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United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION VIET NAM



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

■ The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would like to thank all those who have contributed to this evaluation.

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FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, which covers the programme period from 2017 to 2020. This is the third country-level assessment conducted by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office in Viet Nam. The evaluation has been carried out in collaboration with the Government of Viet Nam, UNDP Viet Nam country office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific.

Viet Nam has made significant achievements in economic growth, poverty reduction and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Viet Nam was one of the pioneering countries in the Asia-Pacific Region to adopt the Multidimensional Poverty approach to achieve SDG1. However, the country is faced with growing inequalities, sustained poverty gains, and poverty among vulnerable groups. Government systems and institutions need to keep pace with rising public expectations for voice and accountability. High carbon emissions and environmental degradation increase disaster risks and undermine opportunities for sustainable development, particularly among women and vulnerable groups. While Viet Nam was successful in containing and responding early to the Coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, vulnerable communities living in extreme poverty and with limited social protection were heavily impacted.

The evaluation found that UNDP is a valuable and trusted partner for the country. UNDP engaged through a multisector and multipronged approach which resulted in policy advisory contributions in

the areas of poverty, inequalities, governance and climate change. However, the programme requires a better resource allocation strategy and documentation of lessons and challenges at the outcome level, to better inform future programming and improve sustainability.

The evaluation concluded that UNDP should continue its support to the Government of Viet Nam to implement its Socio-Economic Development Strategy. Attention is needed to ensure the actual implementation of policy, understanding the opportunities from end user perspectives, and addressing potential barriers to policy implementation by promoting a more comprehensive approach to capacity building and undertaking evidence-based analysis of 'green' actions to foster their scale-up and sustainability.

I would like to thank the Government of Viet Nam, the various national stakeholders, colleagues at the UNDP Viet Nam country office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific who graciously provided their time, information and support throughout this evaluation. I have every confidence that the findings, conclusions and recommendations provided herein will help to strengthen the formulation of the next UNDP country programme strategy in Viet Nam, for a more inclusive and sustainable recovery.



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Anticipatory, agile, adaptive	HDI	Human Development Index
ABS	Access and benefit sharing	HDR	Human Development Report
ADB	Asian Development Bank	ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
BIOFIN	Biodiversity Finance Initiative	ILO	International Labour Organization
CBDRM	Community-based disaster risk management	INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
CEMA	Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs	IR 4.0	Fourth industrial revolution
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund	iSEE	Institute for Socio-Economic and Environment
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019	KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
CSO	Civil society organization	LED	Light-emitting diode
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
DIM	Direct implementation modality	LMIC	Lower middle-income country
DISED	Danang Institute for Socio-Economic Development	M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
D-MOSS	Dengue Model-Forecasting Satellite-Based System	MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
DRM	Disaster risk management	MDP	Multidimensional poverty
DRR	Disaster risk reduction	MoH	Ministry of Health
EU	European Union	MoIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade
EU JULE	European Union Justice and Legal Empowerment Programme	MoJ	Ministry of Justice
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	MoLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
GCF	Green Climate Fund	MoNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
GDP	Gross domestic product	MoST	Ministry of Science and Technology
GEF	Global Environment Fund	MoU	Memorandum of understanding
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment	MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
GHG	Greenhouse gas	MPSARD	Master Plan for Social Assistance Reform and Development

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

MSME	Micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises	UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
NDC	Nationally-determined contribution	UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption
NGO	Non-governmental organization	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
NIM	National implementation modality	UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
NTP	National Targeted Programme	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
NTP-NRD	National Targeted Programme on New Rural Development	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
NTP-SPR	National Targeted Programme on Sustainable Poverty Reduction	UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
ODA	Official development assistance	UN-REDD	United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
PAPI	Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index	UNSC	United Nations Security Council
POPs	Persistent organic pollutants	UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
RBAP	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report	UXO	Unexploded ordnance
SAP	Support to the Reform of Social Assistance Policy System project	VND	Vietnamese Dong
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	VNMAC	Viet Nam Mine Action Centre
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal	VNR	Voluntary National Review
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan	WHO	World Health Organization
SEDS	Socio-Economic Development Strategy		
ToC	Theory of change		
ToT	Training of trainers		

Evaluation Brief: Viet Nam

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been a partner of the Government of Viet Nam since 1978, working closely with the Government and other partners to expand the choices for people and ensure that everyone has equal access to opportunities and to realize their full potential. Over the years, the UNDP programme has been shaped by the country's development priorities and challenges. During the programme cycle under review (2017-2021), the UNDP country programme focused on supporting the Government to implement its five-year Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) 2016-2020, to pursue an inclusive and sustainable development model which balances economic, social and environmental goals for an equitable share of development gains for all citizens. This Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) covers all areas of UNDP support to Viet Nam during the current programming cycle.

Key findings and conclusions

UNDP has made important contributions to national programmes for poverty reduction, in the design and implementation of an improved comprehensive social protection system, and in promoting and integrating

inclusive growth principles into national development and planning systems. UNDP has been able to navigate the complexities of addressing inequalities and challenges related to effective governance and climate change, and is valued as a longstanding and valuable partner, providing policy advisory support and development services. The country office was able to respond to the Coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in a comprehensive and timely manner, and collect timely evidence for the design of the response and recovery.

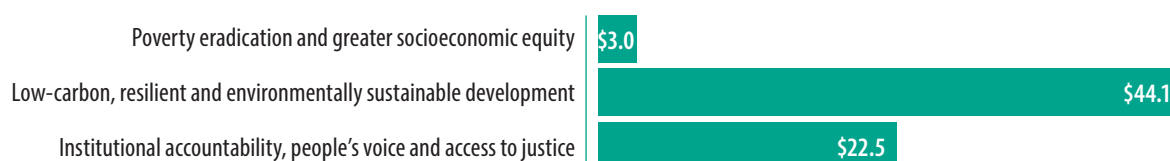
UNDP has been building strategic and operational partnerships with multiple stakeholders to achieve the country programme objectives, and some of these have evolved into partnership models that promote intra-governmental coordination and synergy. UNDP could take a more active role in designing and monitoring on-the-ground implementation of policies and innovations, including associated capacity building, institutional coordination and community participation. These will be fundamental to the overriding UNDP goals to address poverty and inequalities, enhance citizen participation and protect rights, as well as to promote sustainable low carbon development while strengthening the resilience of targeted groups.

Total Programme expenditure (2017-2019)

US\$ 69,590,665



Programme expenditure by practice area, 2017-2020 (US\$ million)



The country office has a well-established monitoring and evaluation system, although the outcomes in the Country Programme Document lack consideration of intermediate changes, assumptions and risk attributes for reaching and measuring key results and intended outcomes. UNDP has made significant progress in establishing a gender-responsive organizational environment and mainstreaming gender into its projects and programmes. However, there is uneven allocation of gender expenditure, integration and collaboration across the portfolios. Performance reporting on outcome-level results remains a challenge.

In climate change and resilience, the extensive international network and experience of UNDP, and its strategic positioning, have helped the Government to secure substantial funding for climate change and sustainable development. UNDP has brought strong technical and policy advisory capacity to address international conventions and national directives, helping to bridge the gap between international obligations that the country has assumed and the challenge of implementing actions on the ground. While UNDP support to address climate change has been highly relevant, the next challenge will be to clarify management roles, build linkages and synergy across the different ministries and extend ministerial actions to local level.

The UNDP focus on governance in this programme cycle has targeted several themes, such as access to justice, the participation of civil society and women, accountability, human rights and combating corruption. However, UNDP has significantly reduced its efforts to strengthen the accountability of institutions, critical for improving performance in governance.

UNDP has been consistently well-financed during this country programme period. The country office had planned for US\$ 133 million across three outcomes, including \$23.3 million of regular resources and \$110 million from other resources such as vertical funds and donor agencies. UNDP has been roughly on track with non-core resources, mobilizing an estimated \$70 million against a \$110 million target. While UNDP core funding has reduced sharply during the country programme period, there has been a steady increase in non-core resources mobilized, partly due to the country office ability to secure non-core resources from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) and new donors. However, government cost-sharing still remains a key challenge.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. UNDP should develop a detailed theory of change (ToC), that identifies a clear intervention logic with intermediate results and a pathway to change, including a detailed assessment of risks and assumptions. This ToC should guide the integration of upstream and downstream interventions as well as promote synergy across programmes.

Recommendation 2. The monitoring and evaluation system needs to focus on outcome-level results, with more frequent project monitoring and evaluation throughout the programme cycle,

to capture system-level and real change on the ground, including transformative changes in gender equality and women's empowerment and leaving no one behind.

Recommendation 3. UNDP needs to systematically reflect on how to properly design and measure the impact of the capacity building and awareness raising that it supports.

Recommendation 4. UNDP should support the Government of Viet Nam to undertake an evidence-based full life cycle analysis of some of its procurement

programmes and key state industries, that will help to monetize the benefits of 'green' actions, to inform the Government, private sector and civil society and promote their scale-up and sustainability.

Recommendation 5. UNDP needs to develop a balanced portfolio to ensure its leading role in governance. Support to accountability institutions and mechanisms with an aim to buttress government integrity and performance should be considered as key components of UNDP efforts.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, as well as the methodology applied. It lays out the development context of Viet Nam and the UNDP programme in the country.

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to national development priorities, as well as the effectiveness of the UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. ICPEs are independent evaluations, carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.¹

This is the third ICPE for Viet Nam, conducted in 2020 towards the end of the current UNDP programme cycle (2017-2021). The scope of the ICPE includes the entirety of UNDP activities in the country, covering interventions funded by all sources, including core UNDP resources and donor and government funds. It also includes any projects and activities from the previous programme cycle that either continued or concluded in the current programme cycle, in accordance with the evaluation Terms of Reference (Annex 1, available online). The ICPE pays particular attention to the subregional and regional development context within which the UNDP country programme operates.

The ICPE is guided by three main evaluation questions.

> EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
3. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP performance and, eventually, the sustainability of results?

It presents findings, conclusions and recommendations which will serve as an input to the formulation of the new UNDP country programme document (CPD) for 2022-2026. The evaluation also covered the UNDP Coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) response and recovery interventions.

The ICPE was conducted in close collaboration with the Government of Viet Nam and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP). The primary audiences for the evaluation are the UNDP Viet Nam country office, RBAP, the UNDP Executive Board, and the Government of Viet Nam.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms & Standards,² ensuring that all steps of the evaluation adhere to ethical and professional standards of evaluation practice.

Theory-based approach: A reconstructed, abridged theory of change (ToC) was developed at the inception stage, based on the desk review, to explain causality and change, including underlying assumptions (Figure 3). The starting point for developing the ToC was the country office's existing ToCs for the CPD and outcomes. During interviews, the validity of the reconstructed abridged ToC was further discussed and validated. The ToC was further refined as the evaluation progressed, based on discussions with stakeholders on UNDP progress towards the achievement of the country programme outcomes. Choices of evaluation methods and the proposed strategy for undertaking the evaluation were grounded in the ToC and its assumptions. An evaluation matrix was developed identifying the sub-questions, sources of information and evaluative evidence for each of the three evaluation questions (Annex 2, available online). Qualitative methods were used for data collection and analysis. The ToC, including

¹ See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>.

² <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>

its underlying assumptions and risks, guided the assessment of outcome-level results. An attempt was made to attribute the results where possible, in other cases contribution analysis was based on the ToC.

Documentation review: The evaluation team undertook an extensive review of relevant documents. This included, among others, background documents on the regional, subregional and national contexts, documents (other evaluation reports and studies) from international partners (World Bank, Asian Development Bank [ADB]) and other United Nations agencies; project and programme documents such as work plans and progress reports; monitoring and self-assessment reports such as the yearly UNDP Results Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs), strategy notes and project and programme evaluations conducted by the country office and RBAP, including quality assurance and audit reports. The documents consulted were adequate, although gaps were found around a lack of outcome evaluations to evidence outcome-level change, mostly for Outcomes one and three. Outcome two projects were quite well covered by midterm and terminal evaluations due to the GEF and GCF portfolios. These provided good, independent observations, to validate ROAR statements.

Portfolio analysis: Purposive sampling of projects for in-depth review was based on a number of criteria, including programme coverage (projects covering the various thematic and crosscutting areas such as gender and human rights); financial expenditure (a representative mix of large and smaller projects); and maturity (covering both completed and active projects). Based on the analysis of the country portfolio, the team selected 26 projects for in-depth review and analysis, covering roughly 40 percent of the programme portfolio and representing a cross-section of UNDP work in the country across the three outcomes (Annex 5, available online).

Stakeholder analysis: Desk review and portfolio analysis were used to undertake a stakeholder analysis to identify all relevant UNDP partners. The analysis was used to identify key informants for interviews during the main data collection phase,³ and to examine any potential partnerships that could improve the UNDP contribution to the country. Efforts were also made to interview stakeholders who have not worked with UNDP but play a key role in the outcomes to which UNDP contributes. Unfortunately, these were not available for interview.

Country office questionnaire survey: A detailed questionnaire was administered to the UNDP country office as a self-assessment and reflection tool and to gather evidence of results. This evidence was very valuable in providing an additional source of information on the UNDP country programme, its effectiveness and sustainability, allowing triangulation of data collected during the remote interviews with stakeholders and from the secondary data/documentation review. The preliminary findings of the desk review (which was conducted according to the evaluation matrix, available online) were validated during stakeholder interviews, and used to identify gaps in data and any important issues requiring subsequent follow-up.

Primary data collection and key informant interviews: Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation team, in close consultation with UNDP Viet Nam, modified the evaluation design to conduct the evaluation remotely with virtual stakeholder interviews in lieu of in-country field work. As a result, most of the primary data for the evaluation was collected remotely, using phone and video communication tools, and few interviews conducted in person. A total of 152 stakeholders were interviewed, representing UNDP staff, Government, civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector, United Nations agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, and beneficiaries of the programme (including community leaders and community organizations) (Annex 6, available online).

³ This turned into a virtual mission due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Triangulation: The information and data collected from multiple sources was triangulated before making any evaluative judgements. The evaluation design matrix guided how each of the questions was addressed based on the available evidence, facilitated the analysis and supported the evaluation team in drawing well-substantiated findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Evaluation quality assurance: The report went through a series of internal and external reviews in line with the IEO peer review process, to ensure a sound and robust evaluation methodology and analysis. Following the reviews, the draft ICPE report was first shared with the country office and RBAP, then with the Government and other national partners in Viet Nam.

Evaluation limitations: The travel restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic forced the evaluation team to cancel the planned data collection mission to Viet Nam, limiting the capacity of the team to conduct in-person interviews and interact with different stakeholder groups and communities benefitting from UNDP support. To mitigate these challenges, the team broadened the range of documentation included in the desk review, including data and reports from the Government, United Nations agencies, donors and others. The team expanded the universe of its stakeholder and key informants to ensure coverage and diversity of views and triangulation of evidence from multiple sources. In addition, a national consultant conducted context analysis, as well as in-person meetings where necessary⁴ and field/ site visits in Bac Kan, Thai Binh and Thanh Hoa while strictly adhering to “do no harm” principles.⁵ The team also conducted a virtual debriefing meeting with the country office to discuss some of the emerging findings, check accuracy of evidence and fill any data gaps due to the limitations.

1.3 Country context

Viet Nam is a lower middle-income country (LMIC)⁶ with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of \$2,715.⁷ In 2019, its human development index (HDI) value was 0.704,⁸ which put the country in the medium human development category, at 117 out of 189 countries, with a rapid 48 percent growth in HDI since 1990. Viet Nam has a population of 95.5 million, 33 percent of whom are under the age of 14, and 36 percent living in urban areas.⁹ The population is composed of 54 ethnic groups, and administratively the country has 63 provinces, each governed by a People’s Council and a People’s Committee.

Over the years, Viet Nam has achieved significant achievements in economic growth. Following reunification in 1975, and with the dramatic growth achieved through intensive political and free-market economic reforms launched in 1986 (Đổi Mới or ‘Open Door’), Viet Nam has transformed itself from one of the world’s poorest nations to a dynamic emerging country in the region, with more than three decades of uninterrupted growth, making it one of the great economic success stories of the 21st century. In 2018, economic growth was at 7.1 percent.¹⁰

Viet Nam was one of the first countries in the Asia-Pacific region to adopt the multidimensional poverty (MDP) approach to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1. It successfully used MDP as a tool for targeting, policy development and development monitoring, and extended the approach to identify the poor at the commune level.¹¹ There are, however, concerns that poverty gains are fragile, with a significant portion of the population vulnerable to falling back into poverty.¹² With UNDP support, the Government has developed and applied the Resolution for a National Targeted

⁴ Some stakeholders were reluctant to have Zoom interviews.

⁵ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>.

⁶ MIC status achieved in 2010.

⁷ World Bank data 2019.

⁸ Human Development Indicators: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/VNM>.

⁹ HDR 2019.

¹⁰ These calculations were done before COVID-19.

¹¹ UNDP 2018 Report on Measurement and Uses of Multi-dimensional Poverty in Asia-Pacific Countries.

¹² 5.6 percent of the population is vulnerable to MDP and 9.8 percent are living below the poverty line. Source UNDP HDR 2019.

Programme on Socioeconomic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas 2021-2030, and updated MDP measurements for 2021-2025, to ensure that its commitment to leave no one behind is realized. In addition, Viet Nam has approved the Masterplan on Social Assistance Reform and Masterplan for Social Insurance Reform. The Government raised the poverty line in both rural and urban areas for the period 2020-2025,¹³ aiming to more accurately and comprehensively identify poor and near-poor households.

National development is guided by the Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) 2011-2020 and Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) 2016-2020, which aspire to build inclusive and sustainable development, balancing economic, social and environmental imperatives so that all citizens benefit from development gains. The recent 'National Report 2020: Five-year progress towards the implementation of the sustainable development goals of Viet Nam,' reported that the country had achieved a number of SDG-related results, although there remain difficulties and challenges to achieve ten of the SDGs, and two¹⁴ will be very challenging to achieve by 2030.¹⁵

While the national average poverty rate has rapidly decreased, it remains relatively high among ethnic minority groups and in mountainous areas. Although ethnic minorities comprised 14.7 percent of the population in 2019,¹⁶ they accounted for 95 percent of Viet Nam's extreme poor (subsisting on less than \$1.90 per person per day¹⁷) and 51 percent of the multi-dimensionally poor.¹⁸ The multidimensional poverty rate is extremely high among some ethnic minority groups, 3.5 times higher than the

national average rate. For example, Co, Xinh Mun, La Hu, Chut, Mang and Pa Then groups make up over 70 percent of poor and near-poor households, while the King/Hoa group accounts for only 2.9 percent. The Chut ethnic minority group alone accounts for 89.3 percent of poor and near-poor households, and this rate is 65.5 percent for the over one million H'Mong people.¹⁹ In addition, new forms of vulnerability can now be associated with the remaining pockets of poverty, with the emergence of a large, lower-middle-income group characterized by non-income deprivations in dimensions such as health and education, water and sanitation, and housing and social protection in Viet Nam.²⁰ The Mekong River Delta region has the highest Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), followed by the Northern Mountains and Uplands. The Red River Delta has the lowest MPI.²¹

Concerns over inequality have risen, despite Viet Nam's record of growth. Income disparities have increased, with the GINI coefficient increasing from 34.8 in 2014 to 35.3 in 2016 and 35.7 in 2018-2019.²² In part, concerns reflect substantial differences in economic conditions, access to key services and non-income deprivations. Gaps in access to social protection services for mountainous ethnic minority groups are still quite large compared with the national average. Social protection embraces basic human rights, social equity and equality, harmonized consensus and a sustainably developed country. More specifically, within social protection there is social assistance in the form of policies and programmes promulgated by the Government to support targeted groups.

¹³ Government of Viet Nam Decree 07/2021/ND-CP on multidimensional poverty line for the 2022-2025 period. New multidimensional poverty line monthly per capita income levels of 1.5 million Vietnamese Dong (VND) for rural dwellers and 2 million for urban dwellers. This is an increase of 114.2 percent and 122.2 percent to the multidimensional poverty index of 700,000 VND and 900,000 VND, respectively.

¹⁴ Goal 12 on sustainable production and consumption and Goal 14 on conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources.

¹⁵ Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; National Report 2020 on the progress of five-year implementation of the SDGs.

¹⁶ https://www.gso.gov.vn/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/01-Bao-cao-53-dan-toc-thieu-so-2019_ban-in.pdf.

