way for the move towards full realization of the 1998 ILO Declaration. It is of great importance because it provides a better legal framework for employment and industrial relations, as well as for equitable and sustainable growth, as Viet Nam makes concerted efforts to become an upper middle-income country. The Labour Code will greatly contribute to the progressive realization of decent work for all working women and men.

"The final adopted text, without question, represents a significant step towards alignment to all the four internationally-recognized fundamental principles. However, gaps and room for improvement remain, as is the case in many countries," said ILO Viet Nam Director, Chang-Hee Lee. Specifically, there are gaps in fully realizing principles of non-discrimination and gender equality at work, while the right to freedom of association, limited in this Labour Code to workers in enterprises, will have to be expanded in the coming years, in tandem with Government efforts for ratification of Convention 87 in 2023.

Revised Labour Code 2019

NEW What's new?

- Workers at enterprises have the right to join or form a representative organization of their choosing
- Definition of sexual harassment in the workplace
- Women are no longer prohibited from doing certain jobs
- Legal protection is extended to employees who do not have a written employment contract

What's been changed?

- Better protection from anti-union discrimination and interference in unions
- Clearer processes and encouragement for collective bargaining
- Better protection against forced labour and debt bondage
- Clearer rules on the employment of minors at different ages

Retirement age to increase in small steps from 2021:

- to age **62** by **2028**
- to age **60** by **2035**

Labour mediation and arbitration:

- Extended coverage and increased professionalism in labour mediation and arbitration

Get the latest updates on labour laws and policies at ilo.org/hanoi
 Funding for the New Industrial Relations Framework project is provided by the United States Department of Labor under cooperative agreement number L-2004-0-9547-0. This material does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government. One hundred per centage of the total cost of the project is program of financed with Federal funds, for a total of 4 million dollars.



OUTCOME 4.1

DECISION-MAKING, RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

By 2021, participatory and transparent decision-making processes and accountable institutions are strengthened, with policies and implementation mechanisms that are responsive to all people, particularly vulnerable groups, women, youth and children

CONTEXT

In 2019, Viet Nam made encouraging progress regarding promotion of good governance and participatory decision-making. The Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) Survey 2019 shows the continuation of improvement in five out of six dimensions (including Local Participation, Transparency in Local Decision Making, Vertical Accountability Towards Citizens, Control of Corruption, and Public Service Delivery). Specifically, consistently over the last ten years, the highest improvements are recorded in the Transparency and Control of Corruption dimensions. Nevertheless, the quality of public administrative procedures remained relatively flat and even dipped in 2019, based on citizens' perception.

The Communist Party of Viet Nam and the GOVN continued to decisively act to achieve the ten per cent reduction target for the civil servant personnel headcount by 2020 across all GOVN agencies as well as lightening the GOVN organizational apparatus by reducing the number of departments and leadership positions. In March 2019, the GOVN started the development of the Overall Programme on Public Administration Reform 2021-2030.

In relation to anti-corruption, the 2018 Anti-Corruption Law came into effect in 2019 and has helped shine a spotlight on persistent corrupt practices. The Law introduced a chapter on anti-corruption in non-state enterprises and social organizations. This chapter encourages the non-state sector to build a healthy and non-corruption business culture, including issuing and implementing codes of conduct and an internal control mechanism. In April 2019, the Prime Minister enacted Directive No. 10/CT-TTg to strengthen measures against petty corruption. Despite the GOVN's efforts, Viet Nam still experiences a high level of corruption and informal payments. Corrupt practices increase the cost of doing business and create an unfair business environment in Viet Nam. According to the Viet Nam Provincial Competitiveness Index, the percentage of companies paying "informal charges" increased from 50 per cent in 2013 to 66 per cent in 2015 and 2016, and slightly decreased to 54.8 per cent in 2018. Out of 137 countries, Viet Nam ranks 69th for Ethics and Corruption and 109th for Irregular Payments and Bribes (World Economic Forum's 2017-2018 report).

Viet Nam's implementation of Chapters II and V of the UN Convention against Corruption (on Prevention and Asset Recovery, respectively) has been recently under review

through the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism (2018-2019). Viet Nam underwent an Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG) Mutual Evaluation in November 2019. The Mutual Evaluation Report will be adopted by the APG in the first half of 2020. The review process identified challenges and made observations for the implementation of the Convention and FATF recommendations, and also identified technical assistance needs for the purpose of improving implementation of these international obligations.

On e-governance, the GOVN issued Resolution No. 17/NQ-CP on key tasks and mandates in e-government development in 2019 and 2020 and towards 2025 and Decision No. 1201/QD-TTg amending a previous decision on establishing the National Steering Committee on E-Government. These important documents underpin concrete missions and tasks to foster development of digital infrastructure and capacity, e-government and digital governance to accelerate economic restructuring, transform public administration and reduce corruption.

KEY RESULTS

In 2019, the UN in Viet Nam made significant contributions to ensuring **participatory and transparent decision-making** practices among key government agencies. In particular, UN agencies were critical in collecting evidence and data and bringing the voices of people into decision-making processes to ensure decisions were evidence-based and responsive to the needs of the people, especially the most vulnerable.

UNDP held over 15 policy dialogues with central and provincial government representatives to inform policy development through direct citizen feedback derived from the results of the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI), which surveyed over 14,000 citizens. In order to inform policy initiatives on youth entrepreneurship and social innovation, UNDP co-hosted the Youth Co:Lab Regional Summit in April 2019 in Hanoi. The summit brought together 500 delegates from 20 countries, including hundreds of young innovators, to exchange ideas, knowledge, and experiences with policy makers. UNDP then hosted four provincially focused dialogues, in Ha Noi, Quang Ninh, Hue and Phu Yen. These dialogues aimed to connect the voices of the youth with local innovation and start-up agencies in order to promote entrepreneurship and social innovation to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

UNFPA supported the General Statistics Office (GSO) to conduct the 2019 Population and Housing Census. The results were used to formulate the next 10-year SEDS. Consequently, UNFPA supported MOJ to implement the Plan of Action on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS), focusing in particular on the development of the Decree on regulations of the electronic database of civil status and online registration of the civil status. UNFPA also provided rights and gender-based evidences and technical inputs and recommendations for the development of the Viet Nam National Strategy on Population till 2030, which was approved in November 2019. The Strategy addresses emerging population issues including population ageing, imbalanced sex ratio at birth, and ways to take advantage of the demographic dividend.

UN Women supported a CSO network and youth working group to develop two shadow reports on gender-based violence (GBV) issues. The shadow reports were sent to UNESCAP and UN Women Headquarters as inputs to the global report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) after 25 years. UN Women supported CEMA to advocate for gender issues in ethnic minority groups in the national review report on the 25-year implementation of BPFA. UN Women engaged with CEMA to advocate for the Master Plan on Social Economic Development to be gender-responsive in relation to ethnic minority groups and remote areas (2021-2030). As a result, the National Assembly approved the development of a stand-alone project on gender equality under the National Target Programme (NTP) on Socio-Economic Development for Ethnic Minority Groups and Remote Areas (2021-2030). The NTP is expected to be approved by the National Assembly in 2020.

Another area where the UN in Viet Nam achieved significant results in 2019 was in providing technical support to **strengthen the accountability of institutions and combat corruption**. Critical to these contributions was the work of UN agencies in connecting international expertise to the relevant national anti-corruption agencies, and in sharing good practice and in conducting baseline assessments of the context in Viet Nam.