¹⁷ 2011 Purchasing Power Parity.

¹⁸ Using the national multidimensional poverty line.

¹⁹ https://www.gso.gov.vn/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/01-Bao-cao-53-dan-toc-thieu-so-2019_ban-in.pdf.

²⁰ HDR UNDP 2020.

²¹ HDR UNDP 2019.

²² World Bank Data - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=VN>.

Viet Nam ranks 118th out of 189 countries in the Gender Inequality Index,²³ while the Gender Development Index for Viet Nam was 0.997 in 2019, placing it in the group of medium to high equality between women and men in HDI achievements. In the 2016-2020 legislature, women held 27 percent of parliamentary seats, still low compared to the 35 percent target established by the 2011-2020 National Gender Equality Strategy. However, Viet Nam is in the top third of countries in the world in terms of women's political leadership, as highlighted in the UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) 2020.²⁴ 66 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education, compared to 77 percent of men. Female participation in the labour market is 72 percent, compared to 82 percent for men.²⁵

Since the adoption of the Đổi Mới policy, the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Government adopted measures to reform public administration, strengthen representative institutions, increase respect for human rights, open access to justice, combat corruption and enhance citizen participation, while promoting the rule of law. Public administration has increased its capacity to deliver services, while representative bodies have become active in supervising some government work and citizens have gained more channels for participation. Challenges related to policymaking, implementation, capacity and public accountability still remain, all of which are critical factors in Viet Nam's achievement of national and sustainable development goals. Channels for participation in policymaking, implementation and monitoring have remained limited, despite favourable legislation

which mandates public participation²⁶ and consultation.²⁷ While law drafters gathered comments from citizens, there was no enabling legal framework for non-government-affiliated or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to engage across sectors or stages of policy cycles, or with particular issues. Vulnerable,²⁸ near-poor and lower-middle-income groups are at high risk of falling back into poverty,²⁹ and other groups such as ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities suffer from disparities in rights-awareness by duty bearers and lack access to quality legal services.

Public participation and the engagement of NGOs and media agencies in the fight against corruption have remained uneven. There have also been bottlenecks in the implementation of both domestic policies and international obligations, deriving from a shortage of capacity and a lack of civil servant motivation to meet targets. At the midterm point of the country programme cycle, Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perception Index ranked Viet Nam at 117 out of 180 countries, scoring 33/100.³⁰ The 2018 'Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index' (PAPI) report found that corruption was one of the top three issues of greatest concern for Vietnamese citizens.³¹ The report shows that citizens are more satisfied with the most basic public services and have more interaction with local officials, compared to 2016, and concluded that there is room for further reform and better implementation of policy by local governments as they strive to be more open, transparent, accountable and responsive.

²³ HDR 2019 Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century.

²⁴ UNDP HDR 2020: VN ranks 65/162 on GII. On GDI: VN is in the 1st group of 5 groups.

²⁵ <https://www.mppn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Vietnam-Human-Development-Indices-and-Indicators-Viet-Nam27s-statistical-updates-Final-2018.pdf>.

²⁶ Law on Grassroots Democracy (2003).

²⁷ Legal Documents (2008 and 2015).

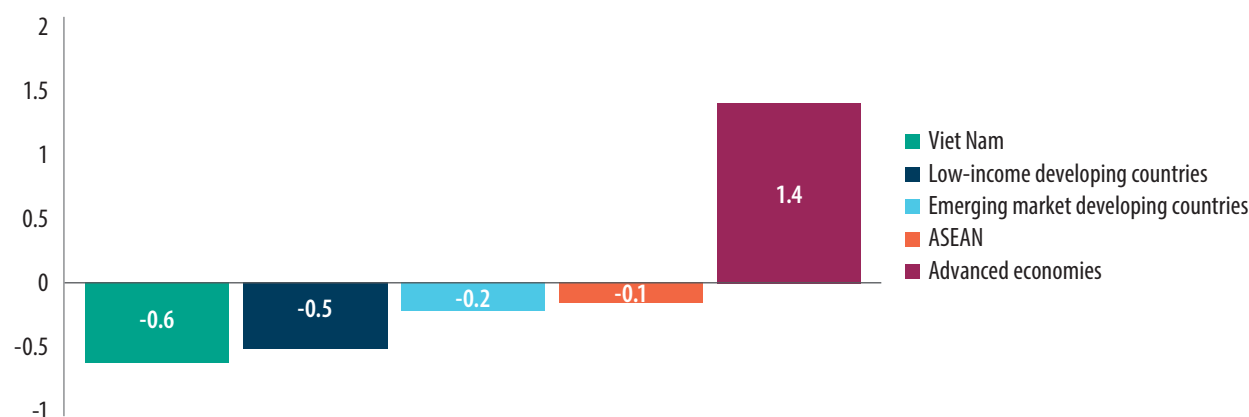
²⁸ Groups exposed to climatic risks (primarily ethnic minorities living in isolated areas, dependent on ecosystems threatened by climate change).

²⁹ Informal sector workers with limited social protection, especially women and urban migrants.

³⁰ 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018>.

³¹ <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/papi-2018.html>.

FIGURE 1. Perceptions of the extent public power is used for private gains³²



Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators, D. Kaufman (Natural Resource Governance Institute and Brookings Institutions) and A. Kraay (World Bank), 2017

Viet Nam is one of the countries most affected by climate change, due to its low-lying areas, and is subject to flooding, storms and drought. Viet Nam's report on intended Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), launched in October 2015, indicates that the costs associated with natural disasters (mostly induced by weather events) could rise to 3-5 percent of GDP by 2030. Women are particularly vulnerable to the hazards of climate change, as their resilience is hampered by ongoing social, cultural and political disadvantages (they are unable to be fully engaged in decisions and implementation regarding climate resilience). A recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report noted that, in Viet Nam, at least 50 million people would be exposed to the impacts of rising sea levels and powerful storms, among other dangers. The Mekong Delta remains among the regions in the world most vulnerable to rising sea levels and drought, which devastate crop production. Saltwater intrusion in the Mekong Delta and other parts of the country contaminates potable water, which continues to threaten widespread water security and has a big impact on rice production.³³

Economic development still heavily depends on fossil fuels and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, increasing the risk of disaster (for example, forest clearing leading to landslides and mangrove cutting increasing the risk of coastal erosion) and undermining opportunities for sustainable development.³⁴ The power sector accounts for two-thirds of Viet Nam's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Carbon emissions have risen from 0.26 metric tons in 1990 to 2.0 metric tons in 2016, with a projected increase of up to four times in the absolute total, making up 86 percent of total net emissions in 2030. Viet Nam is actively trying to address this issue by aiming for the COP21 intended NDC target and increasing efforts in investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

The growing population, and increasing affluence and consumption, have led to the unsustainable exploitation of sand for construction, timber and fisheries. There are associated issues related to waste management, especially plastics in the Mekong River and coastal areas and air pollution in Hanoi and

³² Scores range from -2.5 (lowest) to 2.5 (highest). These indicators are derived from perceptions-based data. The vertical line for Viet Nam indicates the lower and the upper bound estimate based on 90 percent confidence interval.

³³ This area is known as the rice basket of Viet Nam and essential for food security and rice exports.

³⁴ Information in these two paragraphs is derived from: the World Bank (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview>, April 27, 2020); GlobalSecurity.com; the Asian Development Bank Country Partnership Strategy (2016-2020); the current UN One Strategic Plan and UNDP Country Plan for Viet Nam; UNDP Human Development Indicators <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/186606>; Tham C. Hoang, Marsha C. Black, Sandra L. Knuteson, Aaron P. Roberts. 2019. Environmental Pollution, Management, and Sustainable Development: Strategies for Vietnam and Other Developing Countries. *Environmental Management* (2019) 63: 433-436.

Ho Chi Minh City. Viet Nam is one of the ten countries worldwide most affected by air pollution and there is groundwater contamination from industrial activity, as well as, apparently, some residual effects from Agent Orange, a dioxin, possibly still leaching from the soil at old storage sites.

Viet Nam has seen an increasing frequency and intensity of typhoons. In the last five years, Viet Nam was hit by three consecutive typhoons and more than one million people were affected. Around 89,000 homes lost their roofs, and many were destroyed by the storms.³⁵ The central coast has been devastated by widespread flooding, with at least 114 people killed.

Viet Nam declared COVID-19 as a national epidemic on April 1st, 2020, despite the relatively low number of reported cases (260) compared to neighbouring countries. Viet Nam has contained the virus through timely measures in public information, advocating the practice of social distancing and providing access to testing and appropriate care.³⁶ The success of Viet Nam in responding to COVID-19 is based on its experience in dealing with other outbreaks,³⁷ which led Viet Nam to build a strong response infrastructure and networks for identifying, tracing and reacting to human and zoonotic pandemics, including a strong government focus on public information and communication.

2020 UNDP HDR dashboard³⁸ data show that COVID-19 will mostly impact vulnerable communities, especially those living in extreme poverty or under social protection and labour programmes, and that the most vulnerable economic areas will be remittances and tourism. The recent assessment by UNDP and UN Women on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable households and enterprises estimates that the transient national income poverty rate remained at a relatively high

level of 70.3 percent in May 2020 for ethnic minority households, while the national average jumped from 4.57 percent to 26.7 percent. Also, due to COVID-19 the exposure of women and children to violence could be on the rise, and mothers are more likely to incur job losses or reduce their hours to focus on childcare or the family. Finally, the participation of women in response and recovery decision-making processes is critical, yet so far limited in Viet Nam.³⁹ In 2020, the unemployment rate rose to 2.27 percent, compared to 1.16 percent before the COVID-19 pandemic, and more than 29,200 enterprises sought to suspend their operations, an increase of 38.2 percent compared to the previous year.⁴⁰ The latest World Bank report noted that Viet Nam is one of the few countries in the world not to expect a recession, though its growth rate for 2020 will be far lower than the typical 6-7 percent pre-crisis projections.⁴¹ The same report noted that the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis will be hard to predict, given the uncertainty surrounding its magnitude and duration.

1.4 National development planning architecture in Viet Nam

Viet Nam's Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the period 2011-2020, adopted at the Eleventh Congress of the Viet Nam Communist Party, constitutes the primary framework for development planning in the country. The core goal of this strategy is to continue promoting industrialization and modernization with a socialist orientation and building human capital. Viet Nam is currently implementing its five-year Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016-2020, which is based on the SEDS 2011-2020 framework, pursuing an inclusive and sustainable development model which balances economic, social and environmental goals, for an equitable share of development gains for all citizens.

³⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/28/world/asia/vietnam-typhoon-molave-landslide.html>.

³⁶ Cumulative data for COVID-19 in Viet Nam from the start of the pandemic until 06 November 2020 was 1,206 cases and 35 deaths.

³⁷ SARS 2003, Bird flu 2003, H1N1 2009, swine fever 2019.

³⁸ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/global-preparedness-and-vulnerability-dashboards>.

³⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/media/5996/file/UN%20analysis%20on%20social%20impacts%20of%20COVID-19%20and%20strategic%20policy%20recommendations%20for%20Viet%20Nam.pdf>.

⁴⁰ ESCAP 2020; Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs, and especially women-led MSMEs in Viet Nam.

⁴¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview>.

The 2016-2020 SEDP was built on recognition of the achievements of the 2011-2015 SEDP and the areas where progress remained to be achieved.

The 2016-2020 SEDP set 19 economic, social and environmental objectives. In the area of economic development, it sought to strengthen macroeconomic stability and an enabling environment for socioeconomic development; to strengthen efforts for economic restructuring; and to improve the productivity, efficiency and competitiveness of the economy. Additionally, it planned to enhance the quality of socioeconomic infrastructure planning, improve human resource quality and increase capabilities in science and technology. Social objectives included the sustainable development of culture, society, healthcare, improved living standards and addressing inequality. In October 2017, the National Assembly approved a new Law on Planning which established a new system of national, provincial, urban and rural plans. The Law abolishes master-plans for specific industries and products, ensures consistency in the legal system governing planning activities, outlines a legal foundation for unified direction and management of planning activities, and changes the planning methodology to address cross-sectoral, interregional and interprovincial issues. The Law was instrumental for the implementation of SEDP 2016-2020.

In the area of governance, the focus was on ramping up an anti-corruption strategy, improving savings and reducing waste of public funds, and improving the effectiveness of public administration. SEDP 2016-2020 also sought to ensure people's freedom and political participation, improve national defence and security, maintain socio-political stability and peace, and improve effective foreign relations. The environmental objectives included a proactive strategy to address climate change and cope with natural disasters and the enhanced management of natural resources and environmental protection.

SEDP was implemented through a yearly plan designed by the Government. A midterm review of the Plan was submitted to the National Assembly in

2018 and showed that Viet Nam had made substantial progress towards achievement of the SDGs, based on strategic choices in the education and electricity sectors. But achieving the remaining SDGs will require more effort, not only in these two sectors but also in health and road and water infrastructure, which, according to predictions, will require additional annual spending of 7 percent of the country's GDP by 2030.

Preparations are currently underway for SEDS 2020-2030 and SEDP 2021-2025, and different national targeted programmes (NTPs) to begin from 2021, such as the NTPs on New Rural Development (NTP-NRD) and Sustainable Poverty Reduction (NTP-SPR) 2021-2025.⁴²

Viet Nam is playing a significant role in the United Nations as member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and other agencies, as well as in the Non-Aligned Movement, Francophonie and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Viet Nam was elected into the UNSC for 2020-2021 as a non-permanent member, and chaired ASEAN in 2020.

1.5 The UNDP country programme in Viet Nam

UNDP Viet Nam operates under the umbrella of the 'One United Nations' Initiative. Launched in early 2006, the One United Nations Initiative aimed to reduce duplication, improve coordination and enable United Nations agencies to work together more effectively and efficiently. United Nations support is outlined in the One Strategic Plan, the combined planning framework for all the United Nations agencies in Viet Nam, including UNDP. The country programme is aligned with the Government's SEDP 2016-2020 and contributes to the One United Nations Strategic Plan 2017-2021. One United Nations Plan outcomes, UNDP programme outputs and indicative resources are summarized in Table 1.

⁴² Vietnamese source: <https://baodauthau.vn/cac-chuong-trinh-muc-tieu-quoc-gia-giai-doan-2021-2025-de-xuat-co-che-dac-thu-trong-quan-ly-to-chuc-thuc-hien-post97406.html>.

TABLE 1. Country Programme Outcomes and Resources (2017-2020- as of 30 November 2020)

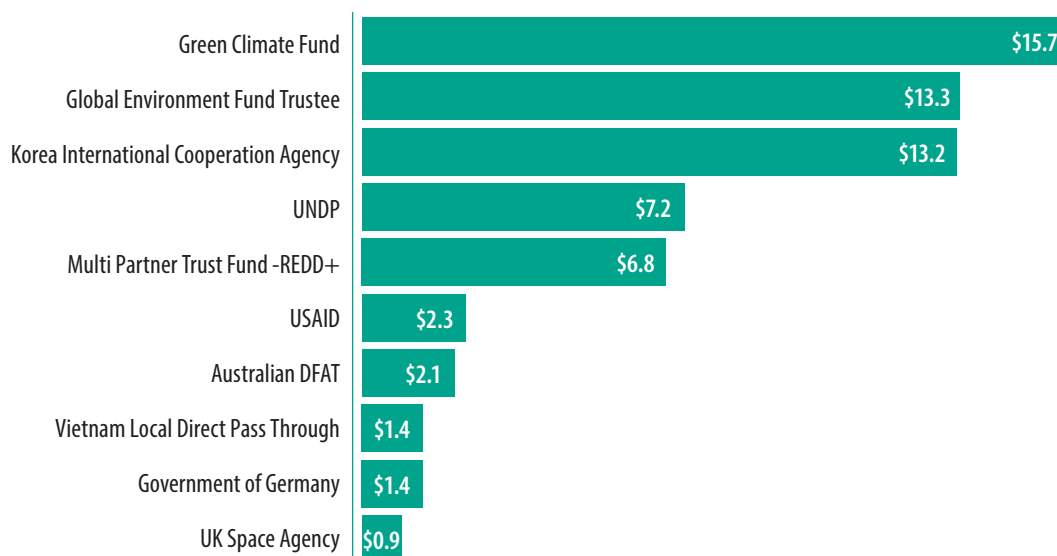
One United Nations Plan outcomes and UNDP country programme outputs	Planned budget US\$ (2017-20)	Expenditure US\$ (2017-20) (%)
<p>Outcome 1: By 2021, all people benefit from inclusive and equitable social protection systems and poverty reduction services, which will reduce multidimensional poverty and vulnerabilities</p> <p>Output 1.1: National Targeted Programmes (NTPs) reduce entrenched and extreme poverty in ethnic minority and remote communities, especially among women</p> <p>Output 1.2: National and subnational systems, institutions and policies reduce multidimensional poverty, exclusion and inequality, particularly for urban settings</p> <p>Output 1.3: Social protection is progressively expanded based on a life cycle approach and universal floor coverage</p>	5,586,670	3,010,125 (54%)
<p>Outcome 2: By 2021, Viet Nam has accelerated its transition to low-carbon and green development, and enhanced its adaptation and resilience to climate change and natural disasters, with a focus on empowering the poor and vulnerable groups</p> <p>Output 2.1: Reduced greenhouse gas emissions in key sectors and cities through low-emission and green development</p> <p>Output 2.2: Adaptation and resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change and disasters increased through UNDP-assisted scale up of community actions</p> <p>Output 2.3: Policies, systems and technologies in place to enable people to benefit from sustainable management of natural resources (forests, ecosystems), and reduced environmental and health risks</p>	61,965,010	44,091,086 (71%)
<p>Outcome 3: 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</p> <p>Output 3.1: Functions and capacity of the rule of law institutions supported, including to strengthen the protection of human rights and improve access to justice and redress</p> <p>Output 3.2: Increase in women’s participation in decision-making and representation in leadership positions</p> <p>Output 3.3: Frameworks and dialogues processes strengthened for effective and transparent engagement of civil society in national development</p> <p>Output 3.4: Legal framework improved, and accountability of institutions enhanced to address awareness, prevention and enforcement of anti-corruption measures across sectors and stakeholders</p> <p>Output 3.5: National data collection, measurement and analytical systems in place to monitor progress on the SDGs and to inform plans, policies and budgets at national and subnational levels</p>	28,508,312	22,487,471 (79%)
Total	96,059,993	69,588,682 (72%)

Source: UNDP Viet Nam Country Programme Document 2017-2021 and Atlas extraction as of 30 November 2020

The UNDP country programme portfolio within the CPD consists of 66 projects under three outcome areas, some of which have continued from the previous CDP cycle. 33 of these projects were relatively small (under \$200,000); 12 with total spending between \$200,000 and \$500,000; and six between \$500,000 and \$1 million. Of the 15 projects above \$1 million, 12 are between \$1-3 million and three are over \$3 million. Projects are implemented under both Direct (DIM) and National Implementation Modality (NIM), and 43 were active at the time of the ICPE.