The UN focused many efforts in 2019 on the development of essential Codes of Conduct (CoC) and guides to promote the accountability of institutions and businesses. UNODC supported MARD in developing the 'Guide on Inspecting for Procurement Corruption and Fraud in MARD', which is a critical tool for inspectors to detect and address risks and instances of corruption. In 2019, the Viet Nam Court Academy and the Supreme People's Court (SPC) hosted a training for 60 judges and judiciary officers on the Code of Ethics and Conduct for Judges, sharing international standards and best practice on judicial integrity. Another training by UNODC was conducted in 2019 for over 150 legal and government officers on enhanced transparency, prevention of corruption in public procurement, and anti-money laundering. The training aimed to mentor the Financial Intelligence Unit in Viet Nam and build capacity on customer due diligence, maintaining adequate records and reporting suspicious transactions.

UNDP supported VCCI to assess and promote the adoption of codes of conduct and internal control mechanisms by businesses to strengthen compliance with the Anti-Corruption Law. A manual on CoCs and internal control mechanisms in business was developed with support from UNDP, with 152 companies participating in trainings on how to build CoCs and internal control systems.

The UN in Viet Nam continued its work in providing both **technical and capacity building support directly to public institutions** to ensure that they are responsive to vulnerable and other groups. In this context, the UN supported government ministries, public institutions and agencies through trainings, awareness raising activities and by providing critical data and evidence to institutions. These activities aim to support these bodies in ensuring they can deliver essential public services, be informed of important policies and legislation, and make provisions for the protection of vulnerable groups so that no one is left behind.

UNDP provided direct support to the Viet Nam Mine Action Centre (VNMAC) to improve their responsiveness in areas including mine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance by conducting a thorough self-capacity assessment. UNDP also assisted VNMAC and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) in building their capacity so that they can provide Explosive Ordnance Risk Education to 150,000 people and develop a digital database of 75,000 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), including 9,100 UXO victims, to strengthen the GOVN's management of their social assistance programmes.

UNICEF provided direct support to members of the NA and the GOVN on the integration of child-related targets in the Socio-Economic Development Strategy, national finance strategy, and investment of state budget in children and human capital development. UNICEF also made key advocacy and technical contributions to strengthen the normative framework on child rights through the approval of the Law on Education, review of the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control, and amendments to the Law on Persons with Disabilities.

ILO provided technical support for the assessment of the 10-year implementation of the Party Secretariat's Directive No.22 on Industrial Relations and the issuance of the new Directive No.37 on strengthening leadership and instruction in the development of harmonious, stable and advanced industrial relations in Viet Nam's new context.

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

Despite recent improvements, there is still much to be done for Viet Nam to achieve good governance and participatory decision-making that benefits all people, particularly vulnerable groups. Although, the GOVN has reduced the number of administrative procedures, citizens, and businesses in particular, still feel that administrative requirements are unnecessarily burdensome and difficult. Corruption, especially petty corruption, remains prevalent in many forms which are difficult to detect. Participation of vulnerable groups and youth in planning and decision-making processes continues to be limited and their voices are not frequently and easily heard by policy makers. Achieving the target of 35 per cent of elected National Assembly and People's Councils delegates in the 2021 election being women appears to be challenging at the current time.

In 2020, the UN will work jointly through its Governance and Justice Results Group and other innovative mechanisms to support the GOVN in addressing the above challenges.

UN's Inter-Agency Collaboration to Leverage Community Voices

The UN in Viet Nam works under the Leaving No One Behind principle. In 2019, UN agencies collaborated to strengthen everyone's right to be free from discrimination and violence through different advocacy campaigns and events.

The #BetheForceforChange online campaign took place between March 1 (Zero Discrimination Day) and March 8 (International Women's Day), sharing facts and key messages about populations severely affected by discrimination and inequality. These groups include people who use drugs, sex workers, ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ people, and people experiencing domestic violence and forced labour.

The UN helped amplify the voices and support of LGBTIQ people via many platforms, most publicly through two events in 2019. In October, the community-led, national Stronger Together Summit was held for the first time in Ha Noi, with the participation of more than 70 representatives from 50 LGBTIQ organizations. A [statement](#) was developed at the Summit, identifying needs and challenges in achieving equity, health and rights of LGBTIQ people. This document has been a foundation for subsequent action by leading LGBTIQ organizations. On 7 December, the UN team celebrated Diversity Day at the Ha Noi University of Science and Technology. Around 500 visitors, with the majority of them being youth, cheered for teams in the Diversity Ball tournament and learned about diverse sexualities and genders from information booths set up by community-based organizations. Visitors enjoyed performances by former National Vietnamese female soccer players, a Diversity Choir, a drag show and photo exhibitions, which promoted respect for diversity and inclusiveness.

From 25 November to 10 December, the UN jointly celebrated 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, drawing the attention of the public and media to the exposure to violence of children, youth, women, LGBTIQ people, and people living with and most affected by HIV. The campaign promoted a culture of zero-tolerance for sexual violence, a survivor-centered approach and the defiance of social and cultural norms condoning sexual violence. The highlight was the [Humans of Courage series](#), which highlighted portrayals of people from various walks of life who are strongly dedicated to working for and supporting their communities. These portraits tell stories about the families, partnerships, struggles and obstacles of these individuals, explaining how they overcame these challenges and what led them to do the work that they do today. The series covers topics ranging from domestic violence and sexual abuse, living with HIV, living as a transgender person, being part of the LGBTIQ community, dependence on drugs, sex work, living with autism, suffering from depression, to living in poverty.

The UN celebrated International Youth Day, themed "Transforming Education" in Ha Giang, a Northern province of Viet Nam that is populated by a diverse ethnic minority population. The event focused on youth populations in marginalized groups and advocated for education, inclusive society, gender equality, employment training and policy dialogue. Through well-coordinated UN communications materials and a One UN spirit, the event was extensively covered by 24 national media agencies and reached more than 107,000 people on social media.



photo: UN Women Viet Nam/ Nguyen Minh Duc

OUTCOME 4.2

HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION, RULE OF LAW AND STRENGTHENED ACCESS TO JUSTICE

By 2021, the protection of human rights is strengthened with improvements to the justice system, greater adherence to the rule of law, more equitable access to justice, increased gender equality and effective prevention of all forms of discrimination and violence.

CONTEXT

In 2019, the Communist Party of Viet Nam's Political Bureau issued Directive No. 36 on strengthening and increasing the effectiveness of drug control and prevention, which shows a strong commitment to handling the complex issue of drugs which indeed remains a major challenge and emphasizes the importance of drug detoxification and rehabilitation centres. This Directive has led to draft amendments of the Law on the Handling of Administrative Violations (LHAV), which would negatively impact access to voluntary community-based drug dependence treatment for people who use/inject drugs. The issuance of this new Directive also creates coherence challenges between different pieces of actual or prospective legislation. One example is the legalization of the rights of people who inject drugs. Their access to community-based Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST), which draft amendments to the Law on HIV are intended to bring about, is made more difficult by draft amendments to the LHAV.

In 2019, Viet Nam continued its international economic integration by ratifying the EU-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement. New market-opening trade agreements like the EVFTA and Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership can enhance the shared benefits of trade by eliminating barriers to expanded international commerce and deepening economic cooperation between Viet Nam and partners. In this new context, international commercial disputes increase not only in numbers but also complexity and diversity. Social, labour and environmental protections can be undermined in efforts to take advantage of access to new markets, and judges have limited experience in handling these new types of disputes. Both the weakness of dispute resolution mechanisms and issues related to social and environmental sustainability in the private sector in Viet Nam act as a deterrent for investment and business in Viet Nam.

In terms of international human rights reporting, Viet Nam was reviewed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and underwent the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UN supported the review processes with UNDP organizing mock sessions for government delegations and providing technical advice on follow-up.

The authorities increasingly recognised violence, sexual abuse and trafficking of boys and girls as major challenges. In 2019, as part of the GOVN's measures to tackle the issue, the National Assembly conducted a supreme oversight on child sexual abuse and violence in Viet Nam. The draft report provides concrete action points to strengthen the protection

of boys and girls from all forms of violence, especially sexual abuse, and will be presented in the forthcoming session of the National Assembly in May-June 2020.

KEY RESULTS

2019 was an important year for the UN in Viet Nam in terms of supporting Viet Nam's review under **human rights reporting mechanisms**. The One UN approach was successfully adopted in ensuring UN effective support to the GOVN, development partners and civil society, in particular for Viet Nam's review under the third cycle of the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**, which took place in January 2019. UN agencies supported civil society actors in providing inputs to the UPR Stakeholder report, which received positive feedback from human rights experts, and also through an analysis of human rights recommendations and training on developing indicators to monitor implementation of the UPR recommendations. Support was also provided to MOFA in the form of a mock UPR session, which was organized by UNDP.

In 2019, UNDP provided support to Viet Nam in aligning its laws and policies with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) by conducting a study on the right of access to justice for women, and by providing a mock session for MOJ ahead the ICCPR review. Following the ICCPR review, the UN brought a UN expert to Viet Nam to help the Government navigate the ICCPR's follow-up procedure. The expert's visit aimed to assist the GOVN in identifying practical steps it can take to implement ICCPR recommendations.

In pursuing a human rights-based approach to development efforts in Viet Nam, as well as ensuring that no one is left behind, the UN engaged in **advocacy for the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups through legislative and policy reform**. The UN, including through the Human Rights Thematic Group, was particularly effective when working jointly across agencies on important issues spanning their respective mandates, and in bringing the experiences and insights of vulnerable groups to legislative and policy consultations.

UNAIDS updated National Assembly members on issues faced by people living with HIV and key populations, HIV policies and law implementation. On behalf of the UN Thematic Group on HIV, UNAIDS also called for further fast tracking the implementation of the HIV Political Declaration

to meet national targets, advocated for the amendment of the HIV Law and for inclusive Social Health Insurance and with UN WOMEN, for improved transgender health and rights and for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to be addressed. Advocacy and guidance were also provided to reduce HIV stigma and discrimination, and to promote human rights and public-health informed interventions for people who use drugs and access to HIV services in prisons. On transgender health and rights, the UN Thematic group on Human Rights led by UNDP with support from the RC Office, UN WOMEN and UNAIDS conducted joint UN advocacy for legal recognition through the draft Gender Affirmation Law, with comments on the draft Law shared with the GOVN. UNAIDS also provided key technical guidance and advocacy on the amendment of the HIV Law with UN joint comments on the proposed Law submitted to the GOVN.

UNDP partnered with the Viet Nam Blind Association to host a consultation for government agencies, to explore ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty and facilitate access to published works for persons who are blind. UNDP organized training for Intellectual Property lawyers and a workshop to develop a Roadmap for accession to the treaty. As a result, the Government assigned responsibility to the Copyright Office to lead this process.

UNICEF provided direct support to members of the National Assembly and the GOVN on the integration of child-related targets in the next SEDS, national finance strategy, programme of action for children, and investment of state budget in children and human capital development. UNICEF also made key advocacy and technical contributions to strengthen the normative framework on child rights through the approval of the Law on Education, the amendment of the Labour Code, National Action Plan on Preventing Violence and Abuse of Children, review of the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control, and amendments of the Law on Persons with Disabilities.

UNODC delivered a number of activities in 2019 focused on

the development of the Law on Drug Prevention and Control. UNODC facilitated consultations with relevant stakeholders to discuss reforms and, together with UNAIDS, advocated to move away from compulsory drug treatment centres to the provision of accessible, voluntary, evidence-based and comprehensive drug dependence treatment.

In 2019, UNODC and UNFPA worked towards **ending gender-based violence** (GBV) in Viet Nam. The work of the UN in this area was particularly effective given the dual support given to building the capacity of key government and law enforcement agencies as well as direct support to victims and the organizations that support victims of GBV.

UN Women strengthened the capacity of justice officials in a rights-based, survivor-centred approach to handle cases of violence against women. UN Women partnered with MOJ in reviewing legislation gaps in prevention and response to violence against women, which contributed to the revision of Decree 167/2013 on sanctioning administrative violations in the field of security and order. Specific acts of sexual harassment were added to the Decree as being subject to sanctions, and the level of sanctions for these acts was raised. UN Women collaborated with MOFA to enhance the capacity of foreign service officials, to better prepare them to address violence against women, especially against women migrant workers, during their assignments abroad.

UNODC helped to build the capacity of law enforcement and criminal justice officials to meet the needs of survivors of gender-based violence, in particular for women and girls, through a series of training workshops. In 2019, with technical support from UNFPA, UNODC conducted the Independent Review of the 10 year implementation of the Gender Equality Law, the quantitative study of the second national survey on Violence against Women and Girls, and an assessment of gender-based violence against sex workers. The final reports will provide technical recommendations for the revision of key legislative and policy documents related to ending gender-based violence in Viet Nam. UNFPA also supported

There were domestic violence cases stemming from the deeply-rooted patriarchal mindset that we should not let them affect the children or the safety of the wives. If their effort to live together does not result in happiness, I will help them to file a lawsuit. I will only report honestly what I achieve, no more, no less.

Ms Phan Thị Huệ
Grassroots mediator in Sóc Trăng

the establishment of a support centre for GBV survivors in Quang Ninh province, providing essential services for GBV victims.

UNICEF cooperated closely with MOLISA, resulting in the approval of the National Action Plan on Violence against Children and strengthened provisions on preventing child labour and protection of minor workers in the new Labour Code. In addition, five training programmes on child protection were developed and training was delivered to 100 welfare managers.

A key focus for many UN agencies in 2019 was on **justice reform** and efforts to **strengthen the rule of law**. The UN demonstrated a strong commitment to coordination, by working across agencies in justice reform, and also in capacity building for key government, law enforcement and judicial authorities in supporting the GOVN in their push for reform of the justice sector.

At the request of the Supreme People's Court (SPC), UNODC and UNICEF provided inputs on the Resolution of the Judges Council of SPC, guiding the application of the provisions on sexual offences against children. The Resolution is instrumental in filling critical gaps on sexual abuse in the Penal Code, and protecting the rights of sexual abuse survivors. Furthermore, UNODC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Security and the Supreme People's Procuracy, supported the development of toolkits for police and prosecutorial officers addressing child sexual abuse.