Various donors have supported implementation of the country programme during the review period (Figure 2). GCF, GEF Trustee and the Korea International Development Agency (KOICA) are the main contributors, followed by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, USAID, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Government of Germany.⁴³ UNDP core resources of \$7.2 million make up 10 percent of the total, and Government contributions, all in kind, are \$1.4 million. Delivery as of November 30th, 2020 was \$69.58 million or 72.44 percent of the target.⁴⁴

FIGURE 2. Key contributors based on country programme expenditure, 2017-2020⁴⁵ (US\$ million)

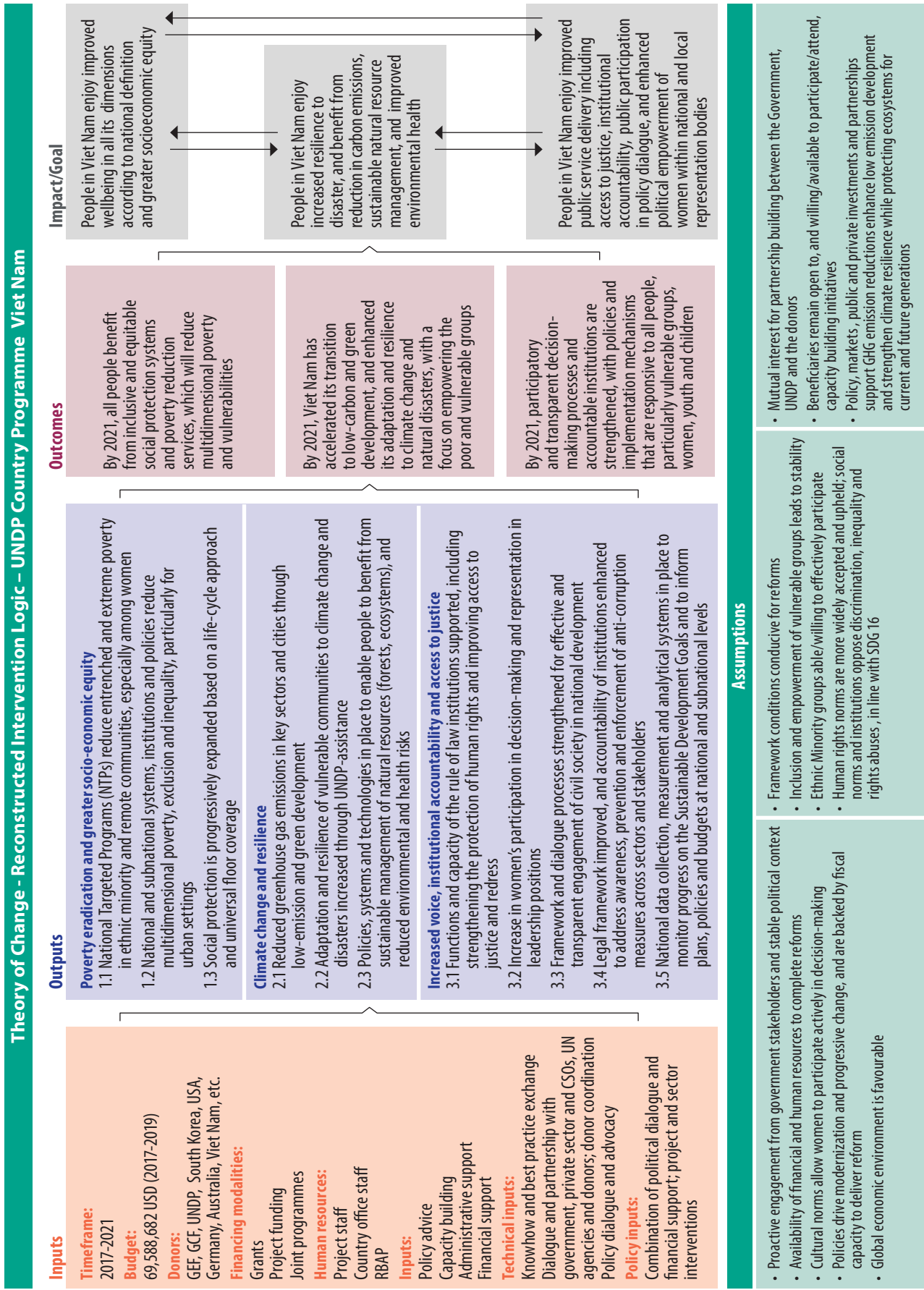


⁴³ A Joint Proposal to CERF on Flood Response amounting \$3 million of funding was also confirmed at the time of the evaluation.

⁴⁴ The figures are based on expenditure recorded on the UNDP corporate system ATLAS on 18 November 2020, and does not include any commitments. Future fund commitment included GFCF2 \$30 million, EU \$5,7 million, Norway \$3 million, Japan \$2.5 million and Canada CAD 3 million.

⁴⁵ UNDP ATLAS, Nov 2020.

FIGURE 3. UNDP Viet Nam – Reconstructed Theory of Change/ Intervention Logic



CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS



This chapter presents the results of the outcome analysis, an assessment of crosscutting issues and analysis of the main factors that influenced UNDP performance and contributions to results. The assessment was based on an analysis of the correlation between project results, their contribution to the expected outputs under each outcome, and consequently to the overall outcome objectives.

2.1 Overall programme implementation

Finding 1. Strategic positioning: UNDP has strategically positioned itself as a thought leader and trusted partner of the Government of Viet Nam. Its multipronged, multilevel and multi-stakeholder approaches have helped to strengthen its position as a strong and credible development partner. There is, however, a need for UNDP to rethink its resource allocation strategy for the implementation of new policies and innovations, as this varies across the different outcome areas. UNDP needs to understand and document successes and barriers in the policy and innovation implementation process to better inform future programming and improve sustainability.

UNDP has played a central role in leading discussions on addressing poverty and inequalities, the utility of the AAA (anticipatory, agile and adaptive) governance concept, enhancing citizen participation and achieving sustainable development in Viet Nam. UNDP has worked closely with the Government, ministries, national research institutions, and the Vietnamese Communist Party's policy institutions. It has led development partners in the preparation of position papers for SEDS pertaining to the SDGs and sustainable development, climate change, the circular economy and natural resources and environment, and bottleneck and impact analysis to identify accelerated actions to transform Viet Nam's economy towards green and sustainable pathways. UNDP is also a member of the MPI Ministerial Advisory Group, co-chairs technical groups with ministries, and coordinates and shares relevant information among development partners and government authorities. The extensive UNDP international network

and experience, and its strategic positioning, have helped to secure substantial funding for climate change and sustainable development.

Discussions across the portfolios with key informants from government ministries, departments, development partners and civil society highlighted appreciation for the knowledge and technical guidance provided by UNDP. UNDP was praised for its longstanding track record in providing policy and technical advice for poverty reduction, governance and the environment, leveraging policy dialogue to advance policy development and implement reforms, and its ability to work across ministries and institutions. UNDP is also seen by the Government as an impartial and objective broker and facilitator of projects, driven by partner needs and understanding of suitable technological and technical approaches, rather than other agendas tied to donor country politics and global positions. Interviews with stakeholders confirmed the UNDP position as a strategic partner which brings strong technical and policy advisory capacity to address compliance with international conventions and national directives, helping to bridge the gap between international obligations that the country has assumed and the challenge of implementing actions on the ground. This is further confirmed by results from the UNDP 2020 Partnership Survey, which indicate that over 88 percent of partners have a favourable perception of UNDP, 76 percent consider UNDP as a valued partner, and nearly 94 percent think that UNDP plays a relevant role in the country.⁴⁶

In the context of declining official development assistance (ODA), UNDP was also seen as responsive to new opportunities, collaborating with different ministries to formulate and submit innovative initiatives to funding agencies. For example,

⁴⁶ UNDP Global Partnership Survey, 2020.

UNDP worked closely with the Government and development partners to formulate and submit innovative ideas to funding agencies, including five million Euro from the European Union (EU) for landscape management to promote a deforestation-free agriculture value chain for 2020-2023, and a new initiative co-designed with the Government and ADB to support vulnerable smallholder farmers in the Central Highlands and South-Central Coast regions to adapt to climate-driven rainfall variability and drought with grant financing of \$30 million from the GCF and a \$120 million loan from ADB. UNDP has been a key facilitator in acquiring these vertical funds and this has cemented its relationship with the Government. UNDP has also been responsive to developments in the country (including during the COVID-19 response) by supporting 'green' employment, mostly for women involved in mangrove planting through the coastal resilience project, which reflects an effort by the country office to use existing projects and platforms for immediate COVID-19 responses, and also to reduce the risk of a slow-down in such projects as a result of the pandemic.

UNDP has also maintained its strategic positioning by being open to innovation, through its access to global, technical, and partner networks. For example, in partnership with the Government, the United Kingdom (UK) Space Agency and HR Wallingford, UNDP pioneered the Dengue Model-Forecasting Satellite-Based System (D-MOSS) in Viet Nam. It was piloted in four provinces in Viet Nam in 2019, to give several months warning of possible outbreaks of dengue fever using earth observation data, seasonal climate forecasts, and a hydrological model. In a similar vein, UNDP has accessed support for the formulation of a National Action Plan for Marine Debris and an Action Plan on a Sustainable Ocean Economy. These initiatives are on the current leading edge of global environmental concerns (marine governance and global health management). Similarly, the governance portfolio has been very active in advancing innovation through grassroots solutions and policy experimentation at city level, and in promoting an ecosystem of inclusive innovation in Viet Nam.

While the evidence collected for the ICPE shows wide appreciation for UNDP policy support, it also points to the need for UNDP to give more emphasis to the implementation of new policies and innovations, especially to help the Government understand potential barriers to successful implementation, scale-up and sustainability. There have been different degrees of success with this emphasis on implementation across the outcome areas. Within Outcome 1, UNDP has effectively moved from supporting the policy framework on poverty reduction and social assistance to supporting the specific and strategically critical implementation of solutions that will benefit the vulnerable. However, UNDP has been less successful in the implementation of interventions within Outcome 3. This is particularly the case with the PAPI and 'Accelerator Lab Viet Nam' projects. While the PAPI project has been successful in collecting information on citizen opinions, there remains some delay in institutionalizing the use of the collected data for governance reform purposes, especially for systemic impact on Viet Nam's accountability mechanisms. While innovation is a crosscutting issue in the Accelerator Lab Viet Nam initiative, introducing the concept of AAA governance, it is still too early to assess how this concept interacts with, supplements or replaces existing governance principles to improve Viet Nam's policymaking and implementation processes. For Outcome 2, as noted above, innovation has been taken up in several initiatives, such as dengue forecasting and new approaches to the eventual self-financing of natural resource management, but there is still more work to be done to understand how government institutions, the public and the private sector are supposed to take up innovation into their routine practices, or even to clarify the benefits of innovation so that they consider uptake. The evaluation found that, if UNDP can play a stronger role as a source of knowledge (documenting innovation and sustainability lessons from all of its projects) rather than being mostly a facilitator for funding and access to global knowledge networks, this could strengthen its role as a development partner for the Government and help Viet Nam play a stronger leadership role within ASEAN.

Finding 2. Partnership: UNDP has made notable efforts in building strategic and operational partnerships with multiple stakeholders to achieve the country programme objectives, and some of these have evolved into partnership models that promote intragovernmental coordination and synergy. UNDP has been an active player within the One United Nations setting, and while collaborative efforts and joint programming with other United Nations agencies do exist, there is room for expanding this engagement.

UNDP has partnered with stakeholders ranging from United Nations agencies both in and outside of Viet Nam, international development cooperation agencies, ministries, subnational government units, mass organizations,⁴⁷ NGOs, academics, think tanks and the private sector to achieve its objectives. Several partnership models that attempt to maximize synergies and minimize duplication have emerged during the current programme cycle. For example, within the poverty reduction and inclusive growth portfolio, UNDP policy dialogue forums have served to mobilize stakeholders to exchange views and have facilitated the integration or reinforcement of poverty reduction into line ministry strategies and activities (see findings 7 and 8). This integration, in turn, has helped to limit overlaps and inconsistencies between related documents, ensured better use of funding and human resources and improved the effectiveness and impact of poverty reduction work at grassroots level.

Instrumental in country programme implementation were UNDP direct partnerships with the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) on MDP and social assistance, and with MPI and their subnational agencies on inclusive growth. Other stakeholders with relevant work mandates, such as the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA), the National Assembly and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), were also involved.

UNDP also brought together academics and think tanks when conducting policy research, dialogue and training, involved mass organizations when targeting particular disadvantaged groups such as blind people, and involved NGOs, State-owned enterprises and private businesses in developing local production networks.⁴⁸

Partnerships with Government, communities and the private sector are a dominant feature of GCF and most GEF projects, since these are structured to link policy change to changes in behaviour and the engagement of end user communities over the life of the project. This requires time and effort to set up and maintain partnerships, for example defining respective roles and tasks in memoranda of understanding (MoUs), and to manage them to overcome implementation in silos, a major issue with programme delivery. Almost all projects in the Outcome 2 portfolio have documented coordination challenges, especially between national and provincial partners, which at times have been related to capacity issues.⁴⁹ UNDP has, in general, recognized the imperative for partnership development and has tried to bolster the capacity for implementation through quite extensive awareness raising and training sessions, in addition to many coordination and planning workshops.

The UNDP Accelerator Lab has been instrumental in mobilizing the engagement of different NGOs and private sector organizations in the country. Likewise, the implementation model of the 'EU Justice and Legal Empowerment Programme' (EU JULE) brings together a wide range of national stakeholders in the justice sector, and thus has become a testing ground for intersectoral coordination. All of the above-mentioned partnerships have been highly relevant for achieving country programme objectives and exploring ways to promote whole-of-government and -society solutions.

⁴⁷ Mass organizations include socioeconomic organizations under the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party, the principal of which being the Women's Union, the Youth Union, the Confederation of Labour Unions, the Veterans' Association and the Peasants' Association.

⁴⁸ i.e. the Ethnic Minority Women Economic Empowerment project.

⁴⁹ For example, due to capacity challenges like in POPs, wetlands, and coastal resilience initiatives.

UNDP has been an active player within the One United Nations setting in Viet Nam, traditionally by providing operational and programmatic support to the United Nations Resident Coordinator to achieve the DaO objectives, and recently to achieve an effective Resident Representative/ Coordinator delinking following reform of the United Nations development system. Within the One Strategic Plan, UNDP is Chair or Co-chair of three out of four United Nations Joint Results Groups and Co-chair of the Programme Management Team, the Ethnic Minority Working Group and the United Nations SDG Task Force. It is a technical lead for the Human Rights Thematic Group and COVID-19 response plan, including the One United Nations Socioeconomic Impact Assessment and United Nations Economic Assessment and Socioeconomic Impact Assessment of COVID-19.

Across the country portfolio, however, programme partnerships involving other United Nations agencies are less common than bilateral UNDP/ Government partnership projects. UNDP has engaged with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (UN REDD) and National RED++ Action Plan; and with the World Health Organization (WHO) in the dengue forecasting project, along with the UK Space Agency and HR Wallingford. A boost in joint initiatives was brought by new SDG Funds in 2019. UNDP took a leading role on social protection initiatives with the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); on the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) SDG financing with UN Women, UNEP and UNICEF; and on the COVID-19 response with UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women. UNDP partnered with UNICEF on the 'EU JULE' project. In other efforts, UNDP played an important role in the design and finalization of the United Nations

country team Central Emergency Response Fund applications, leading the joint United Nations assessment teams and successfully mobilizing resources for Storm Damery in 2017,⁵⁰ Central floods in 2020,⁵¹ and the design of joint projects for the Mekong Delta.⁵² UNDP has played a leading role in the United Nations country team efforts for the COVID-19 response and recovery, including as technical lead for the United Nations Economic Recovery Group, the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment and the preparation of the United Nations Socio-Economic Response Plan.

Competition between large and small United Nations Agencies continues, and while collaboration has progressed well in some projects given opportunities within the COVID-19 response and recovery, it has been limited to very few initiatives. Sometimes this has been due to the limited capacities of smaller agencies, and other times due to a lack of clarity on the agencies' relative contributions and ability to deliver and support the Government. United Nations agencies recognize the UNDP role in coordination and access to the Government, and its large and comprehensive mandate which responds to the integrated nature of the SDGs. There is considerable scope for expanding this collaboration in the next cycle as the country recovers from COVID-19 shocks.

Finding 3. Gender: UNDP has made significant progress in establishing a gender-responsive organizational environment and mainstreaming gender in its projects and programmes. However, there is uneven allocation of gender expenditure, integration and collaboration across the portfolios. Performance reporting on outcome-level results remains a challenge.

The current UNDP Viet Nam gender equality and women's empowerment programme is stronger than in the previous cycle.⁵³ The UNDP programme rationale on gender notes the structural barriers

⁵⁰ In partnership with UNICEF, IOM and UN Women.

⁵¹ In partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA.

⁵² In partnership with IFAD, UNIDO, FAO and UNICEF.

⁵³ The country office implemented the recommendations of the Assessment of Development Results on the integration of gender into programme and project design, setting up a gender team that works across programming and developing a gender strategy and action plan.

to gender equality and identifies gender equality actions required to transform unequal power relations between men and women. To address these challenges, the country office has developed a gender strategy which aims to move from gender-sensitive to gender-transformative programming.⁵⁴ This gender-responsive country programme approach has been comprehensive in mainstreaming gender issues at both internal and programmatic levels, as well in its programme partnerships by encouraging partners to achieve gender equality results.

The country office has made important progress in establishing a gender-responsive organizational environment during the current cycle. In 2017, the office received the UNDP Silver Certificate through the gender equality seal process.⁵⁵ The office is still working to address gaps identified by the gender seal certification process to progress further. Women make up the majority of the country office human resources (69 percent) and are very well represented in senior positions. The country office has a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Task Team, chaired by the Deputy Resident Representative, with members from both programme and operations teams. It also has a gender focal point who is currently the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Analyst. To increase staff engagement, contribution and accountability, all staff performance management and development includes one key result on gender. The country office has a comprehensive set of documents to guide gender-sensitive programming and operations,⁵⁶ and has organized gender trainings and awareness initiatives with its staff.

UNDP Viet Nam has maintained consistent attention to gender mainstreaming in its programme. Between 2017 and 2020, the country office allocated approximately half of its programme expenditure to GEN2

and GEN3 projects, with GEN2 projects accounting for 61 percent of programme expenditure to date, compared to 1 percent for GEN3 projects.⁵⁷ Of GEN2 programme expenditure, 38 percent was allocated to resilience and environmental sustainability (Outcome 2), compared to 13 percent on governance (Outcome 3) and 7 percent on projects responding to poverty reduction and social equity (Outcome 1). Across the three outcome areas, gender marked projects utilize a twin track approach, which employs both mainstreaming throughout the programme and implementing women's empowerment interventions.

Programmatically, governance and participatory and accountable institution portfolios pay considerable attention to gender equality and human rights as key results areas, focusing on increases in women's participation in decision-making and representation in leadership positions, and strengthening the protection of human rights. Key contributions have been seen, for example, in increasing women's participation in decision-making and leadership at community and local levels, and improved leadership and mentoring of grassroots campaigns based on youth-made communication products to deconstruct gender stereotypes in careers and leadership, with good results in promoting new gender norms among young people for an inclusive society.

UNDP work on women's participation in decision-making and leadership is built on gains made in the 2012–2016 programme cycle. The country office has been very active in public communications through campaigns to break gender stereotypes targeting different audiences, as well as in promoting effective knowledge sharing and learning through interactive websites that publicize and share relevant materials to help women in their leadership journey. The 'Ready for Success' website and the

⁵⁴ UNDP Viet Nam Gender Equality Strategy and action plan 2017-2021.

⁵⁵ An internal assessment of gender mainstreaming in UNDP country offices, based on internal policies, gender-sensitive tools.

⁵⁶ UNDP Viet Nam Gender Equality Strategy 2017-2021; Gender marker action plan; Guidelines on gender-sensitive language; Checklist for gender mainstreaming (included in LPAC SOP); Memo on Gender Mainstreaming into Project and Evaluation; Memo on Gender-responsive Evaluation; and Memo on Harassment Prevention.

⁵⁷ The UNDP gender marker system monitors the focus of programmes on - and their expected contribution to - gender equality and women's empowerment. This system provides a basis to distinguish between outputs that are expected to: not contribute noticeably to gender equality ("GEN0"); make a limited contribution to gender equality ("GEN1"); promote gender equality in a significant and consistent way ("GEN2"); or have gender equality as a primary objective ("GEN3").

comprehensive online training manual for potential women candidates for the 2016 election have received a large number of visitors interested in practical advice on everything from public speaking and the preparation of an action plan, to engaging with the media. While the results on women's participation have benefitted from past gains, funding constraints have limited activities to support results. The ultimate change in the proportion of women in decision-making and representation will become clearer after the national and local elections in 2021. Change will also depend on other factors, including national policies on gender equality.

Since 2018, most of the gains on gender equality during this programme cycle have derived from the mainstreaming of gender into UNDP projects, especially ones with significant gender components such as the EU JULE, PAPI and 'Ethnic minority women economic employment empowerment' projects. EU JULE considers women as key beneficiaries among vulnerable groups. This combined approach has indicated that, in order to advance gender equality, the mainstreaming of gender into UNDP projects is as important as having separate projects for women and has contributed to the gender components of the SDGs.

PAPI has introduced questions on gender and produced a special report on this theme. The new phase of PAPI, with Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade funding, will focus on issues of gender norms and related emerging policy issues. The PAPI project provides a public platform for relaying women's voices (women constitute 33 percent of the PAPI survey sample) on transparency, accountability, corruption and public service delivery. PAPI revealed unconscious biases against women, particularly in leadership positions. The public considered gender mainstreaming as less of a priority in Viet Nam, revealing the extent of gender

bias in public perception. PAPI data from the survey is planned to be used for the design of training for women in leadership.

In addition, gender considerations were systematically integrated into projects on access to justice, protection of rights, human rights education and public awareness. Special attention was paid to eliminating discrimination against women with disabilities through access to vocational training, and access to justice for women and victims of gender-based violence under the umbrella project for achieving the 2030 Agenda in Asia-Pacific, which works to institutionalize gender-based budgeting.

UNDP has been expanding its gender equality efforts in peace-keeping and -building within a broader partnership with the Ministry of Defence on mine action and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in advancing the Women Peace and Security agenda. UNDP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence, has involved women in their global peacekeeping efforts. In 2017, Viet Nam sent the first female staff officer to join the United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan.⁵⁸ UNDP has provided technical support for the introduction of gender in the National Assembly resolution on Women Peace and Security, resulting in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting United Nations, UNDP and UN Women to continue this work.

Initiatives within the resilience and environment portfolio have had fairly significant engagement with women, disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities and have created opportunities to help address environmental and climate change issues that disproportionately affect them. This has been especially evident in projects that engage with local communities on disaster risk management (DRM), climate change adaptation, natural resource management and biodiversity conservation;⁵⁹ more so than in energy efficiency projects.⁶⁰ In reported

⁵⁸ <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/Viet Nam/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/UNSCR1325.html>.

⁵⁹ UN-REDD Viet Nam Phase II Programme, for example, embedded gender mainstreaming in the development guidelines of the Provincial REDD+ Action Plan and Site-based REDD+ Action Plans. Women make up 40 percent of the 7,856 local people trained on REDD+, forest protection and livelihood development in the Action Plans.

⁶⁰ Output 2.1, energy efficiency/climate mitigation has five GEN1 projects and three GEN2 projects; Output 2.2, disaster risk management/climate resilience has three GEN1 and seven GEN2 projects; and Output 2.3, natural resource management and environment has five GEN1 and seven GEN2 projects.

cases, gender-sensitive solutions for climate change action planning have been promoted through the training and capacity development of local women to lead on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change agreement initiatives. However, the nature of this engagement is not very well described, with inferences made mostly about capacity building activities, rather than articulating how women and disadvantaged groups used their exposure to projects and capacity building to change their situation on the ground.⁶¹ On the other hand, some projects are noteworthy in their engagement and reporting with regard to the involvement of women and ethnic minorities.⁶² For climate change, more attention is needed within MARD and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) to improve gender budgeting in climate change initiatives, but this requires stronger and more specialized capacity to identify and monitor the gender-differentiated impacts of climate investment and expenditure, so that future gender-focused initiatives can be properly resourced.

The community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) plans supported by UNDP have also targeted women, who made up the majority of project beneficiaries. However, discussions with stakeholders indicate that gender initiatives are not leading to actual changes in roles or benefits.⁶³ UNDP reporting for the CBDRM projects indicates that the specific attributes and needs of marginalized groups (women and ethnic minorities) are not well understood by provincial governments (DARD for example), who find it difficult to assess the impact of projects using a gender lens or develop initiatives that go beyond quotas and the targeted engagement of women. In these cases, UNDP has been consistent in promoting the role of women

in formulating and implementing policies, such as the inclusion of gender equality principles in the draft NDC and the revised Law on Environmental Protection, in the hope of embedding gender and equality considerations in all project planning and government operations.

In other efforts, the country office has shown strong capacity for gender mainstreaming, both within the United Nations country team and with national partners, to effectively achieve gender equality results. The country office cooperates with other actors in the country, building synergies and collaboration with civil society, Government and universities. This has been clear within the One United Nations platform, where UNDP, in collaboration with the German Corporation for International Cooperation, UN Women and NGOs, undertook gender analysis in climate change to provide inputs to Viet Nam's revised NDC. More recently, UNDP has partnered with UN Women to undertake a gender-sensitive assessment of the socioeconomic impact COVID-19 on poor rural households and their businesses, with a focus on women.

One of the key challenges observed by the evaluation, at project and programme levels, is the lack of performance reporting on outcome-level results, such as changes in the economic, political and leadership status of women, the intended or unintended effects on norms and rules, or the challenges faced. Whilst good efforts are noted in the inclusion of sex-disaggregated indicators at project and programme level and the use of evaluation to review and improve gender indicators, more efforts are required for learning from challenges to improve current projects or design relevant gender-focused interventions in the future.

⁶¹ Climate Resilient Infrastructure Planning (low gender analysis profile; women were engaged in low numbers); Commercial Building Energy Efficiency (no gender analysis or action plan; reflecting the gender profile of the building sector, in any case); Green Chemistry (gender analysis not properly documented and responded to); advancing the National Action Plan (there was involvement of women in climate-smart agriculture initiatives, but just in a couple of workshops); LED technology project (no specific gender analysis or initiatives); Non-Fired Bricks (no specific gender approaches); and the POPs project (an ongoing need to collect information on the number of affected beneficiaries, as well as gender aspects).

⁶² The biosphere project has a gender mainstreaming plan and the coastal resilience project has had an appropriate focus on poor, vulnerable, and female-headed households (resilient housing built for them, and involvement in mangrove replantation). Houses for the poor, near-poor, and women-headed households, benefiting more than 6,830 people, 65% of them women, in five coastal provinces. However, gender-specific activities are seen as "add-ons", not fully embedded within the project, based on comments from the Women's Union.

⁶³ The Women's Union indicated that gender initiatives and associated reporting just gets filed; not leading to actual change in roles or benefits.

Finding 4. Monitoring and evaluation: The programme theory of change for the CPD outcomes lacks consideration of intermediate changes, assumptions and risk for reaching and measuring key results and intended outcomes. Project performance measurement focuses mostly on activities, with limited explanation of lasting changes within institutions and society. Indicators at output and outcome levels are not specific enough to show UNDP contributions to outcome-level results, and the utility of the ToC and M&E as a management and learning tool is very limited.

The programme ToC articulates the three outcomes and the intended direction of the programme to help achieve the proposed targets, with a list of outputs and interventions, and touches on the assumptions. However, gaps remain in detailing the nature of change and the short and intermediate changes necessary for reaching the country programme results. The absence of short- and medium-term change in the ToC means that there are no systematic process indicators in the results framework to capture changes that lead to the results and identify weak links in programme design and implementation. Furthermore, reaching key results also depends on the expansion of policy coverage and the capacity of participating stakeholders to deliver policy measures, and improved coordination among stakeholders. As such, a more systematic mapping of the short- and medium-term capacities of the various government agencies and local communities needs to be included.

Another missing element in the ToC is the proper articulation of assumptions. The ToC briefly touches upon these, categorized as ‘enabling conditions’, ‘duty bearers’ and ‘rights holders’, and generalized to the convergence of policies, financing mechanisms, workable partnerships and awareness, access and

realizable benefits in the general population. There is no way of knowing why these have not been achieved before and what risks or constraints may have prevented change. This is a missed opportunity to identify the risks that need to be addressed through appropriate project design and adaptive management.

The different layers in the ToC are mostly iterations of results statements and do not necessarily provide guidance or functional linkages between actions, outputs and outcomes. There is little evidence of the ToC being used in reporting, how it has been utilized for monitoring purposes, or whether revisions have been made to guide new initiatives under the country programme.⁶⁴

Measuring outcome-level results remains another key challenge.⁶⁵ Indicators at outcome and output levels are not specific or detailed enough to enable the UNDP contribution to be measured.⁶⁶ Most monitoring reports focus on the completion of activities, while final reports focus on outputs and outcomes and do not use indicators as reporting tools. While there have been efforts to collect progress data based on results indicators, these are not sufficient to capture UNDP efforts.⁶⁷ Furthermore, project monitoring and reporting relies on expenditure as a proxy for progress, and the number of people engaged in project activities apparently serves as an indicator for the number of beneficiaries (without explicit benefits in the indicator statements). The country office relies on the documentation of actions and numbers of participants, with the assumption that participation brings benefits. This obscures the actual extent of beneficial change on the ground due to specific projects, which in turn makes it difficult to develop compelling case studies to support the replication and scale-up of initiatives. The M&E system has adequate output-level gender indicators

⁶⁴ For example, the new projects beginning during this cycle under outcome 3.

⁶⁵ This remains a corporate-level challenge for UNDP along with the challenge of capturing UNDP contributions through the unification of OSP/UNDAF/ UNSDCF outcome indicators with the CPD.

⁶⁶ Indicator 3.3.1 is too broad and does not specify the contribution to private sector. “Extent to which there is a strengthened environment for civic engagement, including legal regulatory framework for NGOs to function in public sphere and to contribute to development and effective mechanisms to engage civils society”.

⁶⁷ For example, Outcome Indicator 3.1 “Proportion of seats held by women in national and subnational government” with its target 35 percent, cannot fully be attributed to UNDP as many contributors and legal and structural issues are at play. There is also a lack of explicit indicators related to private sector engagement in the results framework, while many projects have engaged the private businesses.

and sex-disaggregated data are collected. There is good reporting on income generation achievements among ethnic minority women in project areas, which is also used in government reports, but there are no specific indicators to systematically trace gains for ethnic minorities.

Regular monitoring activities are conducted with the Government and key stakeholders to follow up on progress and record timely feedback from stakeholders. However, for many projects that started during this cycle, monitoring has been irregular, mostly due to uneven donor resources for use in M&E activities. All projects have annual progress reports, though most are activity-based. Overall, the quality of M&E plans is uneven among projects, though the majority are integrated with national plans (where possible) and unified data reporting systems are in place.

For NIM projects, the weight of monitoring and reporting is on ministries, and UNDP staff rely on government reporting on project tasks.⁶⁸ Since some output targets and related indicators rely on government statistics,⁶⁹ the contributions of individual UNDP projects to these national-level results cannot possibly be determined, and the assumptions behind some indicators, like GHG emissions, are not very clear. The same is true for outcome-level results. Based on the desk review, reporting of contributions to outcome targets heavily relies on government statistics⁷⁰ and assumptions about the number of people benefiting based on population statistics in a given area.⁷¹ The tracking of policy development is even more challenging, as this requires noting

that “policies are in place”. Their effectiveness is not tracked, and policy changes for climate adaptation and DRR are not reported. The number of people benefitting from UNDP project contributions to environmental quality and sustainable natural resource management is not tracked consistently, and the data and information are unreliable and fragmented.

Evaluation coverage has been weak and is limited to mandatory GEF evaluations in the environment portfolio, which constitute 81 percent of all evaluations conducted by the country office during this cycle. Most of the 2017–2021 projects have not yet had final evaluations as many are still ongoing. The use of past evaluations applies to projects that have more than one phase and have conducted either midterm or final evaluations, and there are indications that recommendations and lessons learned are being considered in the formulation of those projects’ second phases.⁷² Single-phase or initiation plan projects do not conduct midterm evaluations and thus do not have recommendations and lessons to implement.⁷³ To date, the country office has only conducted 32 percent of planned decentralized evaluations in this cycle;⁷⁴ and the IEO quality assessment rated 50 percent of those as “moderately satisfactory” and the rest as “moderately unsatisfactory”.

Risk management is carried out at project level, and project design documents are clear on the potential risks for effective project implementation.⁷⁵ However, it is unclear whether the risks identified are monitored, or adjustments actively made as projects proceed. Several risks emerged during the

⁶⁸ This is especially evident in the Means of Verification for One United Nations outcomes.

⁶⁹ Such as forest cover and percentage of GDP lost to disasters.

⁷⁰ In response to the 2017 Assessment of Development Results recommendation, the country office indicated the use of national data and monitoring and evaluation systems to measure programme performance and using the ToC. The reliance on more use of government data is perhaps not the best way to monitor and understand the contributions of each project, and there is no evidence that the ToC is actively used in any way.

⁷¹ This is evident in the reporting of the number of beneficiaries in areas developing licenses for ABS.

⁷² From the initial phases of the ‘Support for the Implementation of Resolution 80’ project and the ‘Social Assistance’ project.

⁷³ As per UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, in addition to all GE/AF and GCF evaluations, the following project evaluations must be conducted: (a) Projects with a planned budget or actual expenditure of over \$5 million must plan and undertake both a midterm and final evaluation; (b) Projects with a planned budget or actual expenditure between \$3 million and \$5 million must plan and undertake either a midterm or final evaluation; (c) Projects with a duration of more than five years must plan and undertake either a midterm or final evaluation; (d) Projects entering a second phase should plan and undertake an evaluation; and (e) Development initiatives being considered for scaling up should be evaluated before expansion.

⁷⁴ A total of 31 evaluations were planned by the country office, of which 11 had been completed by the time of the ICPE and 12 were cancelled, mostly due to projects being delayed, cancelled or not approved yet.

⁷⁵ There are lots of risks identified for the biosphere project, mostly related to ongoing funding and the institutional modality.

implementation process,⁷⁶ which were not sufficiently mitigated across all projects. Another risk includes the COVID-19 pandemic, which has slowed down project implementation across the board, although UNDP has managed to maintain delivery rate targets.

In some cases, project management has not been sufficiently flexible and responsive to required changes. The 'Green Chemistry' project is a good example of this. The midterm review was critical of the project management for not being sufficiently clear or adaptive to the issue of companies in Viet Nam being conservative and change averse, and failing to develop an appropriate communication plan to address this. Furthermore, some government partners, such as the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT), are not clear about activities and expectations and are not proactive in mitigating risks. In other cases, projects lacked diligent risk monitoring and adaptive management,⁷⁷ or failed to improve their M&E systems.⁷⁸ The evaluation noted that in some of these cases, the language used for reporting obscures the actual situation. While independent reviews of some projects point out difficulties in implementation, UNDP reporting indicates a more positive picture, using language that is overly sanguine and sometimes with hyperbolic statements not fully supported by evidence, while others seem to express hope more than reality.⁷⁹

Finding 5. COVID-19 response and recovery: UNDP has adopted a comprehensive approach that is timely and critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the country. Its response has been highly appreciated by stakeholders and will serve to establish a timely evidence base for the design of post-pandemic socioeconomic response and recovery.

Viet Nam was one of the first countries outside of mainland China to detect cases of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, with the first case reported on January 23rd, 2020. Since then the Government has mobilized its system at all levels and worked tirelessly to limit the spread of the virus and ensure medical treatment for those infected, stepping up quarantine requirements including mandatory and centralized quarantine for travellers from outside of the country.

A comprehensive set of UNDP interventions covers areas of health procurement, communication for prevention, relief for social groups affected by the pandemic situation, and post-pandemic recovery. The support was timely and critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and preparing a post-pandemic socioeconomic recovery policy and response. UNDP donated 20,000 high-quality surgical masks to the Ministry of Health (MoH) to support health workers on the frontline of the COVID-19 response. These interventions are built upon the existing partnership and MoU with MoH on sustainable procurement.

Together with MoH, UNDP launched a campaign called "Spreading the Word– #LeaveNoOneBehind" to deliver COVID-19 prevention messages through animation and other means of communication. 21 videos were produced, including some in ethnic minority and sign languages, and featured on national television and social media. The Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health, under MoH and in partnership with UNDP, launched the official English version of the famous #GhenCoVyChallenge handwashing music video,⁸⁰ which has received nearly 4.6 million views since it was launched in April 2020. UNDP partnered with AngelHack and Hanoi Youth Union in launching an online 'Hack Covy' hackathon to leverage inclusive innovation and technology development to support the national COVID-19 response across six categories: inequality,

⁷⁶ The Liveable Ho Chi Minh City Initiation Plan did not materialize owing to uncertainty of funding and change in Ho Chi Minh City leadership.

⁷⁷ POPs project. According to the midterm review, the PSC role was apparently not clear.

⁷⁸ The Non-Fired Brick project review indicates the need to improve its M&E system. The evaluation team could not find evidence of this.

⁷⁹ Examples include reports from UN-REDD, Rio Conventions project, Non-fired Brick project and Green Chemistry projects.

⁸⁰ <https://youtu.be/wGoodWetV8c>. Revenue generated through this video will be channelled to UNDP for COVID-19 response activities.

economy, health, climate, education and governance. UNDP has also involved REACH, a vocational education organization, to provide information technology training for people with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 30 to enhance connectivity during the pandemic. REACH has followed up with students six months after their graduation and reports that some 50 percent had found jobs.⁸¹

UNDP, together with UN Women, chaired the United Nations country team Economic Impact Assessment Working Group and conducted the socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19 on micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), poor households and ethnic minorities.⁸² This fed into an assessment by the National Centre for Socioeconomic Information and Forecast under the Ministry of Planning and Investment and informed the socioeconomic response plan.⁸³ Other UNDP-led COVID-19 activities included the preparation of the working group report on COVID-19 economic impact, and the consolidation of the United Nations

report on the COVID-19 Social and Economic Impact working groups. UNDP also conducted rapid consultation with local partners in seven provinces on COVID-19 impacts and the immediate needs of waste collectors, poor farmers and other vulnerable groups, alongside a survey of people with disabilities. UNDP also donated 15 Ohmni Robots to the Ministry of Health to help protect frontline doctors and nurses in hospitals in the Central province from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. In joint United Nations efforts, UNDP successfully developed a joint programme on social protection (with ILO, UNFPA and UNICEF) from the SDG Fund, and a joint programme on COVID-19 response and recovery (with UNICEF, UNPFA and UN Women) funded by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund. Overall, key informants from national and development partners view the UNDP response to the COVID-19 pandemic as very timely, comprehensive and useful to Viet Nam's evolving needs on prevention and post-pandemic efforts to build back better.

UNDP VIET NAM COVID-19 RESPONSE



Health System Strengthening

- Robotic support to front line health workers
- Standards and quality assurance for scaling national production of essential PPE
- Delivering health information and awareness to ethnic minorities and people with disabilities



Green Resilient Economy

- Cash for work activities for the poor and vulnerable
- Supporting farmers and agricultural cooperatives to recover through diversification of markets and green production
- Training and awareness raising for agricultural cooperatives and SMEs on business risks prevention and green supply chains



Social Protection

- Impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities (PWDs)
- Socio-Economic Impact Assessment on vulnerable households and MSMEs in 58/63 provinces
- 750 PPE packages to informal waste workers, 1,600 water tanks for clean water storage and PPE and relief support to 9,100 UXO survivors



Digital Disruption

- E-governance and digitizing public service provision
- Digitalization of the social protection system in five provinces
- 'Hack Covy' hackathon to source inclusive innovations
- Accelerating e-commerce for household businesses, MSMEs and cooperatives, including women, ethnic minorities, and youth

Source: UNDP Viet Nam, August 2020

⁸¹ <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/Viet Nam/en/home/coronavirus.html>.

⁸² <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/Viet Nam/en/home/library/covid-19-socio-economic-impact-on-vulnerable-households-and-ent.html>.

⁸³ <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/SERP.html>.

The country office has taken an active role in ensuring that COVID-19 related interventions in Viet Nam are designed based on the broader UNDP response, including experimenting with and testing approaches to cover gaps that may not be covered by previous programming. The COVID-19 Social Economic Impact 2020 survey ensured a balance between a large sample size and adequate representation of female-led households.

Finding 6. Innovation. The country office has introduced the concepts of the Accelerator Lab, AAA governance and inclusive innovation to call for wider and more inclusive stakeholder engagement so as to generate innovative and integrated solutions for accelerating the achievement of development goals and enlarging the scale of impacts. While these have enhanced both internal and external collaborations of UNDP, it is too early to gauge their long-term sustainability and potential for scale-up.

UNDP Viet Nam was among the first offices to launch the Accelerator Lab, in June 2019, as an acknowledgement of the additional capacity and specific tools needed to respond to fast-paced changes in the country. It aims to re-imagine how development work is done by promoting a culture of innovation and experimentation. The expectation is to ensure continued UNDP relevance to development by improving its capacity to adapt in a rapidly changing environment, and to provide an effective response to local partners to achieve the SDGs. In Viet Nam, the Accelerator Lab implements communication and regional engagement, and experiments with and maps solutions, with an allocated budget of \$983,423 over the 2019-2021 period.