UNDP worked closely with SPC, the Viet Nam Bar Federation, MOJ and the Central Committee of Internal Affairs to develop codes of conduct and ethics for judges and lawyers. To enhance integrity in the judiciary, 272 judges were trained on the new Code of Ethics and Conduct, judgment writing and application skills. UNDP also conducted with MOJ, SPC and the Vietnam Lawyers Association several surveys on legal needs, legal dissemination, legal aid, grassroots mediation, and court-annexed mediation.

UNICEF continued to support the strengthening of child justice institutions and their capacity, especially the roll-out of the Family and Juvenile Court to 36 provinces. UNICEF also delivered a training programme on child justice for the Court Academy and conducted an online training on child sexual abuse for 15,000 judges and court officials across the country. UNICEF and MOJ jointly launched a Juvenile Justice Situation Analysis, providing strategic recommendations for continued child justice reforms.

In the area of trafficking in persons and border patrols, through an extensive series of trainings and other support, UNODC helped strengthen the capacity of relevant agencies, including police, prosecutors, judges, Border Liaison Offices, and Port Control Units. These interventions were critical in identifying risks related to human trafficking by helping to detect and prevent cases of human trafficking. They also helped to combat transnational crime in the context of port authorities, improving their profiling capacities to identify high-risk containers while facilitating legal trade.

The UN in Viet Nam made key contributions to **promoting responsible business practice for the protection of human rights** in 2019. The UN has helped bridge the gap between the private sector and policy makers in directly collecting experiences and practices from businesses on protecting human rights and making important contributions toward sustainable development.

UNICEF collaborated with VCCI to host a series of consultations and a good practice forum, with over 350 representatives from across sectors participating to explore strengthening protection for child rights in the context of business activity. UNICEF also provided technical inputs to VCCI on children's rights as part of the Corporate Sustainability Index (CSI) and developed a practical guide on state obligations regarding the impact of business operations on children's rights in 2019.

UNDP partnered with VCCI, the Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Associations and the Centre for Social Initiatives Promotion to deliver the 2019 Blue Swallows programme. Over 160 businesses were recognized with awards for their contributions to sustainable development, in an effort to share lessons on good practice and encourage businesses to integrate sustainability in their operations.

Finally, on ensuring access to legal aid, UNDP developed a leaflet providing easy-to-understand information on the right to claim state compensation, as well as when and how to claim it. 6,000 copies of the leaflet were distributed to the 64 poorest and remote districts of 20 provinces for onward distribution to communes and villages.

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

Looking ahead, challenges exist regarding (i) full implementation, impartial enforcement, and robust monitoring of human right treaties, laws and policies; (ii) equal access to justice and support services, particularly for women, young people and vulnerable groups; (iii) comprehensive and effective multisectoral prevention and response mechanisms to address exploitation and all forms of violence and harmful practices against women, girls and boys, and disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; and (iv) capable and accountable justice institutions. The UN will continue to work jointly with the GOVN and other stakeholders in 2020 to address these challenges.



Frontline officers in the border crossings practicing simulation exercises of investigation in the fight against transnational organized crime.
Photo: UNODC

Joint UN Efforts under the EU JULE to Fight Gender-based Violence

Gender Equality lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite Viet Nam's strong commitments to gender equality, numerous challenges remain unaddressed, especially in tackling gender-based violence²⁴. UNDP and UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), supported numerous interventions on tackling GBV as part of the EU Justice and Legal Empowerment Programme (EU JULE) funded by the European Union, UNDP and UNICEF.

The Policy Dialogue *"Anti-Discrimination against Women and Prevention of Gender-Based Violence"* was organized in 2019 to examine current situations, laws, and policies, and agree on the main priorities for action for Vietnamese agencies, EU JULE and other partners. Through the Policy Dialogue, a cross-sectoral and multi-ministerial platform focusing specifically on GBV was created in Viet Nam, gathering more than 150 participants from all relevant GOVN ministries/agencies (such as MOJ, MPS, MOLISA, Supreme People's Court, Supreme People's Procuracy. Many recommendations were presented and discussed, focusing on (1) law reforms to ensure that all forms of violence against women, girls and boys are criminalized, (2) awareness raising and legal literacy to combat the stigma and to ensure that all women and children know their rights, (3) legal aid to support them in protecting their rights, and (4) training of all justice providers. As a result, it was agreed that the development of gender-sensitive training materials for justice actors, including grassroots mediators, is necessary and should be implemented. Also, under EU-JULE, field surveys in 18 provinces on awareness and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, including survivors of GBV, were organized. Four reports were produced from the surveys' results to increase legal awareness of special needs, to identify the legal aid needs of vulnerable groups, and to emphasize grassroots mediation with a focus on how to

prevent women from being pressured into mediation that might deprive them of formal judicial resolutions.

In 2019, the EU-JULE project was instrumental in influencing the development and approval of SPC's Judicial Resolution on sexual crimes and adjudication of sexual cases involving children under 18 years. The Resolution provides detailed definitions of many forms of sexual abuse and introduces protection measures to make adjudication procedures more sensitive and responsive to the needs of child survivors of sexual abuse. These measures mitigate trauma for children and improve the quality and accuracy of a child's testimony for better outcomes and remedies.

"This Judicial Resolution is crucial in prevention of child sexual abuse and protection of child survivors and their best interests", said Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa, Chairperson of the Viet Nam Association on Protection of Children's Rights.

An online seminar on child- and gender-sensitive judicial skills and knowledge was also organized in 2019 and broadcasted to around 15,000 judges and court officers nationwide. In addition, a foundational training programme was completed by the Court Academy to equip judges presiding over cases involving children, including survivors of GBV, with essential judicial skills and knowledge on child and gender-sensitive justice. The UN trained 240 judges on legal drafting skills to help ensure their judgments are just and fair, which contributes to improving the national judicial system of Viet Nam.

"Judges participating in this training were equipped with essential knowledge on child justice and, more importantly, were inspired and encouraged to change mindset and behaviours to handle cases involving children more effectively," said SPC Deputy Chief Justice Nguyen Tri Tue.

24. General Statistics Office (2010). *"Keeping silent is dying". Results from the National Study on Domestic Violence Against Women in Vietnam'* Ha Noi, Viet Nam: GSO



UN annual Legal Forum in 2020 which reviewed and assessed EU JULE results in 2019
Photo: UNDP Viet Nam





International Commitments, National Progress

In Viet Nam, as in many other countries, there is a gap between what the GOVN has committed to under international human rights treaties and the GOVN's ability to guarantee that all people in Viet Nam are able to fully enjoy those rights. 2019 offered a number of opportunities for Viet Nam to take stock, to receive concrete, expert recommendations and to work closely with UN agencies and other stakeholders to narrow that gap. In all these areas, constructive dialogue between the GOVN, the UN, CSOs and the most vulnerable groups in society play an important role.

The UN supported the GOVN, CSOs and other stakeholders in advance of Viet Nam's review by the Committee Against Torture and the Human Rights Committee (HRCtte), the bodies responsible for monitoring Viet Nam's compliance with the [Convention against Torture](#) and the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), respectively. This assistance meant that the GOVN and others had the knowledge to engage meaningfully with these bodies and obtain clear recommendations on pressing human rights issues in the country, as well as measures that could improve the situation on the ground. Since the reviews, the UN in Viet Nam has assisted the GOVN in implementing the recommendations (available [here](#) and [here](#)). For example, to guide Viet Nam through the process that the HRCtte uses to follow up on its 'Concluding Observations', the UN brought an expert from the HRCtte to Viet Nam to help the GOVN identify practical steps it can take, and highlighted the key role played by civil

society in the process. "Civil society plays an important role in implementing the ICCPR and the Concluding Observations by the Human Rights Committee, including in terms of trainings and awareness-raising," said Ms. Sarah Cleveland, former member of the Human Rights Committee.