Results from the Accelerator Lab contribute to all three outcome areas. Under Outcome 1, the Accelerator Lab approach helped UNDP to offer innovative solutions to accelerate poverty reduction among ethnic minority women in Bac Kan and Dak Nong provinces, and influenced the design of the Government's poverty reduction programme

(2021–2025). Within Outcome 2, UNDP worked with Danang city on promoting an innovative and systemic approach to waste management and plastics pollution. Within Outcome 3, the Accelerator Lab supported the setup of a City Lab in Danang to experiment with urban development solutions. The Accelerator Lab has been experimenting with different approaches such as collective intelligence and behavioural insights to address the issue of waste management, introducing the concepts of AAA governance and inclusive innovation to call for wider and more inclusive stakeholder engagement in order to generate innovative and integrated solutions and enlarge the scale of impacts.

Waste management is the initial focus area of the Accelerator Lab in Viet Nam. UNDP has worked closely with municipal authorities to conduct waste segregation experiments for evidence-based policymaking. Most results were achieved around awareness on the need for policy to regulate informal waste workers.⁸⁴ On the implementation front, experimentation took place to address the lack of waste-sorting infrastructure in Danang city and an expressed need to recycle more valuable waste including metal, paper and high-grade plastics. The Government has shown an interest in understanding innovative options and experimentation, but working out the relationship between Government and city dwellers in waste management has been challenging, causing delays and gaps in delivery. Furthermore, the initiative has suffered from poor internal communication on waste collection, for example big trucks lacking waste compartments still being used, and no recycling activities initially envisioned. Under Outcome 2, another project 'Accelerating Private Sector Engagement in NDC' contributed to innovation through AAA governance, COVID-19 activities,⁸⁵ and systemic design for a circular economy.⁸⁶ In some cases, advancing innovation has been challenged by low engagement of the private sector (the lack of practical examples in the agricultural business sector in Viet Nam has

⁸⁴ Many of whom are vulnerable women from poor socioeconomic backgrounds.

⁸⁵ Production of personal protective equipment, digital solutions to COVID-19 and the use of robots in hospitals.

⁸⁶ Danang waste management project – Circular Economy Lab in Danang.

suppressed interest, for example⁸⁷), and challenges in communicating innovative ideas to the private sector. On the other hand, 15 innovative solutions coming from different ASEAN countries have been intensively incubated to tackle the ocean plastic waste problem in Ha Long Bay (Viet Nam) and Koh Samui (Thailand), and efforts continue to be made to engage the private sector, despite the challenges.

Overall, the Lab team has succeeded in finding and opening space for pre-emptive design or frameworks on innovation and pushing forward the innovation agenda. Experiments in Bac Kan and Dak Nong have been used by CEMA and MoLISA to include the 4M (Meet-Match-Mentor-Move) and Accelerator Lab approaches in drafting the NTP on Socio-Economic Development in Ethnic Minority Areas. UNDP work in Danang city Lab has also shown signs of innovation being taken up as wider concept, with the establishment of an internal Innovation Task Force that brings together members from all city departments to identify key challenges and problems the city faces and to test experiments from which development solutions can be selected.

National stakeholders appreciate the UNDP concept of AAA governance as it forecasts capacity, is responsive to the context of globalization, and evolves with changing situations. All three aspects of governance are pertinent to Viet Nam, especially as it prepares strategic plans for the years 2030 and 2045, links its economy with the region and the world, and reacts effectively to the pandemic situation. AAA was adopted by the National Economic University as part of its training programme for senior civil servants. The Theoretical Council has included a paper on AAA governance for innovation and an inclusive 'fourth industrial revolution' (also known as IR 4.0) in a scientific publication of the Party. This uptake and coverage also call for UNDP to integrate these innovative approaches into its wider programming.

The efforts of the country programme to create an ecosystem of inclusive innovation in the country, have included raising the awareness of the Government on innovation for leaving no one behind, and collaboration with ASEAN and China to organise the 2019 High-level Regional Symposium on inclusive innovation. Viet Nam was a case study country for the UNDP, Bangkok Regional Hub, Regional Innovation Center and NESTA⁸⁸ regional study on strategies for inclusive innovation, which was published in the Symposium. UNDP Viet Nam has been working with the Ministry of Planning and Investment to unpack the concept of inclusive innovation, and has organized two national dialogues with different ministries and an action-oriented research paper on inclusive innovation policy in Viet Nam. UNDP is now advising the design of the newly established National Innovation Centre. Similarly, following this engagement, UNDP signed a MoU with the Central Institute for Economic Management on experimentation and testing solutions in support of MSMEs in Hue Province.

The evaluation found that the Accelerator Lab has brought wider organizational change to the UNDP country office by bringing together different groups and creating new development teams across programme areas, but lacked clarity on how Accelerator Lab related projects would lead to systemic changes. Stakeholders interviewed appreciated the introduction of these novel ideas, innovative concepts and experimental approaches, while questioning their benefits (owing to a lack of practical and successful examples to draw upon) and how they would be mainstreamed and implemented nationwide over the long term.

⁸⁷ Such as recommendations and roadmap for developing the MARD data.

⁸⁸ Centre for Collective Intelligence Design <https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/centre-collective-intelligence-design/>.

Finding 7. Resource mobilization: UNDP has successfully addressed its funding challenges as Viet Nam attained middle-income country status. However, government cost-sharing still remains a key challenge.

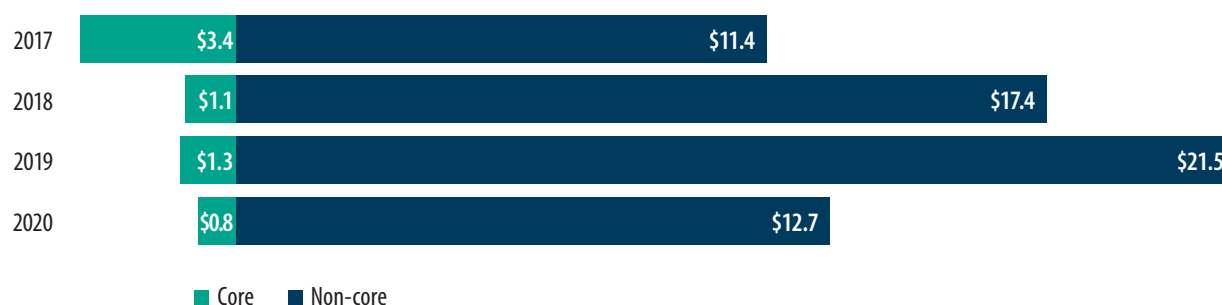
Viet Nam transitioned to a lower middle-income country in 2010, and graduated from International Development Association concessional loans in 2017. This significantly changed Viet Nam’s international financing architecture, with several established bilateral donors moving funding away from the country. This brought resource challenges for United Nations agencies, in particular a decline in UNDP core resources (see Figure 4), which triggered the need to consider non-traditional financing for the overall programme implementation during the CPD under review. UNDP has, despite the lack of government cost-sharing, carefully managed the decline in hybrid and grant-funded ODA to stay on course with its planned programme delivery in the country.

During the current CPD, the country office had planned for \$133 million expenditure across the three outcomes, which includes \$23.3 million of regular resources and \$110 million from other resources such as vertical funds and donor agencies. While there have been challenges with the estimated allocation of core resources (about \$9.2 million), UNDP has been roughly on track with non-core resources,

mobilizing an estimated \$70 million at the time of the ICPE against a \$110 million target.⁸⁹ The country office estimates a total delivery of \$104 million for the 2017-2021 CPD.⁹⁰ While UNDP core funding has reduced sharply during the CPD, the mobilization of non-core resources has steadily increased, partly due to the country office ability to secure resources from GEF and GCF, as well as attracting new donors such as the Republic of Korea, Australia, Norway, the United States and the EU.⁹¹

Funding has been a particular challenge for the poverty and equality programme, which seems to have impacted the economic policy advisory work, as well as the continuation of some projects and the sustainability of key results. Although development cooperation partners have gradually phased out their projects, especially their support to governance components, UNDP has been successful in securing agreements from several others in this area. For example, UNDP was successful in securing funding from Ireland and Australia (PAPI project); KOICA (Mine Action project in Quang Binh and Binh Dinh provinces); the EU (justice); the United States Department of State (criminal justice and anti-trafficking); and Norway (human rights). The country office also receives some funds from regional projects, which include those with funding from the UK (anti-corruption), Sweden (business and human rights) and Citibank (Youth Co-lab).

FIGURE 4. Core vs non-core expenditures (US\$ million)



⁸⁹ UNDP ATLAS, 18 Nov 2020.

⁹⁰ Country office Resource Mobilization Strategy, July 2020.

⁹¹ CPD 2014-2017 (Outcome 1 - 39 million, Outcome 2 - 75 million and Outcome 3 - 23 million).

While these projects make valuable programmatic contributions, some of these funds have relatively high transactional costs given their small size, and they often target specific themes or topics.

UNDP has also had some success with the Joint SDG Funding on social protection (with ILO, UNFPA and UNICEF) and on INFFs (with UNICEF, UNEP and UN Women). It also received funds from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for the COVID-19 response and recovery. In May 2020, UNDP also received an emergency fund of \$2 million from the Japanese Government for the COVID 19 response and recovery programme. UNDP leveraged this funding to support vulnerable groups highly affected by COVID 19, including MSMEs. UNDP has also played an active role in the United Nations country team, and supported the Government in disaster response and recovery, including mobilizing resources from CERF and Korea.

The country office signed an agreement with Finland to receive seed funding of \$30,000 for the development of a new strategic partnership and to make the case for a strategic investment portfolio on the circular economy in Viet Nam. The project will initiate a dialogue on systemic investing with a network of investors like development finance institutions, development and government partners on different financial instruments (e.g. private equity, guarantees and loans) and a systemic investment modality (e.g. circular economy fund, public-private partnership) for a blended financing mechanism for the promotion of a circular economy. More recently, the Government of Canada has agreed to support UNDP in an initiative aimed at improving the resilience of vulnerable groups through the promotion of social impact businesses and the supporting ecosystem, amounting to 3 million Canadian dollars.

UNDP has made numerous efforts to tap into the private sector and foundations, to unlock potential of innovative financing like green bonds, social

impact funds or impact investments, for activities related to low emissions, e-vehicles, sustainable agriculture products and the COVID-19 response. However, this ICPE could not find strong evidence of results from these efforts.⁹² The country office has a very detailed resource mobilization strategy, which it needs to proactively pursue.

Another key challenge for the country office is government cost-sharing, partly linked to the centralized government budget system and legal environment, and partly to the Government's emphasis on its significant vulnerabilities despite its LMIC status. UNDP will need to maintain the ongoing high-level dialogue with the Government on cost-sharing as a key principle for the mobilization of funds for the implementation of UNDP-supported projects in the LMIC context.

As an entry point, UNDP has explored the opportunity to support the Government through procurement, for example of HIV medication and personal protective equipment, at competitive prices. UNDP received a special waiver agreement from the Government for procurement services, combining operational support with capacity development by returning the savings to the Government as training on procurement. To date, UNDP has signed an agreement for government cost-sharing on equipment for HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 testing, amounting to \$600,000. It is important that the country office maintains the waiver agreement with the Government even when the situation returns to normal, and continues to seek alternative and innovative ways to gain co-financing from the Government. The Bangkok Regional Hub has some seed funding available to support country offices to move forward on the agenda of government financing, and has developed a "menu of services" based on country specifics.

⁹² The involvement of the private sector has consisted in disaster management, developing internal control mechanisms and a code of conduct, and designing robotic arms for persons with disabilities, among others.

2.2 Inclusive societies

CPD Outcome 1: By 2021, all people benefit from inclusive and equitable social protection systems and poverty reduction services, which will reduce multidimensional poverty and vulnerabilities.

UNDP interventions within this outcome mostly concentrated on efforts towards extreme poverty reduction. This includes projects addressing the measurement of multidimensional poverty in urban areas, among ethnic minority women and for social assistance protection. Other projects covered interventions to reduce extreme poverty in marginalized groups including people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, remote communities and women; promoting inclusive growth and strengthening productivity and competitiveness. Of the actual budget of \$5,586,670, actual expenditure accounted for \$3,010,125 in November 2020, around 54 percent of the available budget.

Finding 8. UNDP support to the NTP-SPR (2016–2020) has been critical to reinforce Viet Nam’s poverty reduction efforts. While policies and programmes introduced by UNDP are being implemented by the Government, the real impact will depend on how these capacities and solutions are scaled up nationwide.

UNDP support to the ‘Implementation of Resolution 80’ project (2012–2017) helped the Vietnamese Government to establish the innovative NTP-SPR 2016–2020. The project promoted investment in the poor and near-poor, the inhabitants of areas with difficult living conditions, and vulnerable communities, by ensuring their access to quality services (health care, education, vocational training, housing, clean water, waste management and access to information). The programme adopted mechanisms such as block grants and medium-term budget allocations to create favourable conditions for local planning based on need. Drawing on lessons from the South Korean ‘Saemaul Initiative Towards Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities’,⁹³ self-help and community empowerment approaches were integrated into NTP-SPR and NTP-NRD 2016–2020, particularly on production support and capacity building. To address the practical need for capacity building and implementation of the capacity building components of the two programmes, especially at grassroots level, MoLISA, MARD and CEMA developed training documents and handbooks with an inclusive and sustainable community spirit for their annual nationwide training for local staff.

UNDP support also critically influenced the decision to use a single implementation mechanism for the two NTPs. MoLISA uses a Rapid Impact Monitoring toolkit and procedure for reporting, aiming to collect qualitative information to complement quantitative information, which contributes to its management and administration of labour and social affairs nationwide.⁹⁴ All of these contributions are critical to reinforcing Viet Nam’s poverty reduction efforts.⁹⁵

⁹³ The South Korea model was later integrated into the NTP-SPR. The model is focusing on community empowerment instead of subsidies from the Government.

⁹⁴ Final Review Report: The Project “Support to the Implementation of Resolution 80 on Directions of Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2011-2020 and the National Target Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2012-2015 (PRPP, Hanoi, June 2017); and Korea International Cooperation Agency. ISNC Final Report-Viet Nam 2015-2017.

⁹⁵ For relevant government documents, see the NTP-SPR 2016-2020 at https://data.Viet Nam.opendevlopmentmekong.net/en/laws_record/decision-1722-qd-ttg-approving-national-target-program-for-sustainable-poverty-reduction-2016-2020; Decision No. 1865/QĐ-TTg on the implementation of action plans for national target programmes during the 2016-2020 period at <https://thukyluat.vn/vb/quyet-dinh-1865-qd-ttg-giao-ke-hoach-thuc-hien-chuong-trinh-muc-tieu-quoc-gia-2016-2020-59f6a.html>; and the NTP-NRD 2016-2020 at <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/van-hoa-xa-hoi/Quyết-dinh-1600-QĐ-TTg-chuong-trinh-muc-tieu-quoc-gia-xay-dung-nong-thon-moi-2016-2020-320132.aspx>.

Policies and programmes introduced by UNDP are being implemented with government resources and systems at national level.⁹⁶

UNDP has provided policy advice and organized policy dialogues to support evidence-based implementation of multidimensional poverty frameworks and objectives through the 'Initiation Plan PRPP Phase II' project.⁹⁷ Specifically, UNDP has supported the development of the first ever overview of multidimensional poverty in Viet Nam using national data.⁹⁸ With detailed analysis, the report served as an input for several key planning documents: the NTP-SPR midterm review; the national Voluntary National Review (VNR) report on SDG1; and the poverty reduction policy analysis required to prepare SEDS (2021–2030) and SEDP (2021–2025).⁹⁹ Additionally, UNDP has provided policy advice on the replication of Ho Chi Minh City initiatives on multidimensional poverty, based on reports on the city.¹⁰⁰ UNDP also engaged in policy research with the Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs (a think tank of MoLISA) in a review of multidimensional measures and indicators in Viet Nam. The review of MDP measurement at local level suggested that, for the period 2021–2025, more indicators need to be added.¹⁰¹

Implementation of NTP-SPR has led to positive changes. Viet Nam's average poverty rate has decreased significantly, reaching the target set by the National Assembly of 4 percent per annum. The level of deprivation of basic social services among poor households has also decreased. Along with reductions in the rate of poor households and the number of districts, communes and villages in

extreme poverty, Viet Nam has also attained the goal of the NTP for Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2016–2020.

Nonetheless, the scalability of these innovative interventions will depend on implementation capacity. Stakeholders interviewed consider that coordination among provincial-level agencies and between central and provincial government agencies will be critical to successful implementation, given the multiple dimensions of poverty challenges and the need to combine the reduction of poverty and the promotion of growth to ensure development over the long term. Given that many of the implementation solutions are decentralized, the capacity of local government and communities to take initiatives forward has become critical.

A clearer ToC for capacity building would have been critical to map a pathway to short- and medium-term changes to capacity. UNDP has taken wide-ranging initiatives for capacity building, from drawing on lessons learned for local-level experimentation, to generating innovative solutions and the utilization of learning, knowledge and improved capacities, as well as integrating solutions at local and provincial levels with policy shifts and scale up. For sustainability, approaches that emphasize the integration of capacity development into the public administration system need to be considered, including, but not limited to, recruitment, performance measurement and promotion processes.

Finding 9. UNDP has been successful in identifying solutions for multidimensional poverty reduction that focus on employment generation for vulnerable groups. The “business model” for ethnic minority women piloted in Bac Kan and Dak Nong

⁹⁶ Three noteworthy examples include: Prime Minister Decision No.1614/QĐ-TTg approving the master plan for “Transforming from Uni-Dimensional to Multi-Dimensional Poverty for the Period 2016 – 2020,” and Prime Minister Decision No. 1772/2016/QĐ-TTg approving the National Target Program for Sustainable Poverty Reduction for the period 2016 – 2020, as well as the guideline for planning target programmes as an integral part of social-economic development planning (2016 – 2020) at the local level.

⁹⁷ Support to the implementation of the Resolution 80/NQ-CP on directions of sustainable poverty reduction 2011-2020 and the National Targeted Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2012-2015.

⁹⁸ Including: VHLSS 2010 – 2016, the Population and Housing Census, surveys on the socioeconomic situation of 53 ethnic minority groups, and the National Survey on People with Disabilities in Viet Nam.

⁹⁹ Final Report: Preparation for a Full-Scale Project “Expanding Partnerships and Promoting Innovations for Eliminating Multi-Dimensional Poverty among Ethnic Minority Women” (PRPP II Initiation Plan).

¹⁰⁰ Report on the Support to Multidimensional Poverty Reduction Project in Urban Area from 2012-2017.

¹⁰¹ Key informant interviews with research institutes.

has been integrated into the NTP on Social Economic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for further scale-up. UNDP support to people with disabilities has directly addressed their rights to employment. Both achievements reinforce the “leaving no one behind” approach to sustainable development.

UNDP support to the economic empowerment of ethnic minority groups in Bac Kan and Dak Nong provinces, through the ‘Ethnic Minority Women Economic Empowerment through Application of Industry 4.0 Technology’ project, has developed a platform for local authorities, business sectors and local ethnic minority women to meet, discuss and match supply and demand. The project’s ToC centres on the ‘4M’ initiative, ‘meet, match, mentor and move’. The ‘meet’ stage brings together potential stakeholders from relevant government agencies, NGOs, women’s producer groups, and businesses. The ‘match’ stage focuses on connecting women’s producer groups with potential business partners and investors. In the pilot cases, stakeholders experimented with e-commerce business models. The ‘mentor’ stage focuses on strengthening the capacity of women producer groups in aspects necessary for e-commerce such as production, e-marketing and financial management. The ‘move’ stage is to scale up local businesses by improving access to finance and marketing information, as well as linkages in value chains.

During the ‘meet’ and ‘match’ stages, the provincial coordination office for NTP-NRD worked as key coordinator and ensured support from the People’s Committee of Bac Kan. It also coordinated provincial and central-level agencies, including the Department of Forestry, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Industry and Trade, DARD, Department of Planning and Investment, MoLISA, the Women’s Union and the Youth Union. The office also contacted specialists to provide

training for the ethnic minority women beneficiaries. Key local government stakeholders recognize that the project has contributed substantially to implementation of the NTP-NRD.¹⁰²

During the ‘mentor’ stage, a social enterprise engaged in rural development (VietED) helped to build capacity for the women to sell their products online. VietED introduced no-fee platforms such as Zalo, Facebook and Line and fee-paying platforms such as Shopping, Sen Do (Red Lotus) and Lazada, and provided participating ethnic minority women with basic skills for online marketing, including the use of the platform, photography, video recording, basic business planning and the identification of sources for inputs.¹⁰³

Through mentoring, the capacity of these women’s groups for business plan development has been strengthened, helping them to access better private and public resources. This process has economically empowered 31 ethnic minority women and increased their income by 20 percent after six months. Interviewees from central government agencies and social enterprises working in Bac Kan province report that the project has helped to build confidence among ethnic minority women and identify possible products for their groups. Overall, they have received capacity building support and their income has become more stable. Interviews with local beneficiaries and social enterprises reveal a preference for more support to be provided, to consolidate initial gains.¹⁰⁴ There are nonetheless some challenges. The timeframe for the project was limited, and the ‘move’ stage thus took place too early in the process. Furthermore, while most of the cooperatives are strong in production, they lack marketing capacity. There are also technical issues related to branding and brand registration, as well as the need to standardize products for online marketing and the registration of intellectual property rights.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Key informant interviews with the Bac Kan Provincial Administration.