In early 2019, the UN also supported Viet Nam as it underwent its Universal Periodic Review (UPR), by hosting a mock review for MOFA and providing capacity building and technical guidance for CSOs to engage effectively with the mechanism. "The UPR brought civil society in Viet Nam a unique opportunity to work together and to engage with a wide range of stakeholders including our fellow civil society actors, the government and countries which are interested in human rights progress along the development of our country. Support from the UN Country team in Viet Nam has proven the essential role of the UN on the ground to facilitate dialogues and support vulnerable groups to participate meaningfully in international processes to defend our rights." Participant, Capacity Building Training on Effectively Engaging with the UPR Mechanism.

Through these activities, all UN agencies are helping Viet Nam to map a path towards a society in which everyone can better enjoy all their human rights and no one is left behind.



CHAPTER 3

2019 OPERATING-AS-ONE RESULTS

- Green One UN House
- Common Service
- One Leader
- One Set of Management Practices
- Communicating as One

GREEN ONE UN HOUSE

The award-winning Green One UN House (GOUNH) continues to serve as a model for sustainable construction in Viet Nam and demonstrates how innovative design and sustainable management practices can lay the foundations for meeting the SDGs. The GOUNH environmental responsibilities have been managed in a systematic manner as confirmed by the ISO 14001-2015 certification, re-validated in 2019 by the UK Branch of the Bureau Veritas Certification Holding SAS.

In 2019, the UNCT also delivered more effective GOUNH joint management through the GOUNH Management Board with support from its Executive Committee, the Operations Management Team, and the Common Services Unit (CSU). The GOUNH in Viet Nam, because of its advances in consolidating back office operations, implementing Business Operation Strategy and Delivering as One agenda, was chosen to participate in two strategic assessments in 2019. The first was the UNSDG Business Innovations Project team mission on Common Back Office Cost-Benefit Analysis, and the second was the Joint Inspection Unit review “United Nations Common Premises: current practices and future requirements”.

The GOUNH reached almost full occupancy rate with ILO joining the GOUNH in December 2019. It now has all 16 but one of the UN agencies resident in the Country working together in the same premises. As directed by the GOUNH Management Board, approximately 5 per cent of desks were kept as floating desks for existing agencies to allow more flexibility and respond to their needs. Another important aspect to highlight is that the increase in the level of occupancy to nearly 100 per cent also brought savings of approximately 19 per cent on the per-desk cost paid by the Agencies when comparing 2019 and 2018 budget figures.

COMMON SERVICES

The GOUNH offers the first-ever integration of a CSU, providing harmonized IT, facility management, protocol and premises security services to all GOUNH-based UN agencies. This has led to reduced transaction costs for the UN through reduced travel between UN offices across Ha Noi, better inter-agency coordination, and enhanced synergies, as well as reduced energy and water consumption and waste, amongst other benefits. The GOUNH Management Board (GMB) Executive Committee, under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, is the main governance mechanism responsible for the overall management of the GOUNH and Common Services. By applying innovative measures to ensure a cost effective and green GOUNH operation, the UN achieved remarkable results which include, but are not limited to, an average satisfaction rating by staff of 4.95/5 for all services provided in GOUNH in 2019.

ONE LEADER

The One UN/DaO initiative in Viet Nam is implemented under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator (the One Leader), leading the work together with the UNCT.

In 2019, the One Leader led the UN in Viet Nam to quickly complete mandatory reform steps as well as to adapt the UNCT’s work and coordination structure in response to the new UNDS reform environment. These include the Resident Coordinator delinking from UNDP; getting accreditation and legal status for both the Resident Coordinator and his office (RCO) from GOVN; the reinforcement of RCO staff; the identification of prioritized future joint actions; streamlining

the UN coordination architecture; the organization of briefing sessions to UN staff, the GOVN, and development partners; as well as the enhancement of joint proposals, joint resource mobilization, and joint programmes/programming.

Noticeably, under the One Leader mechanism, the UN achieved significant results in cross-cutting tasks which required common messages and high-level coordination across UN agencies. For example, the Resident Coordinator, through his co-chair role of the Development Partners Group (DPG), convened the UN and other development partners to prepare seven position papers as inputs to Viet Nam’s SEDS and SEDP, and to provide joint recommendations to the GOVN’s ODA legal framework which led to the GOVN’s development of a new decree on ODA management which was to be issued in early 2020. Through the Informal Ambassador Group on Gender Policy (IAGGP), the UN successfully advocated for gender-equality-related improvements in the revised Labour Code.

The UN’s support to Viet Nam in fulfilling its responsibility in global peace-keeping and peace building is another such example, especially when Viet Nam becomes a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2020-2021 term and the Chair of ASEAN in 2020. The UN also assists the country in enhancing its engagement in South-South Cooperation. More specifically, the UN, per GOVN request, has helped mobilize support from the UN and development partners in Viet Nam to co-host a Global Event on Women, Peace and Security in the second half of 2020 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of UNSC Resolution 1325, the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, and to accelerate actions to increase women’s participation in peacebuilding. Facilitated by the RCO and UNDP, the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and MOFA have been engaged in planning an Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on South South Cooperation in 2020. The GOVN also expressed its support and endorsement for RCO, UNDP and UNOSSC to share Viet Nam’s development experience in the context of the Doi Moi economic renewal reforms through UNOSSC’s publications, both in terms of successes and challenges, with other countries in the global south.

ONE SET OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The Business Operating Strategy (2018-2021), adopted by the UNCT, continued to be actively implemented under OMT leadership for all six BOS outcomes including common procurement, common human resources, common finance, common ICT, common logistics, and common premises. The 2019 BOS joint work plan was implemented and monitored by UN agencies, the Common Services Unit, and other interagency working groups.

In terms of Common Procurement, the UN established two long-term agreements (LTAs) for travel, two LTAs for event organizing services and two LTAs for translation and interpretation for all UN Agencies’ common usage. The joint use of these newly contracted LTAs for travel led to an estimated 80 per cent time saving. In addition, 58 events organized through two travel LTAs were valued at USD296,375 – an estimated cost saving of USD11,547, and 247 translation/interpretation cases resulted in an estimated savings of USD38,761.

Staff welfare and wellbeing received considerable attention as part of Common Human Resources. Health-related promotion sessions and First AID training courses were organized for all UN personnel. A list of qualified local psychologists was established and shared with staff for

their reference and usage. Interim and comprehensive salary surveys were completed and initiated, respectively, as part of the normative HR activities on staff benefits and entitlements. Changes and updates in agencies' HR policies were circulated within the OMT to facilitate mutual recognition, where possible.

In terms of Common Finance, the UN Finance Group negotiated successfully and obtained approval from the State Bank of Viet Nam to open a Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) Transactions Office inside the GOUNH.