¹⁰³ Key informant interviews with central government agencies and social enterprises working in Bac Kan province.

¹⁰⁴ Key informant interviews with social enterprises and local beneficiaries in Bac Kan province.

¹⁰⁵ Interviews with key stakeholders in Bac Kan confirm these observations.

This 'business model' has been integrated by CEMA into the NTP on Social Economic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas, for further scale-up. The lessons from the pilots at grassroots level were used as inputs for the development of policies and national programmes on socioeconomic development and poverty reduction in mountainous and ethnic minority areas. Key components include innovative business models and support to start-ups run by ethnic minorities. Tentatively, CEMA will provide support to individuals, link trade promotion with investment in minority areas, develop an ecosystem for start-ups from local to national levels, set up centres attached to universities to support minority businesses, and provide advisory and mentoring services.¹⁰⁶

In addition to supporting ethnic minority women, UNDP has supported the capacity of government agencies to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities through the 'Innovation for Inclusion - Reducing Inequalities and Leaving No One Behind' project. The study on 'Strengthening the Alignment of the National Law on Persons with Disabilities with the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other International Standards' helped MoLISA and other relevant agencies to identify gaps in regulatory frameworks that impeded equality and the full enjoyment of rights of people with disabilities. Furthermore, the 'Employment for Persons with Disabilities' study was critical in making a strong connection between the responsibilities of both the State and private sector in strengthening access to the labour market. The development of these reports led to a direct request from MoLISA to assess ten years of implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Law in Viet Nam, in order to help it revise the law in 2020. The two studies will also form the basis for a proposal to the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.¹⁰⁷

Finding 10. Ho Chi Minh City was successful in applying the multidimensional poverty concept until 2017, but the follow-up plan to further support its use in an urban setting has not materialized due to lack of funding and changes in leadership. This has generated gaps in the knowledge, understanding and models of how MDP could be implemented in urban settings.

UNDP work on poverty reduction in Ho Chi Minh City from 2012–2018, through the 'Support to Multidimensional Poverty Reduction in Urban Settings' project, resulted in the institutionalization of the MDP concept. The People's Committee of the city issued directives such as Decision No. 58/2015/QĐ on December 31 2015 determining the city's poverty line and criteria for poor and near-poor households for the period from 2016 to 2020, and the conversion from single-dimension to multidimensional and comprehensive measures of income. MoLISA used the experiences from the pilot programme in Ho Chi Minh City to develop a MDP approach for nationwide application, officially adopted by Prime Minister Decision No. 59/2015/QĐ-TTg on November 19 2015, to apply MDP measures for the period 2016–2020.¹⁰⁸

UNDP support has helped to improve awareness of MDP, as well as to disseminate implementation experiences within Viet Nam and beyond. Beneficiaries include: civil servants and public employees in Ho Chi Minh City, MoLISA, the National Assembly Committee on Social Affairs, People's Committees of other cities and provinces in the country and research institutes. Other provinces in Viet Nam benefitted through the 2016 National Symposium 'Multidimensional Poverty Reduction in Ho Chi Minh City', and direct exchanges of MDP experiences with Tra Vinh, Hanoi, Danang, Ba Ria and Vung Tau between 2014–2017, as well as with seven countries at the 2015 South-South Exchange Conference.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Key informant interviews with government agencies.

¹⁰⁷ Final Report: Innovation for Inclusion – Reducing Inequalities and Leaving No One Behind; and key informant interviews with CSOs.

¹⁰⁸ Report on the Support to Multidimensional Poverty Reduction Project in Urban Area from 2012-2017.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Owing to funding restraints and changes in Ho Chi Minh City's leadership and priorities, the initial plan of UNDP to develop the 'Liveable Ho Chi Minh City' project, which intended to reinforce preliminary successes with MDP in the city, has not materialized.¹¹⁰ This has deprived UNDP of the opportunity to directly pilot MDP implementation approaches for urban settings. While the Bac Kan and Dak Nong project has shown what could be done to improve the lives of ethnic minority women, there is no comparable model addressing MDP in urban settings. UNDP has provided national-level support to the MDP Hub in the Poverty Reduction Office, with whom it has collaborated on generating lessons learned and experiences of measuring MDP, conducting regular MDP analysis and monitoring using the data from the Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey and MDP household listings. Nonetheless, the absence of a pilot has not only deprived UNDP of the opportunity to directly test MDP implementation approaches for urban settings, but has also limited the opportunity for UNDP to work directly with specific vulnerable groups such as the urban poor or migrants to identify possible solutions.

Finding 11. UNDP has made notable contributions to the design and implementation of an improved and comprehensive social protection system in Viet Nam. Its Training of Trainers (ToT) approach to capacity building has proved beneficial in sustaining awareness and the significance of the scheme. Subsequent UNDP initiatives to pilot e-payment for selected social assistance components and digitalize management of the implementation of social assistance policies and programmes, and the plan to expand this to all social assistance packages, has significant implications for governance.

UNDP, along with other agencies in Viet Nam, has provided technical assistance and policy advice to support a shift in national policy towards building

a more inclusive, gender-responsive, life cycle and rights-based national social protection system that includes social health insurance, social insurance, social assistance and social care and is based on universal floor coverage. The first phase of the 'Support the Reform of Social Assistance Policy System' (SAP) project, carried out from 2014 to June 2017, contributed to the formulation and approval of the 'Master Plan for Social Assistance Reform and Development' (MPSARD) for the period 2016–2025 and the 'Vision to 2030'.¹¹¹

During the current CPD, UNDP supported the roll-out of the MPSARD action plan through SAP Phase II, which focused on the institutionalization of capacity building to implement reform components. UNDP has supported the development of a training curriculum and the establishment of a network of master trainers on social assistance and social policy design and implementation at central and provincial levels. Key capacity areas include the design and implementation of a life cycle, rights-based approach and universal floor coverage under MPSARD. ToT courses have been delivered to high-level policy makers and National Assembly members, technical officers at central level, and provincial practitioners. National partners receiving training have acknowledged that the ToT curriculum and courses have contributed substantially to policy advocacy for reforming the social assistance system. The capacity building programme initiated by UNDP is to be implemented by the Government from 2020 onwards, using its own resources.¹¹²

The UNDP initiative to apply e-payment to selected social assistance packages has crucial governance implications, although the project is not designed as a governance project *per se*. Using e-payment for all packages of social assistance has significant potential to contribute to accountability and anti-corruption work. E-payment helps to make the payment process more transparent and expeditious, and

¹¹⁰ Key informant interviews with the country office; and Final Progress Report: Liveable HCMC Initiation Plan (IP). 28 February 2019.

¹¹¹ Final Report: Project to Support the Reform of Social Assistance System in the period 2013-2017, Phase I. It is noted that the 2015 ADR does not review this project as the project had only operated for one year at the time of the review.

¹¹² Report on Results of Work Plan of 2018: Project on Supporting the Improvement of Social Assistance System in Viet Nam the Period 2017-2020 (SAP 2); and Report on Results of Work Plan 2019: Project on Supporting the Improvement of Social Assistance System in Viet Nam the Period 2017-2020 (SAP 2).

helps to limit the potential for petty corruption as it reduces face-to-face contact between social assistance recipients and social workers. Furthermore, it helps to reduce management costs by saving time for government officials to deliver payments, and for citizens to collect payments. The approach will ultimately help to discourage corruption and speed up the delivery of social assistance services.¹¹³

MPSARD implementation by the Vietnamese Government increased social assistance coverage from 1.63 percent in 2016 (1.7 million women and 1 million men) to 2.95 percent in 2019 (1.9 million women and 1 million men). The minimum benefit also increased from 180,000 to 270,000 Vietnamese Dong (VND), a rise of 66 percent per month per beneficiary.¹¹⁴ Overall, though there is no explicit link between the MPSARD and NTP-SPR projects, UNDP support to social assistance has also contributed to poverty reduction by providing additional support to poor and other vulnerable groups.

Finding 12. UNDP has made some notable contributions to promoting and integrating inclusive growth, productivity and competitiveness in national development and planning frameworks. However, its efforts in these areas have been impeded by resource constraints during the current programme cycle. This lack of resources has deprived UNDP of the opportunity to further its strategic positioning as a thought leader for inclusive growth.

In addition to supporting the policy cycle on multidimensional poverty reduction, from the agenda-setting stage through framework formulation and implementation to monitoring, UNDP also provides policy advice on inclusive growth, productivity and competitiveness. This has been carried out through the 'Initiation Plan for Programme Development and Policy Advising on Inclusive Growth 2019 – 2020: Preparation for a Productivity and Competitiveness Facility for Inclusive Growth'.¹¹⁵

Policy advisory work has included issues related to IR 4.0, inclusive innovation and ODA public investment management. It has also generated useful policy products, most notably the 2015 UNDP National HDR on inclusive growth and the UNDP Development Finance Assessment. These analyses and their recommendations are pertinent to national efforts to be more inclusive, improve socioeconomic development and opportunities for poor and vulnerable groups to participate and benefit from the development process. UNDP policy papers on ODA and public investment management, and the productivity and competitiveness of Vietnamese enterprises, informed the drafting of SEDS. The UNDP-MoIT 'IR 4.0 Readiness Survey Report', alongside international expertise and experience on inclusive IR 4.0, anticipatory governance and inclusive innovation, helped to influence the Government's SEDS, SEDP and IR 4.0, science, technology and innovation strategies, and Political Bureau resolutions on foreign direct investment and IR 4.0.

UNDP policy support also contributed to the formulation of the National SDG Action Plan, VNR, NDC review, Viet Nam's review of the first five-year SDG implementation report, and recommendations for mainstreaming SDGs in SEDS/SEDP. The work of the country office on the SDGs and SEDS/SEDP includes planning, monitoring, data, financing and implementation support. Support in the area of planning included the development of the National SDG Plan and the integration of SDGs into the new SEDS/SEDP, while in the area of implementation UNDP focused on the integration of the SDGs across its policy and programme work. In the area of data, UNDP focused on the concretization of the 'leaving no one behind' principle. For monitoring, it focused on supporting the Government for VNR and Annual Review reporting. In the area of financing, it focused on the Development Finance Assessment and the INFF, a joint initiative of the United Nations SDG Fund.

¹¹³ Key informant interviews with the country office and participating researchers.

¹¹⁴ Information drawn from the pre-mission questionnaire responses.

¹¹⁵ Progress Report: Programme development and policy advising on Inclusive Growth. March 2020; and Final Progress Report: Preparation for a Productivity and Competitiveness Project (PCP) for inclusive growth, 28 February 2019.

While UNDP has a comparative advantage in providing policy advice based on good international practices, the initiation plans related to productivity, competitiveness and inclusive growth have not been expanded, due to limited funding during the current programme cycle. In the face of resource constraints, the country office used funding from Japan for COVID-19 to support in-depth research and policy advice on the productivity and competitiveness of Vietnamese firms. Furthermore, support for inclusive growth, productivity and competitiveness has been continued through policy research and advice on inclusive innovation, inclusive IR4.0 and AAA governance, and work on MSMEs. While these initiatives have shored up the UNDP comparative advantage as a policy adviser, the lack of resources has affected prospects for the sustainability of the UNDP role as a thought leader in this area.

2.3 Climate change and adaptation

CPD Outcome 2: By 2021, Viet Nam has accelerated its transition to low-carbon and green development and enhanced its adaptation and resilience to climate change and natural disasters, with a focus on empowering the poor and vulnerable groups.

The UNDP focus within this outcome revolved around reducing greenhouse gas emissions in key sectors and cities in Viet Nam through low-emission and green development; building the resilience and adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities to climate change and disasters through community

actions and up-scaling; and supporting policies, systems and technologies to enable people to benefit from the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems and reduced environmental and health risks. Of the \$61,965,010 budgeted for this outcome, UNDP had spent \$44,091,086 (about 71 percent) at the time of this ICPE in November 2020.

Finding 13. UNDP has made notable contributions to reducing GHG emissions in Viet Nam by promoting low-emission activities and green development. Initiatives with a sharp focus on specific energy efficient technologies and products have been more successful compared to carbon sequestration initiatives addressing forest management and green growth.

Most of the UNDP-supported initiatives within this outcome have had a sharp focus on technology and specific products that consume less energy or burn less fossil fuel (energy efficient lights, energy efficiency in buildings, use of non-fired bricks, etc.) with a very high volume of potential end users, which has contributed to reductions in GHG emissions and thereby to the outcome goals.¹¹⁶

Projects have been quite effective at meeting targets, with measurable reductions in GHG emissions. For example, UNDP work in promoting non-fired brick production and utilization has contributed to increasing the demand for non-fired bricks in construction and thus their production, despite them being slightly more expensive and labour intensive. This is evidenced by the increasing loan volume provided by banks to support non-fired brick production lines.¹¹⁷ The reduced use of coal for firing bricks is contributing significantly to reducing GHG emissions and carbon sequestration, and also freeing up land which was used by brick kilns for

¹¹⁶ UNDP is not working in the energy sector, which contributes about 66 percent of Viet Nam's GHG emissions, so overall reductions due to UNDP programming are quite small relative to the problem (GHG Emissions Factsheet: Viet Nam, www.climatelinks.org). Government control over the energy sector is a key hurdle in this regard. Specific consumer products are much more workable in programming.

¹¹⁷ UNDP reports indicate that 2,115 buildings in Viet Nam have used non-fired bricks. The loan volume provided by financial institutions (including commercial banks) for non-fired brick investments has been \$26.4 million (for 33 enterprises; 53 new non-fired brick production lines have investment plans approved). The market share of non-fired bricks (28.5%) is calculated based on the consumption of non-fired bricks against the total consumption of bricks estimated for 2019. The project supported 18 non-fired brick plants with feasibility studies (target of 22; 4 demonstrations and 18 replications).

agricultural production.¹¹⁸ This has been helped by the sharp target for non-fired bricks, alongside policy development and technology demonstrations to promote their use. However, demand-side issues still need to be addressed, as there are lingering concerns about the construction quality of non-fired bricks (mostly on cement quality) which are being addressed through regulatory and code guidance. UNDP is now also promoting non-fired bricks as part of its energy-efficiency initiatives in commercial buildings and for building climate-resilient housing in coastal areas.

UNDP energy efficiency initiatives in commercial buildings have focused on raising awareness and policy development, and been moderately effective in improving the uptake of energy efficiency, which has measurable benefits for building owners, tenants and the environment.¹¹⁹ Progress has been slow, with limited demonstration of energy efficiency potential at the time of the ICPE in August 2020,¹²⁰ and delays in selecting participants and the construction of energy-efficient buildings. However, owners of new buildings who have participated in the initiative have indicated reduced power consumption, mostly due to smart building controls. They feel the 3-8 percent increase in the cost of building

construction associated with energy-efficient materials will be recovered over three to five years.¹²¹ UNDP support for the uptake of light-emitting diode (LED) lighting manufacturing and domestic use in Viet Nam seems to have been very effective,¹²² and has been backed up with efforts in building standards and regulations to support LED lighting uptake throughout the country.¹²³

Initiatives like UN-REDD, that have focused on forest management to increase carbon sequestration and initiate carbon payments, have been more challenging and require more time than energy-efficiency initiatives to achieve results. UN-REDD Phase 2 built on Viet Nam's progressive initiatives on Payment for Ecosystem Services prior to UNDP support.¹²⁴ While agreements are in place for community benefits, these have not yet been fully activated.¹²⁵

Policy and legislative developments in support of forest conservation and management are positive,¹²⁶ but on-the-ground action and enforcement (in selected community forest areas) is still required, as there is an ongoing issue with illegal logging and the conversion of forest areas for agriculture and forest quality is still a big concern.¹²⁷ There is still a need to

¹¹⁸ The project has led to a direct emissions reduction of 180,955 metric tonnes of CO₂ (to the end of 2019; triple the expected end of project target), with the demonstration and replication projects; also 36,560 TOE (tonnes oil equivalent) with the displacement of coal (this objective achieved) (UNDP ROAR, 2019).

¹¹⁹ So far only 25 buildings (of a target of 165) have completed an energy survey (10 in Hanoi; 15 in Ho Chi Minh City); specific energy consumption profiles and energy efficiency benchmarking system for five types of buildings and two climatic zones, involving new buildings and retrofits, based on MoUs with building owners. The Law on Construction has just been promulgated (late 2020), so energy efficient building construction will likely pick up pace.

¹²⁰ Since then, the country office has identified 75 energy saving solutions in 22 new and existing buildings resulting in energy saving potential of 25-67 percent.

¹²¹ Cominco Tower in Hanoi, for example, built over two years; the initial energy efficient design process added three months to the schedule, but seems to be bringing real energy savings (noted in electricity bills; according to the owner of Cominco Tower). The country office notes that additional building construction costs may be only 3 percent higher than conventional— with more energy efficient buildings coming onstream, the database on respective costs will become more accurate.

¹²² With assumptions about energy consumption of LED lights versus regular lights, the project has assumed the estimated tonnes of CO₂ displaced as 1,263 (direct) and 204,951 (indirect top-down); the indirect energy savings (MWh) are assumed to be 1,460 (direct) and 2,370,160 (indirect top-down; based on the installation of 4,830 LED lights) (UNDP project reporting).

¹²³ The project has taken some credit for supporting the LED market, which is 49 percent of the light market in Viet Nam. The average market share of locally manufactured products in the Vietnamese LED market is about 34 percent (exceeding the project target; rural and urban consumers; directly contributed to sales of 40 million LED lamps out of 119 million LED lamps in the market). The project has engaged with two larger local companies (Ralaco and Dien Quang; manufacturers, selling to 15,000 retailers) and about 200+ mostly smaller companies that assemble/manufacture LED lighting products (UNDP project reporting).

¹²⁴ Forest communities were paid for catchment management related to hydropower projects.

¹²⁵ The initiative supported pilots in six provinces, but these are confined to allocations, modelling, plans, and MoUs with communities on benefit distribution systems. Viet Nam has signed a Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement with the EU (in 2019), to institutionalize sustainable forest management practices and legal, transparent trade in timber; recently funded.

¹²⁶ According to stakeholder interviews, forest closures were imposed, but it has been very difficult to keep people out, especially farmers. There has been an attempt to help them transition to agroforestry, like coffee.

¹²⁷ UN-REDD has supported a multisectoral approach to landscape and forest management, mostly articulated in the national strategy and action plan (a national vision up to 2030, including planning and investment). After the closure of the project, a new Forestry Law came into force (January 2019) and Viet Nam is now working on a new public procurement policy to eliminate purchase of illegal timber.

make clear empirical linkages between (projected and actual) forest cover changes and community benefits, as current statements tend to be aspirational and based on assumptions.¹²⁸ The initiative has supported the development of data and information systems, key tools to measure the effectiveness of forest management going forward. However, they mostly seek to ensure compliance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) requirements for the four Warsaw Framework pillars.¹²⁹ In 2019, Viet Nam became the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to complete the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ after fulfilling the UNFCCC safeguard requirements.¹³⁰

The concept of green growth has featured in a couple of recent UNDP initiatives, focused on understanding the climate needs and opportunities in various sectors, especially transport and agriculture, and examining expenditure reviews and financing options (especially for the private sector). To date, this has been ineffective in activating private sector uptake of green growth strategies.¹³¹ One ongoing issue is the government financing of green growth, as the concept of a carbon tax continues to be examined in the light of stalled global carbon financing schemes related to Article 6 of the Paris Climate Agreement. UNDP has tried to follow this up with the 'Private Sector Engagement' project, but this is still in early phases, and the emphasis is on information management and related technologies, targeting smaller players in the agriculture sector, so it is too early to determine the effectiveness of the initiative.¹³² On the other hand, following the recent

submission of Viet Nam's revised NDC to the UNFCCC in October 2020, UNDP secured some new funding to support the implementation of the Viet Nam NDC. The new initiative aims to promote participation and contributions from the private sector, as identified and defined by the Government of Viet Nam.