Regarding Common Premises, the UN in Viet Nam continued to pursue energy efficiency measures to maintain the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System, which was audited and revalidated. Other notable achievements in 2019 include: (i) the GOUNH Solar Panel System generation of 88,093 KWh electricity energy; (ii) the replacement of the L5 lighting tubes in the Common Service area by LED tubes, resulting in a reduction of more than 50 per cent of energy consumption for this area and significantly increased lighting quality; (iii) the regrouping of lighting in lift lobbies, tunnel and entry building into smaller groups and switching some off to save energy; (iv) the improvement of air quality inside the Building through the installation of higher quality air filters in the ventilation system; and (v) the use of grey water output from the Waste Water Treatment Plant to irrigate the garden, resulting in a savings of 650 m3 of clean water. Additionally, the CSU maintained the GOUNH Air Quality Indexes (AQIs) at good levels, ceased the GOUNH canteen practice of providing plastic water bottles and straws, and required cleaning services providers to use biodegradable waste bags.

On Common Logistics, the CSU supported hundreds of internal UN staff meetings and about 89 large conferences in the GOUNH with smooth and professional coordination among internal teams and outsourced suppliers for catering and conference supplies. Feedback was positive from clients, with the Service Desk achieving a satisfaction rating of 4.95 out of 5 for all services provided. The CSU also received 1072 requests for Protocol Services from UN agencies and the quality of responses received an overall satisfaction rating of 4.94 out of 5.

In 2019, the UN continued to apply the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT), through which all the Micro Assessments undertaken for the new implementing partners under the ongoing program/project cycle were completed in an adequate and timely manner by the participating agencies, including UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA. Mazars Viet Nam has been selected by UNDP for the LTA for the HACT Audit, and the selection criteria of this LTA was sufficiently stringent to allow for jointly usage by other UN agencies, as necessary.

The need for the EU-UN Cost Norms revision will possibly be raised in upcoming reviews, given the light fluctuation of the 2019 Viet Nam CPI (Consumer Price Index) in the most recent reporting period (October 2019) and the confirmation from both the EU and the UN sides of the ongoing appropriateness of the 2017 EU-UN Cost Norm. The revision of Harmonized Programmes and Project Management Guidance (HPPMG) will be conducted upon the GOVN issuance of a new ODA Management Decree, expected in early 2020.

COMMUNICATING AS ONE

Clear, strong and coordinated communication through One Voice is a crucial and fundamental principle that guides the

UN Communications Group (UNCG) in Viet Nam. As one communications channel, the UN Development System Reform introduced new branding of the RCOs and UNCT, including logos and website. In 2019, Viet Nam was in the first 25 of 129 UNCT-present countries globally to launch a new website adopting the revised branding. The UN in Viet Nam became the first to launch their website – fit for diverse audiences including general public, development partners, donors and UN staff – in two languages: English and Vietnamese. The new [UN in Viet Nam website](#) was launched on UN Day (24 October) with SDG-focused branding and features highlighting One UN impacts and results. The website also integrates the UN INFO database, a planning and reporting hub for UN entities, capturing the scope of work and progress of ongoing UN projects and programmes in the country.

In supporting the UNCT on the implementation of OSP 2017-2021 and advocacy on SDGs in 2019, the UNCG put a focus on youth empowerment and a safe and clean environment as two main themes. These foci were in addition to the thematic support for the joint celebration of International Youth Day, Human Rights Day, 16 Days of Activism, World AIDS Day, International Volunteers Day, Zero Discrimination Day, International Women's Day, and more.

The UNCG's specific achievements in these events includes but is not limited to the following highlights: (i) the UN's International Youth Day celebration themed "Transforming Education" was extensively covered by 24 national media agencies and reached more than 107,000 people on social media; (ii) the Diversity Day organized by the UN to promote diversity and inclusiveness in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression reached more than 60,000 people on Facebook; and (iii) the UN "Humans of Courage" series during 16 Days of Activism and World AIDS Day, illustrating women and men who overcame life challenges, reached 750,000 people on social media, 53 million views on Tik Tok and was included in 261 media clippings.

The UNCG also organized a second clean-up activity on UN Day where UN Staff and students of Viet Nam's Diplomatic Academy cleaned the Giang Vo lake area to promote a clean and safe environment and raise awareness of environmental issues in Viet Nam. Finally, a mini film festival was organized within the UN, screening documentary films on climate change and climate refugees.



Photo: UN in Viet Nam / Sami Jun



CHAPTER 4

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

- Joint Resource Mobilization
- 2019 Budget and Spending
- UN Viet Nam SDG Fund

JOINT RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

In 2019, the UN Country Team in Viet Nam continued to emphasize joint resource mobilization for OSP implementation and followed the Resident Coordinator's strategic direction to move beyond joint programming towards joint programmes, which are more effective and coherent but also more attractive for resource mobilization from regional and global funding sources.

In response to the Joint SDG Fund's 2019 call for proposals, four UN agencies (ILO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA), in cooperation with MOLISA, submitted a Joint Programme proposal on "Accelerating Viet Nam's transition toward inclusive and integrated social protection." The proposal was one of 30-40 successful ones out of 114 proposals worldwide to be awarded a grant of USD 2 million for two years (2020-2021). The Joint Programme will support Viet Nam in developing an integrated, multi-tiered social protection system using the life-cycle approach, including an extended social care services system and an innovative e-service delivery system.

In 2019, a new partnership with Vietjet was discussed which should mature in 2020, leading to Vietjet providing USD600,000 to implement the UNESCO-UNIDO-UNHABITAT Joint Programme on "Mobilizing Cultural Dynamics and Youth Participation for Ha Noi Creative Capital." The Vietjet Fund for Vietnam's Heritage and Innovation, which is planned to be established under this partnership, is envisaged as a platform to encourage additional and long-term collaboration between the UN in Viet Nam, SOVICO (Vietjet's parent cooperation) and other national partners (especially youth and social innovators) to preserve and promote Vietnam's cultural heritage and sustainable tourism.

Other joint resource mobilization efforts include UNESCO and UNICEF's support to the GOVN in securing a grant of USD467,000 from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for 2019-2021 to develop a national education development plan. UNDP and WHO received USD636,000 from a multi-partner consortium (including HR Wallingford, UNDP, WHO, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Met Office and Oxford Policy Management in the UK, and the GOVN) to implement the Joint Programme "Dengue Model forecasting Satellite-based System" (D-MOSS). UN Women, FAO, and UNICEF jointly mobilized USD534,000 from EU-ECHO to implement phase two of the Joint Programme on scaling up Forecast based Financing/ Early Warning Early Action (FbF/EWEA) and Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP).

2019 BUDGET AND SPENDING

In total, the UN in Viet Nam was able to mobilize approximately USD68.5 million, equivalent to 86.3 per cent of the total planned budget for 2019 of about USD79.3 million, which is significantly lower than the mobilized amount of each of the last two years of 2017 and 2018. The accumulated 3-year mobilization accounted for roughly 63.6 per cent of the OSP's total five-year estimated budget of USD423 million, showing that the UN and the GOVN are still on track in terms of planned resource mobilization for OSP 2017-2021 implementation.

As shown in the table (see below table), the largest share of the UN budget in 2019 went to Outcome 2.1 on low-carbon, climate and disaster resilient development (22.9 per cent), Outcome 1.2 on equity in health (22.4 per cent), and Outcome 4.2 on human rights protection and justice (19.9 per cent). The three-year trend since 2017 (see below chart) shows that the UN consistently put a high level of investment into equity in health and constantly increased its budget for human rights protection and justice. Nevertheless, the work on poverty reduction, social protection, education, economic growth, and an inclusive labour market got a decreasing and small budget due to difficulties in resource mobilization. For other areas, the budget fluctuated greatly over the last three years.

Regarding expenditure, by the end of 2019, UN agencies delivered USD61 million, resulting in a disbursement of 89.1 per cent against the total available budget of USD68.5 million, a relatively high rate compared with earlier years.

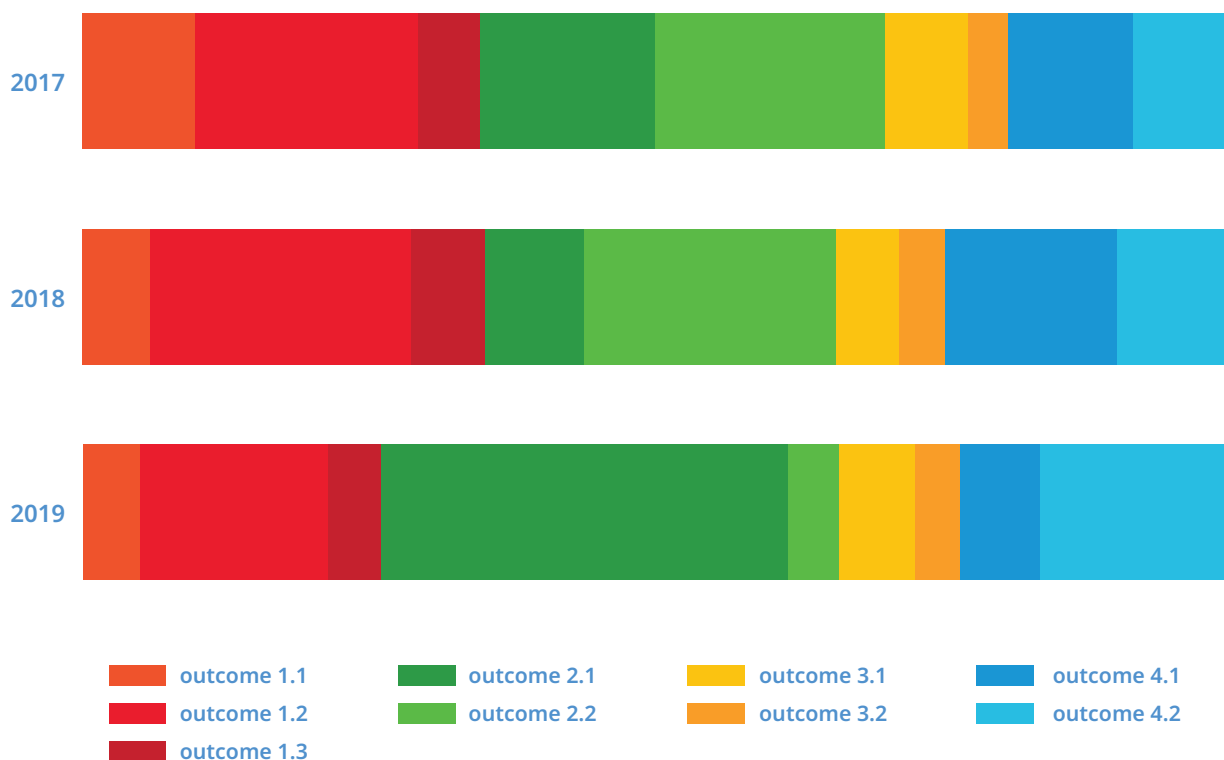
UN VIET NAM SDG FUND

The UN Viet Nam SDG Fund (SDGF) was established at the end of 2018, based on the rebranding of the One Plan Fund (OPF) and as the result of the UN in Viet Nam's consultation with the GOVN and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO). This aims to provide a local pooled fund, mirroring global efforts on the Joint SDG Fund, to better support SDG acceleration and OSP implementation. In 2019, MPTFO transferred USD120,904 (of the total USD252,776 left over from OPF) to SDGF for the Resident Coordinator Office's operation. An expense of USD54,197 was recorded in 2019 to mainly cover the salaries of RCO staff (during the RCO transition period under UNDS reform) who provided coordination assistance to the UNCT and different substantive inter-agency groups (including Results Groups) supporting Viet Nam's SDG implementation and acceleration.

OSP 2019 Budget (in USD)²⁵

Focus Area	Outcomes	Total Required	Available	Gap	Expenditure
FA1	Outcome 1.1	4,369,697	3,814,451	555,246	2,992,936.81
	Outcome 1.2	23,790,253	15,307,498	8,482,755	15,307,498.00
	Outcome 1.3	4,076,710	3,597,986	478,724	1,762,377.00
FA2	Outcome 2.1	15,883,515	15,695,452	188,063	13,375,633.36
	Outcome 2.2	3,316,148	3,316,148	0	2,710,889.76
FA3	Outcome 3.1	5,767,494	5,237,494	530,000	3,496,254.00
	Outcome 3.2	2,760,639	2,760,639	0	2,662,952.00
FA4	Outcome 4.1	5,753,175	5,134,730	618,445	5,134,729.84
	Outcome 4.2	13,599,956	13,599,956	0	13,599,956
Total		79,317,587	68,464,354	10,853,233	61,043,227

UN Available Budget in 2017, 2018 and 2019 by Outcome (percentage)



25. This does not include IFAD loans of USD11 million and USD8 million disbursement



CHAPTER 5

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE UN SYSTEM IN VIET NAM

- challenges and Lessons Learnt
- Opportunities for 2020

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

2020 will be the third year of the One Strategic Plan (OSP) 2017-2021's full implementation at the time when the UNCT in Viet Nam has built a strong organization and internal delivery architecture. The UN in Viet Nam will also enjoy the UNDS reform's benefits given its strong Delivering as One foundation in addition to the potential opportunities and the GOVN's higher expectation and evaluation of the UN's engagement and contribution under UNDS Reform. Nevertheless, there are challenges which need the UNCT's joint efforts to overcome.

Efficient transition to new UN structure and working modality

Although UNDS reform implementation started on January 1st, 2019, the UNCT/RC spent a considerable part of the first year identifying a relevant UNCT structure and working modality, recruiting RCO staff and establishing legal formalities, preparing different reform tools (e.g. UN Info database, UNCT website) and communicating the reform with the GOVN and different partners. 2020 will be the year when the UNCT will operationalize the newly established systems and bring the UNDS reform into real operation. Given the UNDS reform's obvious intended benefit which is to have a more harmonized and efficient UN system at the country level to deliver on the SDGs and 2030 Agenda, the implementation of UNDS reform will still require a learning-by-doing approach where the UNCT will need to not only follow Headquarters guidance but also develop innovative and relevant solutions to Viet Nam's context, and at the same time identify bottlenecks and challenges as feedback to Headquarters for improving UNDS reform design and implementation. 2020 will also require the UNCT to have more interactions and contributions regarding the UN reform at regional level, which includes cooperation with other regional countries in identifying cross-border issues for joint interventions and providing inputs and opinions for the finalization of the UN regional coordination structure.

While the delinking of the RC function from UNDP has facilitated the RC's full dedication to leadership of high level policy and strategy as well as coordinating UN development joint work, fulfilling his role as a UN thought leader and strategic advisor to the country over a wide range of development issues requires much greater substantive support from each of the UN agencies, Results and Thematic Groups, other inter-agency groups, and the RCO. This, in its turn, requires stronger cooperation and collaboration of the UN agencies and these groups.