Finding 14. UNDP has contributed to government efforts to improve the resilience of vulnerable communities to frequent disasters in coastal areas, where new climate-resilient housing has survived recent typhoons. The impacts of other initiatives related to DRM and dengue forecasting (associated information systems, training, modelling and local plans for DRM and dengue management) are not yet evident.

UNDP has successfully supported ongoing government programmes to improve the resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change and frequent disasters, and to help with the scale-up of resilience-related initiatives. UNDP technical support and funding from various sources have been used to fill technical gaps and fund the scale-up of existing programmes, where government funds seem to have been limited.¹³³ With the exception of the GCF climate resilience project which has clear reporting targets, the projects within this cluster have unclear performance accountability with macro-level statistics on disaster response effectiveness not easily linked to specific UNDP-supported initiatives.

The GCF climate resilience project has contributed to the continuation of government programmes and their geographical expansion with additional

¹²⁸ Consultations with project partners indicated that the national or central view of the project, reflecting progressive forest plans and policies, does not always match the actual situation in specific areas, especially near the border with Laos, where illegal logging is occurring. Further, the carbon market has been rather weak, and payments are not yet coming, although the World Bank will pay for future forest management efforts. With the Emission Reductions Payment Agreement now in place, Viet Nam is expected to reduce 10.3 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions from six North Central Region provinces of Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien Hue, to receive \$51.5 million from the FCPF (assuming validation from field observations).

¹²⁹ <https://unfccc.int/topics/land-use/resources/warsaw-framework-for-redd-plus>; the four main pillars of REDD+ include: (1) Develop and complete the National REDD+ Action Programme, (2) Develop and submit a forest reference emission line/national forest reference line (FREL/FRL) to the UNFCCC, (3) Develop and submit a safeguard system (SIS) and report safeguard summary for UNFCCC, (4) Finalize the national forest monitoring system (using FIPI 5-cycle data to report and calculate emission reduction results for the period 2014-2018).

¹³⁰ <https://news.globallandscapesforum.org/viewpoint/viet-nam-becomes-the-second-country-in-the-world-to-complete-all-four-pillars-of-the-warsaw-framework-for-redd/>.

¹³¹ The country office notes that efforts to expand the partnership and buy-in from the private sector have been introduced only more recently over the past 12-18 months.

¹³² There is a concern that the new CBI platform, to demonstrate business climate responsibility, may not project accurate information about individual business GHG emissions – the information is voluntary and may omit some emitter actions.

¹³³ Noted by Viet Nam Forests (MARD) and Thanh Hoa DARD in evaluation meeting. UNDP "added value" with housing has been mostly the extra funding that has come from the GCF project, which UNDP helped to secure.

project funds. It focuses on pro-poor climate resilience in coastal areas, supporting suitable housing for communities. The project has supported the construction of 2,402 storm-resilient houses for 4,000 poor and near-poor residents in high-risk coastal areas in five provinces,¹³⁴ 65.3 percent of whom are women. It has supported mangrove replanting over 1,442 hectares, with appropriate guidelines for site selection.¹³⁵ The project has also supported the completion of community-based disaster risk assessment and planning exercises in 152 communes, involving more than 16,723 community members, local government officials and other stakeholders, with 50 percent female participation.¹³⁶

The storm-resilient houses survived Typhoon Matmo in October 2019, indicating a clear benefit of the housing scheme (security and peace of mind for home owners). The benefits of mangrove replanting are not yet clear as more time is required for forest growth. The project supported the training and development of a coastal forest database, but the database is unstable.¹³⁷ It implemented 15 livelihood models, such as beehives and shrimp cultivation, with the participation of 456 farmers (16 percent women), but net benefits are still undocumented. Project references to carbon sequestration due to mangrove replanting are based on assumptions about the areas replanted and future growth of the mangrove canopy, and as such cannot be easily verified.¹³⁸

The UK-funded and UNDP -and WHO- supported integrated early warning dengue system has been innovative in addressing a persistent health issue by using a sophisticated combination of historical dengue incidence data and climate modelling.¹³⁹ While there has been training and roll-out of the model management, intended to help the Government and communities pre-empt dengue outbreaks by targeting specific areas for government/ community campaigns (mostly by allowing the Government to allocate appropriate annual budgets), it is too soon to determine the effectiveness of the initiative in reducing the incidence of dengue.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, issues related to the ownership and operation of the forecasting model and ongoing funding for data input still need to be resolved.

Other DRM initiatives within this cluster have focused on information systems, hazard maps, guidelines, plans, and related capacity building. These were relatively small initiatives supporting the efforts of the Viet Nam Disaster Management Agency, established in 2017, but project documentation does not indicate how the information, maps and plans have reduced the impact of disasters on Vietnamese people.¹⁴¹ The UNDP contribution has mainly focused on bringing funding and regional experiences to the Viet Nam context, although Viet Nam is already a

¹³⁴ Up to 3,300 houses by November 2020; 3,417 houses in five provinces by end 2020 according to the country office.

¹³⁵ Up to 3,383 ha by December 2020, according to the country office.

¹³⁶ GCF project reporting and UNDP ROAR, 2019. The project status was updated in December 2020, through phone conversations with beneficiaries in typhoon-affected provinces (Quang Ngai, Quang Nam, and Quang Binh, affected by Typhoon Molave in October 2020). All interviewed households and coordinators appreciated the project and mentioned that the new houses provided a safe haven for them and neighbours during the recent typhoon. Supporting facilities (kitchen and bathroom) are not funded by the project. Beneficiaries have borrowed from friends and neighbours, in addition to the bank. Beneficiary households do not know the details of project funding, associating the project mostly with the Government of Viet Nam.

¹³⁷ Noted by Viet Nam Forest (a division of MARD) in an evaluation meeting; the database is inoperable at the moment and needs attention.

¹³⁸ While the carbon sequestration estimates from mangrove replanting apparently follow IPCC measurement protocols, and the country office is confident in the resulting estimates, the project documentation and subsequent comments from the country office do not clearly explain how the mangrove replantation has produced accumulated carbon sequestration to date.

¹³⁹ The initiative has focused on information and data collection on Dengue. Monthly data on dengue incidence has been collected at the district level in four pilot provinces in the past 20 years, along with training of baseline survey enumerators and M&E baseline surveys. A mobile App for disseminating news and early warnings generated by D-MOSS to the public is under development, and MOH and UK Space Agency/HR Wallingford are in discussions on the ongoing maintenance and data input for the model.

¹⁴⁰ The model forecast for weather has been quite accurate over the last six months in the areas supported by the project, but the use of the forecast to change budgets and respond pre-emptively is not yet evident in data on dengue incidence (from meetings with UK Space Agency/HR Wallingford, Ministry of Health, Pasteur Institute). A limitation of the model is that it does not allow predictions at the district level (just provinces).

¹⁴¹ These small projects included assisting least developed countries to advance their national adaptation plans (focus on climate vulnerability in the agriculture sector), Disaster Risk Management Phase II, and Post Disaster Needs Assessment and Recovery Preparedness. They were not the subject of evaluation meetings/consultations (to explore actual results and changes), although all project documents were reviewed.

recognised regional leader in disaster preparedness and response, given its vulnerability to typhoons and associated collateral effects.

Finding 15. UNDP-supported initiatives on natural resource management and biodiversity conservation in Viet Nam have helped the country respond to the requirements of international conventions and protocols, by developing new policies that allow local communities to be more involved in the management of, and eventually benefit from, forest conservation and new protected areas. However, the sustainable self-financing of new community livelihoods to draw pressure off of natural resources and biodiversity has not yet been demonstrated and scaled up.

UNDP initiatives pertaining to sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation in Viet Nam have had more direct engagement with local communities in rural areas compared to other UNDP -supported activities on natural resource management. These projects are trying to address very complex issues around the conflict between economic growth and resource conservation/ environmental quality and the varied interests of involved stakeholders. They are making slow but steady progress with UNDP support, and have focused on the convergence of policy, institutional reform, community action, and attempts at sustainable financing that involve millions of people.¹⁴²

The 'Conservation of Critical Wetland Protected Areas' initiative, for example, has gone to the core problem of setting up protected areas by finding a compromise between the local desire for economic growth and the need to protect internationally important habitats and biodiversity. This has been achieved by defining and gazetting two wetland protected areas, and starting to provide alternative

livelihoods as compensation for exclusion from these areas.¹⁴³ However it has been a slow process, as splitting economic growth areas from conservation areas required national intervention into provincial planning and some negotiation.¹⁴⁴ Sustainable financing options for wetland protected areas remain challenging, especially in the time of COVID-19, given the constraints to tourism,¹⁴⁵ which has been defined as a substantial revenue earner in and near protected areas, especially around Hue.

Other international convention initiatives have been similarly helpful, at least in setting frameworks for future compliance of Viet Nam and direct engagement with communities living in and near at-risk natural resources. For example, the 'Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) in Viet Nam' initiative has been somewhat effective, as it touched on the critical aspect of community benefits to save habitats and biodiversity through appropriate financing mechanisms. These are intended to reward local communities with a market (and new revenues) for sustained and "value-added" resource extraction. The project has established the required institutional structures and processes for ABS, and has several MoUs in place. The permissions process for ABS has been approved (through the 'Decree on Management of Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing from their Utilization'), and there are associated ABS guidelines and manuals, with awareness raising through annual communication events. An ABS model with MoUs and surveys was piloted in Lao Cai province (with a local and national database), with the Red Dao people, and with the SapaNapro enterprise for herbal medicine (including contracts for new products, traditional knowledge management, implementing genetic resource conservation, a handbook, and various factsheets). The project has developed a proposal on collecting

¹⁴² For example, for wetlands, a new decree on the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands was promulgated in 2019.

¹⁴³ Two wetland conservation areas, in Thai Thuy, Thai Binh province and Tam Giang-Cau Hai, Thua Thien Hue province. This included related capacity needs assessment, management training, and integration of wetland biodiversity concerns into provincial and district planning, including considerations of livelihood/ biodiversity linkages. For Thai Thuy, management and regulations were clarified, the Management Board is now financed, and boundary demarcation and equipment procurement is imminent.

¹⁴⁴ According to MoNRE, the Prime Minister and UNDP were involved; one wetland area had to be halved to accommodate both conservation and economic development. In addition, DARD and DoNRE share management, and this has been confusing at times.

¹⁴⁵ Pilot income generation options were implemented in five districts surrounding the WCA in Thua Thien Hue to reduce pressure on resources in the lagoon (polyculture, grass carp, shrimp, and tilapia). While limited in scale, they created a 10-15% increase in household incomes as per UNDP reports, confirmed by DONRE on account of shrimp selling in Hue. There has been clam culture in Thai Binh, but outcomes are not described.

fees and a traditional knowledge registry proposal and, according to UNDP reporting, a legal framework has been developed. However, the ABS agreements have not yet been activated, awaiting details of revenue-sharing mechanisms.¹⁴⁶

The initiative on enhancing the capacity for implementing Rio conventions was highly relevant, with a focus on information management, policies and operationalizing laws to help meet Viet Nam's commitments. According to project reviews and stakeholder interviews, the project was somewhat effective, but the advancement from project activities to actual institutional change and traction with communities on the ground did not happen. Other initiatives in the portfolio have focused on project development, reporting or examining scenarios for financing biodiversity conservation, with no significant institutional change documented. For example, the 'Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) Phase II' initiative is just starting, with minimal results to date; the 'Biosphere Reserves in Viet Nam' project has a robust set of baseline data and information on stakeholders. Actual changes in forest cover and biodiversity from UNDP-supported initiatives have not yet been documented as it is too early to observe these.

Finding 16. UNDP has supported the Government of Viet Nam to reduce the health risks associated with hazardous chemicals (mostly Persistent Organic Pollutants) through policy development, guidelines, awareness raising and actual, though limited, hazardous waste site clean-ups. Green chemistry concepts are being promoted, but not yet producing evident change. The use of mercury is starting to be addressed in new policies related to the Minamata Convention.

UNDP support to the Government to manage persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and other harmful chemicals like mercury has been quite successful in addressing the pervasive problem of hazardous chemicals in Viet Nam. The project has been very effective in building awareness of the issues and approaches, and has supported policy development and technical guidelines,¹⁴⁷ including the initiation of actual clean-up operations for some sites. Fifty tons of POP waste have been collected and treated and 280 tons of contaminated soil have been isolated and managed sustainably at 11 POP hotspots in Lam Hoa (Quang Binh province), benefiting 1,179 people from 96 nearby households.¹⁴⁸ There has also been support for developing inventories and risk reports of POP contaminated sites on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and industrial areas in Binh Duong.

UNDP support to the Government to manage POPs has sought to address sustainability issues, but financing mechanisms for the many site clean-ups required (hundreds in Viet Nam) are challenging, as the provinces lack the required funds. There have been some initial successes in building understanding of the mercury situation in the country as per Minamata Convention obligations, but more time is needed to create local community understanding of mercury hazards (such as those facing artisanal gold miners) and develop alternative actions that do not require mercury.¹⁴⁹ POPs and mercury management awareness is certainly elevated, and future initiatives to extend gains from the project are expected. However, there is an ongoing need to improve laboratory capacity for monitoring POPs and other hazardous chemicals.

¹⁴⁶ According to MoNRE.

¹⁴⁷ Nine legal documents were amended, supplemented, or newly developed. Three have been issued, including environmental protection, with POP/PTS life cycle considerations, chemical management, on pesticide residue sites, land use related to POPs, and regulations on response to waste incidents. Eleven technical guidelines have been developed (including steel industry emissions and wastewater, and also shifting to a more risk management approach, with prioritization of sites for clean-up) and five provincial environmental protection plans have been developed (two of which have been issued, including Nghe An); also a POPs/PTS tracking tool. There has been extensive training related to all of these, as well as lab accreditation for POPs analysis.

¹⁴⁸ The project was completed in July 2020.

¹⁴⁹ The Viet Nam Environment Administration has been involved with development of an inventory of sources and the amount of mercury released from major industries (based on detailed surveys and questionnaires; for coal-burning thermal power, cement production, incineration, and non-ferrous metal production) and a database on mercury in light bulbs, medical devices, dental filler, and cosmetics, as well as a strategy for reduction and elimination and a risk assessment pilot at the Rang Dong lamp company. Related awareness raising materials were also produced.

The related project on the application of green chemistry in Viet Nam, while highly relevant, is challenging as it addresses a somewhat obscure concept which integrates the safety, health and environmental issues associated with hazardous chemicals through ‘whole-of-operation’ chemical management.¹⁵⁰ It is too soon to determine whether the project is effective, since demonstrations are just getting underway and there are few examples to date, including engagement with a paint manufacturer and the electroplating industry.¹⁵¹ However, some momentum has been developing: the Viet Nam Chemicals Agency under MoT is revising the Law on Chemicals and formulating the Strategy for Development of the Chemical Industry to 2030. These legal documents are proposed to include green chemistry initiatives, which will provide the legal framework for the transition of industry in the country to be greener and less hazardous. The aim is for an actual reduction in POPs and hazardous chemicals of 3 tons in 2021.

Finding 17. The sustainability of UNDP-supported initiatives in climate adaptation, energy use, environment and natural resource management remains weak, due to insufficient consideration to institutional change, replication and scale-up and overreliance on the return of funding from donors.

The sustainability of most of the initiatives supported by UNDP under this outcome remains elusive with a tendency to rely on the continuation of projects to subsequent phases.¹⁵² At the core is a lack of critical examination of policy change and how effective it may be in sustaining change on the ground, alongside a lack of attention to self-financing options and exit strategies at the beginning of projects.

There has been a significant amount of work on policy development within Outcome 2, but UNDP or government documentation contains little information on the actual implementation or effectiveness of policy (the activation of changes in government processes and human behaviour that bring pervasive community benefits). There tends to be a cataloguing of policies and decrees produced with UNDP support, and significant emphasis on related capacity building, but little clarity on how new or revised policies are to be implemented, and how they are expected to change the behaviour of end users. The POPs project reporting is a good example, as it places emphasis on the number of new policies and decrees, but not on behaviour or institutional change. UNDP does not seem to have worked out the nuances of objective field visits and evaluations to probe the effectiveness of new policies in detail, and these are not evident in progress reports.

Part of the problem may be that it is difficult to attribute macro-level statistics (like the loss of forest cover or GDP due to disasters) to specific policies, and therefore the exact drivers or enablers for sustained change are not clear. Extensive field surveys, consultations with stakeholders and end users, and evidence from the ground (that can be attributed to policies and Government actions) would be needed to provide confidence in the ability of new or revised policies to create and sustain change.¹⁵³

There are some specific examples in which government practice is actually working against sustainability. For example, the BIOFIN initiative explored actual and potential expenditure and financing arrangements for biodiversity conservation, showing that public sector spending had

¹⁵⁰ Even discussion with various project participants, such as VNCS and MoNRE, focused on safety aspects, rather than environmental issues.

¹⁵¹ In an evaluation meeting, the Nishu Paint Company noted that they were initially reluctant to participate in the project, because economic and environmental benefits were not clear to them. They stayed in, with a sense of social obligation, and some prospects for getting into an export market.

¹⁵² The UN-REDD Phase 2 project is a good example, following from Phase 1. There was some piloting of initiatives in Lao Cai and Bac Kan, with communities paid for forest conservation work, but payments came from the project, not carbon markets (discussion with UNEP). The World Bank Carbon Fund will take another year to take effect in Viet Nam, but the Government still has to certify the right for emission reduction transfer. A Phase 3 project (regional) is now proposed to carry these sustainability requirements forward. The POPs project requires and expects a next phase, as does the ABS and the Wetlands project which is looking for more funding. The dengue initiative also requires more funding for continuation as highlighted in discussions with government partners and HR Wallingford.

¹⁵³ For example, discussions with project partners indicated that forest management policy is not being properly implemented (UN-REDD; illegal logging and forest encroachment still occurring), and there is still illegal importation of mercury (POPs project); whatever may have been innovative in the new policies is not being understood and enforced at the local level. UNDP-facilitated support (UN-REDD, for example) still seems to be predicated on the notion that new government policies will be effective and enforceable, despite identified challenges.

accounted for 76.7 percent of biodiversity conservation initiatives in recent times, implying a great dependency on the Government (compared to local communities or the private sector) to protect Viet Nam's biodiversity resources. Yet data indicated that public spending on biodiversity conservation had been decreasing, with a negative impact on sustainability.¹⁵⁴ There is no clear valuation of biodiversity that is independent of overall prosperity in Viet Nam, and stakeholder discussions confirmed that, in hard times, biodiversity conservation will be a much lower priority than economic prosperity. While the BIOFIN sustainability strategy included options for revenue generation, to avoid future biodiversity expenditure and deliver financial resources more effectively and efficiently, there is not much evidence on the implementation of this strategy with balance or coherence between the options.¹⁵⁵

There is reference to revolving loans and grants being used to sustain initiatives, such as the 'domestic waste and plastic management in five cities' project,¹⁵⁶ but rather than encourage sustainability, grants create dependence. Revolving loans have more potential for replication and scale-up, but they need to be paid back to ensure that capital remains available to all waste handlers, and this means that there has to be some quick and secure profitability to the individual in handling and managing waste. The evaluation, however, could not find evidence of whether this is working.¹⁵⁷

Likewise, the notion that laws and regulations will enforce sustainability (for example, laws enforcing the use of non-fired bricks, energy efficient materials, LED lights, etc.) may be weak, since almost all end users and consumers will weigh the pros and cons and select whichever is more beneficial and secure. For example, discussions with stakeholders from MoST and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) confirmed that many small factories and businesses cannot afford investments in green chemistry or energy efficiency, despite regulations enforcing this approach.¹⁵⁸ In the majority of cases, the lack of a clear business case to demonstrate the benefits of an initiative (whether social, environmental or financial, but all 'monetized' in some fashion) results in sustainability issues, however, in others it needs more advocacy and persuasion.¹⁵⁹

There are some clear examples of compelling cost/benefit analysis, meaning that sustainability is likely. As noted, energy efficiency initiatives are usually a 'win-win' proposition as the investments required to be fully energy efficient can usually be paid off in three to five years, providing reduced operational costs thereafter. Simple awareness of the existence of appropriate energy-efficient materials and construction techniques will help with the sustainability of building energy efficiency, according to architects involved in the energy efficiency and green growth projects. However, there is an ongoing challenge with the subsidization of electricity costs in Viet Nam, which works against energy conservation efforts.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ The total annual biodiversity expenditure is closely linked to the GDP and when this falls, so do investments in biodiversity conservation.