New procedures, mechanisms, and tools (e.g. UN Info, UNSDCF guidance and different guidance on financing, reporting, joint programmes) have been and will be introduced under UNDS reform, which obviously require time to implement. This requires all UN entities' greater investment in terms of time and resources as well as change in their own procedures, mechanisms, and tools (e.g. at agencies' Headquarters level) for harmonization with the UNDS ones.

2020 will be more challenging for the UNCT in Viet Nam since we are going to conduct the OSP final evaluation

and also start preparing for the development of the next Common Country Analysis (CCA) and new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), which will require the application of new methodologies and tools with more demanding timelines.

More sustainable resource mobilization

Although in general the UN in Viet Nam has been doing well in terms of resource mobilization so far, fund raising has been posing a great challenge for all UN agencies in Viet Nam. The regular core budget now counts for only about 20 per cent of the total UN budget while some UN agencies have been operating based only on non-core budgets. A number of agencies have also experienced staff cuts due to a lack of financial resources.

At the same time, grant ODA in Viet Nam has been on a sharply decreasing trend. Bilateral resources have become rarer. The UN system has been actively looking for funds from global and regional sources which more and more require a joint approach for joint programme proposals.

Nevertheless, Viet Nam's current ODA framework continues to present many barriers for project and programme appraisal, approval, disbursement, and access to global and regional funds. As mentioned earlier, the UN over the last year proactively worked with development partners through the DPG and the IAGDC (both co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator) to jointly raise with the GOVN issues related to ODA regulation, including, among others, delayed appraisal and approval, low disbursement, lack of a fast-track mechanism for emergency response, and lack of an appropriate mechanism to facilitate access to global funds. The GOVN developed a new ODA-management decree, Decree 46/2020/ND-CP, partly as a result of the UN and development partners' advocacy which was to become effective in 2020 and incorporates some of the UN's major recommendations. The UN will continue working with the GOVN to address any remaining issues in the new Decree which may prevent the UN's fund disbursement and mobilization.

Prioritization and effective delivery of UN joint interventions

The UN in Viet Nam includes more than 20 resident and non-resident agencies with a wide range of agency-specific working areas and priorities. Although working under the One UN umbrella, UN agencies still tend to focus more on their own agenda with their own mandates. It was agreed among the agencies at the October 2019 UN Country Team Retreat that it is crucial and urgent for the UN to identify 3-5 priorities for joint UN intervention and to make efforts to deliver those at strategic level each year, while the UN is still accountable for delivering the OSP's expected results. As a result of the UN Country Team's discussion, support for SDG mainstreaming into the next SEDS and SEDP, Viet Nam's enhanced role in peacebuilding and peacekeeping, and the National SDG Report will be prioritized for the UN's work in 2020. The next stage for implementing to-be-identified interventions will be more challenging, requiring the UNCT to have more substantive discussion and invest more of their resources for joint work.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2020

2020 will be an important year for Viet Nam when the Communist Party of Viet Nam and the GOVN will be finalizing the two most important and strategic documents which are the Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) 2021-2030 and the Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) 2021-2025. These documents will guide Viet Nam's development in the next five to ten years. Viet Nam will also implement its vision expanding the country's engagement in the global and regional arena, being a non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for 2020-21 and taking the chair role for ASEAN in 2020, as well as broadening the country's peacebuilding and South-South Cooperation actions. These will bring tremendous opportunities for the UN in further supporting Viet Nam's SDG and other national priorities as well as in delivering the One Strategic Plan's results, particularly when the UN continues to be highly evaluated by the GOVN for its contributions (e.g. as expressed through the joint UN-GOVN meeting in October 2019).

Advancing SDGs with a focus on Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)

Mainstreaming SDGs into SEDS and SEDP will be the UNCT's priorities in 2020. As the main activities for drafting SEDS were implemented in 2019, with the UN's and Development Partners' contribution, and the SEDS was in advanced draft by the end of 2019, the UN's engagement in 2020 will be focusing on the next 5-year national SEDP as well as the sectoral and provincial SEDPs. UN agencies will work under the UNCT's common direction to continue advocating for SDG integration in SEDS/SEDP goals and targets, monitoring and evaluation framework (including data development), as well as budgeting at different levels. This also includes a coherent UN approach and advice to the GOVN on an integrated SDG M&E framework and integrated national financing systems. Following the successful delivery of UN support to the GOVN in preparing Viet Nam's 2018 Voluntary National Review (VNR), the UN will work together under the SDG Task Force's coordination to support the GOVN's development of the national SDG report which is expected to be issued in 2020. The UNCT also plans to leverage UN support through higher-level dialogues with the GOVN on SDGs, for example through finding entry points for the UN's closer engagement in the National Committee on Sustainable Development and Competitiveness Improvement. Building on existing partnerships, the UN will further expand its cooperation with UN agencies at global and regional level (e.g. UNDESA and UNESCAP), the private sector (e.g. VCCI) and CSOs on advancing SDG acceleration. Across all UN work, LNOB will be continuously emphasized, focusing on ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Enhancement of Viet Nam's role and participation in the global and regional agenda

As explicitly expressed in the Joint UN-GOVN meeting in October 2019, the GOVN expects more UN support to foster Viet Nam's role and participation in the international arena through strategic advice, international experience sharing, facilitating and convening different partnerships, especially in supporting its role as a non-permanent member of the UN

Security Council 2020-2021 and the Chair of ASEAN in 2020. This area of work was also discussed and prioritized in the UN October 2019 Retreat with further concrete actions to be identified in subsequent UNCT discussions.

A number of activities can be concretized for implementation in 2020 based on the 2019 foundation, including helping the GOVN to host a Global Event on Women, Peace and Security in 2020, planning an SSC Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop, supporting a publication on Doi Moi (the economic renewal reforms starting in 1986) to share Viet Nam's development experience, supporting the GOVN's preparation for the upcoming ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue on Political-Security Cooperation (AURED V) Workshop, and possible support to further strengthen Viet Nam's engagement and participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

Enhancing the UN's role and position in development forums

Under UNDS reform, the UNCT has greater opportunities to increase its joint work, coherence and visibility as the One UN in Viet Nam. This is in line with the GOVN's expectation for the UN to further engage in macro development forums and present its joint recommendations to Viet Nam to facilitate its growth pathway. Based on the reform's foundation through the DaO approach, the UNCT did well to raise its One UN profile in the Development Partners Group (DPG), the Informal Ambassador Group on Development Cooperation (IAGDC) and the Informal Ambassador Group on Gender Policy (IAGGP), through both the Resident Coordinator's role and joint UN substantive inputs including their inputs to the SEDS/SEDP, ODA legal framework, and gender issues in the Labour Code revision. The UNCT will deepen the DaO approach with development partners in 2020. At the same time, and even more importantly, as expected by the GOVN, the UN will conduct more direct high-level dialogues with the GOVN at national and sectoral level to discuss development solutions for achieving the SDGs and national priorities.

The UN will also continue to prioritize using its unique strengths to support Viet Nam's development, including by bringing international best practice and expertise and sharing Viet Nam's expertise and experiences through regional and global South-South Cooperation platforms, providing high quality and impartial policy advocacy and technical guidance, convening development partners, and supporting a "whole-of-government" and "whole-of-society" approach to SDG achievement with an emphasis on Leaving No One Behind (LNOB).



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