¹⁵⁵ BIOFIN project reporting. There has been a focus on procedures for results-based budgeting, some effort at improving a museum, and apparent willingness at the provincial level to collect tourism fees. The project is not yet at the point of selecting and fully implementing the various options identified in the initiative, as the Government is still pondering the tax and revenue flow implications of the various options.

¹⁵⁶ Revolving loans in the 'domestic waste and plastic management in five cities' project; although the country office now says they will not be taken up.

¹⁵⁷ An experiment in Hoi An demonstrated that, with some support from outside, informal waste workers can organize and turn their work into a socialized model of waste collection that can not only contribute to reducing recyclable waste in the community but also generate income and provide a safer work environment for the most vulnerable.

¹⁵⁸ Several discussions with government project partners indicated that small businesses which cannot afford investments to meet new policy requirements just don't comply, and enforcement is weak, in any case.

¹⁵⁹ The notion of business cases, based on cost/benefit analysis, came up in most of the stakeholder meetings but almost all outcome 2 projects in the current CPD cycle do not yet have these. HR Wallingford noted that they had made a business case for net benefits (reduced health care costs and household income retained) compared to the relatively modest cost of running the forecasting model (\$7,000/year), but this has not yet convinced the Government to fully take up ownership of the dengue initiative. There are similar database ownership issues with the climate risk guidance initiative and the coastal forest database, which is inoperable at the moment (DARD – Thanh Hoa).

¹⁶⁰ Green growth strategies, many of which involve reduced power consumption, are challenged by the subsidized price of electricity in Viet Nam. If the price of electricity internalized the environmental cost associated with producing and transmitting electricity, incentives to reduce power consumption would be stronger.

Tax incentives have been examined in a few projects, but the government revenue system in Viet Nam is complicated, and change in this area could be very slow. The sustainability of green growth strategies is also constrained by a deflated global carbon market, and the clean development mechanism is not generating much interest in carbon credits in Viet Nam. Detailed monetization of all potential benefits from new initiatives could help in this regard, in which the costs and benefits of these green initiatives are highlighted and evident to all end users. For example, a lack of monetization is possibly working against the sustainability of the mangrove replanting efforts under the GCF coastal resilience project. Planting mangroves is expensive (as noted in project reports), and this creates some resistance, but if the true value of erosion protection and GHG emission reductions associated with mangroves were to be calculated and disseminated, there would likely be more efforts to plant mangroves in suitable locations.¹⁶¹

2.4 Accountable institutions

CPD Outcome 3: 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.

UNDP efforts under this outcome have mostly concentrated on the areas of: strengthening rule of law, access to justice and human rights protection; strengthening accountable institutions and anti-corruption and participation in decision-making; promoting responsible business; and peace and

security. Some projects focused on the SDGs, with a specific focus on results-based management, public administration performance and mainstreaming the SDGs. The portfolio for this outcome grew significantly, from an initial four projects and a budget of \$2 million, to 11 projects with an actual budget of \$28,508,312. At the time of the ICPE, UNDP had spent \$22,487,471, which is about 79 percent of the available budget for this outcome.

Finding 18. UNDP has been successful in consolidating existing legal frameworks to promote human rights, access to justice and the participation of women, while also expanding its reach to other vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and people in remote areas and areas with extremely difficult socioeconomic conditions. Interventions in these areas have focused on both awareness and capacity. Challenges remains in terms of the scalability and strategic significance of the interventions.

UNDP support has significantly shaped the capacities of rule of law institutions to better protect human rights and improve access to justice and redress. Support has been provided through projects addressing human rights and access to justice, in particular the 'Increasing Viet Nam's Human Rights Capacities' project, the 'Human Rights Protection' project, the 'Strengthened Role of Disabled People's Organization' project, and the EU JULE project. The first three of these have reached their completion, but the EU JULE project has been extended to the end of 2022, and the achievements of this results area are, to a considerable extent, still unfolding.

UNDP support to human rights protection, built on achievements from the 2012–2016 programme cycle, have equipped government officials with the necessary methods to work with international human rights conventions, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanisms, reporting obligations, and procedures for monitoring and reporting to United Nations treaty bodies. Specifically, UNDP

¹⁶¹ There has been documentation of the carbon sequestration value of mangrove replantation, but not the net benefit of mangroves to local communities – they still perceive more value in water surface (for aquaculture) compared to a mangrove cover, according to MARD, which is trying to maintain 60% mangrove and 40% water in coastal areas.

extensively supported the UPR through co-hosting consultation workshops with the Government, and preparatory training for CSOs (see finding 18). UNDP facilitated government engagement with reviews of international reporting mechanisms under the Convention against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, co-hosting mock sessions that explored Viet Nam's responsibilities under those treaties and inviting international experts to assist with review preparation. The projects also involved the participation of people's organizations in the monitoring and implementation of international human rights conventions. After three UPRs (in 2009, 2014 and 2019), key stakeholders have become familiar with the processes of human rights monitoring and reporting, and the integration of recommendations into action plans.

Through the 'Strengthened Role of Disabled People's Organization (Phase II)' project, the rights of persons with disabilities have been expanded and concretized following the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, ratified in 2014. The right to legal aid for people with disabilities with financial difficulties is stipulated in the Law on Legal Aid (2017). The law accords free legal aid to people with disabilities from poor households or those providing meritorious services to the revolution, as well as children or ethnic minorities residing in areas with extremely difficult socioeconomic conditions and persons aged between 16 and 18 from near-poor households, if accused. Outreach on the rights of people with disabilities has been done through documentaries, workshops, training, media coverage and social media. People with disabilities, including children, are encouraged to cultivate self-esteem, avoid self-stigma, form social relations and gain skills and knowledge that enable them to claim their rights. Overall, the institutionalization of disabled peoples' rights, alongside campaigns to raise public awareness of their rights, has emerged as an implementation trend.

UNDP has supported the amendment of the Labour Code related to the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) people in the workplace, and also involved LGBTQI people in the Youth Co Lab project with an emphasis on awareness, the National Youth Dialogue, UPR reporting, and the development of the Law on Gender Affirmation.¹⁶²

In the area of access to justice, Viet Nam's key rule of law institutions have benefitted from strengthening evidence-based policy making, institutional functions and individual capacity. Key areas of intervention under the EU JULE project include legal education, legal aid, dispute resolution and the rule of precedent. Evidence-based studies and implementation pilot projects have served as a basis for the development of national policy frameworks, training schemes and capacity development plans.

An assessment of the legal awareness and legal needs of citizens, as well as the capacity of legal communicators and legal reporters in communicating with vulnerable groups, has served as the basis for the preparation of a national strategy on legal education, and the dissemination of training materials for local communicators. In the area of grassroots-level mediation, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) carried out capacity development for mediators at hamlet level, and has prepared to expand that training. Responsible agencies in the area of legal aid have assessed the needs of vulnerable groups as a basis for reviewing the capacities of legal aid providers. Accordingly, the MoJ developed training materials for provincial-level legal aid providers. Finally, the MoJ reviewed the implementation of the 'Legal Aid Reform' project 2015–2020 at a strategic level to prepare for the upcoming cycle. UNDP support under the rubric of the EU JULE project has thus targeted the overall legal aid strategy as well as the provision of legal aid for vulnerable groups.¹⁶³

¹⁶² ROARs 2017 and 2019.

¹⁶³ EU JULE 2018 Annual Progress Report (1 November 2017–31 December 2018); and EU-JULE 2019 Annual Report (1 January 2018–31 December 2019); interviews with key stakeholders.

UNDP support to the Supreme People's Court has promoted its institutional functions and capacity. Following this, the Supreme People's Court has initiated discussions on the organization of the court system, developed legal precedents and provided judges with training on how to write judgments and apply precedents. Furthermore, it has formulated and disseminated a new code of conduct for judges. Nonetheless, project support is considered to be too limited in scale and the Supreme People's Court considers large-scale capacity building to be strategically significant for its further reform.

Both the implementation partners and vulnerable groups (i.e., people with disabilities, women, children, those living in poverty and ethnic minorities) are considered beneficiaries of EU JULE project efforts on access to justice and redress. Capacity building activities have been undertaken with local judicial authorities, and these activities are directly aimed at improving access to justice and the realization of rights for people and businesses, such as capacity building for conciliators, legal rapporteurs and legal assistants at provincial and grassroots levels. The assessment of citizen's needs for legal dissemination, for example, focuses on regulations of the Labour Code for people with disabilities, children and women. The EU JULE project will continue until 2022, and strengthening the institutional functions and capacities of the MoJ and the Supreme People's Court has the potential to ease access to justice and redress for citizens and businesses.

One key factor that positively influenced this result area is the good long-term working relationship between UNDP and participating national stakeholders, though some programmatic and sustainability challenges remain. The objectives, directions and priorities for UNDP support mentioned in the EU-JULE project document should be reviewed and revised to be clearer and more aligned with national directions and priorities (decided by the 13th Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam). In the area of sustainability,

national stakeholders consider that initial capacity development results are limited in scale. Capacity development outputs supported by the EU JULE project within the MoJ and the Supreme People's Court have been implemented in local or grassroots units, and the long-term impact of this will depend upon further replication and scale-up.

The 'Korea-Viet Nam Mine Action' project has also promoted human rights and improved institutional functions, as well as socioeconomic rights, and included explosive ordnance risk education, assistance to unexploded ordnance (UXO) survivors, and linkages to sustainable development. The project produced concrete results related to mine clearance and capacity building, and thereby contributed to human development in contaminated districts. UNDP also gathered information to help quantify potential post-clearance development outcomes.¹⁶⁴ This project also contributed to improved capacities for national stakeholders, for example MoLISA improved its capacity in providing assistance to mine victims. The Viet Nam Mine Action Centre (VNMAC) benefitted from a standardized testing area, a standardized briefing board in the command post, information on the number of items found, detailed medical contacts, and understanding of the importance and application of a rigorous quality management system. This in turn has had a positive effect on team-level operations in technical surveys, the clearance of sites, and improved adherence to the Vietnamese Technical Regulations and National Standards, as well as the respective standard operational procedures used in the project. VNMAC and the Ministry of Defence also provided advanced training to survey and clearance teams and developed a database on mine action for the two provinces where the project is implemented. The project has also contributed to the prevention of risks in contaminated areas in other provinces by providing capacity development for VNMAC staff and units responsible for mine action. The project has facilitated the organization of conferences to

¹⁶⁴ As of November 2020, 16880 ha had been surveyed and 7800 cleared. <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/KVMAP-Korea-Vietnam-Mine-Action-Project.html#:~:text=PROJECT%20SUMMARY&text=The%20Korea%2DViet%20Nam%20Mine,and%20development%20in%20contaminated%20areas>.

support the preparation of draft legal documents on mine action. Challenges remain around the limited understanding of participating international stakeholders on the level of contamination in Viet Nam and its environmental impacts,¹⁶⁵ which limits their support on the development of a coherent mine action policy and comprehensive strategy for land use after clearance.¹⁶⁶

Finding 19. UNDP has consistently engaged NGOs in policymaking, implementation and monitoring processes, and engaged with the private sector for implementation of the revised Law on Anti-Corruption. Nonetheless, UNDP efforts to bring existing legal frameworks on association into line with international good practices have fallen short.

UNDP has done considerable work on strengthening the participation and engagement of CSOs and academic institutions in policy advocacy, implementation and monitoring. UNDP has also extended its partnership to include the private sector (both businesses and social enterprises), in addition to NGOs and academic think tanks active in national development. UNDP engagement with CSOs, academic institutions and the private sector has not only contributed to Viet Nam's national development, but also strengthened their capacity in the middle-income context.

UNDP support to Viet Nam to implement its international obligations on human rights has opened up opportunities for NGOs to engage in advocacy and monitoring work, despite perceived restrictions since 2017, although this has mostly been during the preparation of UPRs. UNDP mock sessions have contributed to familiarizing national stakeholders, including CSOs, on human rights dialogues. The Disabled People's Organization advocates policies on behalf of its members, working directly with MoLISA, and requested to share directly with

the National Assembly their concerns about obstacles that hindered their inclusion, participation and empowerment in the workplace and in everyday governance. Representatives from disabled people's organizations and networks served as conveners of research themes and co-conducted research with the Institute for Socio-Economic and Environment (ISEE) and UNDP. Overall, through project support, the Disabled People's Organization moved from a state of dependence to being rights-holders and decision-makers in their own right.

In other efforts, UNDP supported the Viet Nam Blind Association to advocate for Viet Nam's participation in the Marakesh Treaty, which facilitates access to published works for blind, visually impaired or print-disabled people.¹⁶⁷ During the review process of the Law on Intellectual Property Rights, the association proposed changes to certain clauses to align with the Marakesh Treaty. UNDP also supported the development of a Disability Map programme that identifies facilities for persons with disabilities by using information gathered from disabled persons themselves, and searchable using an application installed on their mobile phones.

The Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) is an exemplary case of UNDP support for CSO and citizen involvement in the accountability process. UNDP partnered with the Centre for Community Support and Development Studies and the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, an umbrella mass organization that collects citizen feedback on the performance of 63 provincial governments. As a result of this collaboration, provincial governments are using PAPI results as a source of feedback from citizens on their performance. 60 out of 63 provincial governments have reportedly adopted action plans to improve their PAPI scores.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Interviews from MoD and VNMAC. Referring to technical knowledge of dealing with the level where mines are located.

¹⁶⁶ The second phase of the Mine Action project has been designed and submitted for approval to KOICA HQ in December 2020. The new phase incorporates an integrated and innovative approach to enable inclusive, safe and resilient local development in targeted areas. The second phase will ensure environmental and climate-smart solutions for communities affected by Explosive Ordnance.

¹⁶⁷ The association explained the treaty to government sectors and hosted conferences to discuss preparations. The association compiled a document and submitted it to the Prime Minister with suggestions for ways forward.

¹⁶⁸ <http://papi.org.vn/eng/provincial-policy-responses>.

A number of Vietnamese academic institutions have also been active in supporting the strengthening of local government accountability, using PAPI results to identify sources of poor governance. For example, between 2012 and 2015, the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics collaborated with the PAPI team to study a total of 22 provinces with similar demographics but different PAPI results in order to ascertain the sources of governance challenges. These studies enhanced the understanding of provincial strengths and weaknesses and enabled the coordination of presentations by foreign and domestic experts. Since 2015, the Academy switched to providing policy advice to provinces with low PAPI scores. The Danang Institute for Socio-Economic Development (DISED), a think tank of the city's People's Committee, has been active in compiling results from the PAPI project, which it presents to the People's Committee together with results from other governance surveys conducted by the city and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The PAPI findings and methodology are also integrated into high-level training for senior Party and government leaders in the pool of 2021-2025 government executives.

Under the rubric of City Lab Danang, UNDP supported DISED to organize a participatory dialogue on how to organize a night tourism district. DISED has engaged a wide range of city government agencies to identify issues and approaches to security, environment, cost-benefits, and residents' preferences. It also plans to conduct surveys to seek inputs from both citizens and tourists. The approach has promoted bottom-up exchanges among practitioners prior to the formulation of a proposal.

Engagement with the private sector is a significant result area of governance. Through the 'Promoting a Fair Business Environment in ASEAN' project, the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a crucial number of businesses have been involved in developing internal control mechanisms and a code of conduct.

Under the rubric of achieving the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, UNDP partnered with youth and businesses through initiatives such as the

SDG Challenge and Youth Co Lab, creating space for young entrepreneurs to establish links between their business ideas and SDG impacts. A good example is Vulcan Augmentics, a start-up using 3-D printing to design robotic arms for persons with disabilities. The company won multiple prizes and awards, including one at Techfest 2019, and is currently testing its products on two UXO survivors from the Korea-Viet Nam Mine Action project.

Most CSOs, academic institutions and private businesses have been able to sustain their engagement based on initial contacts facilitated by UNDP. Even without funding, iSEE has been active in conducting non-discrimination work and working with LGBTQI networks. The Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industries has proposed an initiative to the Government to continue its engagement on integrity through its Business Integrity Platform for Professional Service Providers.

UNDP achievements in opening the political space for NGOs, academic institutions and the private sector have mainly resulted from its coordination role. As progress in the engagement of non-state actors is critical to implementation of the SDGs, UNDP would benefit from a coherent framework and strategy on the participation of mass organizations, social organizations, professional organizations and other non-state actors to advocate for a fundamental change in Viet Nam's legal framework concerning their association.

Finding 20. UNDP has contributed to improving institutional accountability and legal frameworks to address the prevention of corruption and the awareness and application of anti-corruption measures. However, these efforts have been framed in isolation, without a coherent package of public administration reforms based on earlier achievements.

UNDP efforts to strengthen the impact of public administration reform in Danang City (2013-17) brought about major breakthroughs in public administration and significantly improved responsiveness, accountability and transparency in public service delivery. The project showed that Danang

was committed to concretizing provisions of the Law on Cadres and Civil Servants on subjects including the process, criteria, rating scale and classification of civil servants. Furthermore, to improve administrative service delivery, Danang upgraded the performance of its interagency one-stop-shops through the use of indicators and toolkits to assess customer satisfaction. Attempts to improve service delivery were extended to include a pilot of the Allilmi system for the disclosure of construction information in Danang city. The success was exceptional as a result of the quality of its public administration reform, leadership commitment, and its location as an urban centre. The Ministry of Home Affairs has selectively codified and integrated certain aspects of Danang's achievements into Viet Nam's reform programme. Despite these achievements, the current country programme includes no coherent component on public administration reform. While some key result areas focus on functions and institutions or accountability, they are framed in isolation of a comprehensive package of public administration reform measures. While PAPI has contributed to the development of a public administration reform agenda, its main focus is at subnational level. This limits the overall results that UNDP can achieve.

A number of Vietnamese academic institutions have also been active in supporting the strengthening of local government accountability, using PAPI results to identify sources of poor governance. Beginning in 2008, PAPI conducted nationwide surveys to assess citizen experiences with various aspects of governance. Increasingly, provinces and municipalities, as well as central government agencies, have taken PAPI results into account. At provincial level, PAPI results inform performance in areas such as one-stop shops, elected bodies and local government responsiveness. Furthermore, the PAPI team has worked with central government agencies such as the Ministry of Finance on budget transparency and the National Assembly Judicial Committee on anti-corruption. Central-level institutions such as the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and the provincial level research agency have increasingly conducted analytical work using PAPI results in order to improve performance. PAPI has become

an important performance measurement system alongside the Provincial Competitive Index, Public Administration Reform Index, and the Satisfaction Index for Public Administration Services. Overall, by providing evidence, PAPI provides entry points for the public administration reform.

Within efforts to support anti-corruption, UNDP contributed to building the capacity of the Government Inspectorate to carry out required United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) reports and develop a system that could help monitor corruption risks at subnational level. The Government Inspectorate has coordinated with relevant ministries and agencies to prepare UNCAC review reports and prepare for revision of the Law on Anti-Corruption. A database for preparation of the national assessment report on UNCAC implementation was developed in 2017 for use in relevant ministries and departments. The Government Inspectorate also developed a database on the declaration and transparency of income and assets to serve in anti-corruption efforts, to propose recommendations for amending regulations and to finalize the legal framework on the declaration and transparency of assets. Through project support, the Government Inspectorate was active in involving society in anti-corruption campaigns that emphasized combatting corruption through youth education, community supervision and communication for awareness. Provincial Anti-Corruption Assessments have been carried out by the Government Inspectorate and are used as an M&E tool, though the reports have not been launched publicly.

Financial support from UNDP and the GAIN Fund, and technical assistance from UNDP Seoul and the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission of Korea, helped the Government Inspectorate to pilot the development of an empirical assessment toolkit for anti-corruption work, based on experiences of the Korean Commission. This was a continuation of activities that the inspectorate had implemented in 2015. Key contents of the assessment toolkit were shared during the process of amending the draft Law on Anti-Corruption, yet in the first year of the pilot,

the toolkit was only applied at provincial level, not at ministerial or sectoral levels. Furthermore, the results of the 2016 Provincial Anti-Corruption Assessment apply only to the pilot and cannot be used as original data for comparison in subsequent years. Financial support stopped after the project ended in 2017.

UNDP work in promoting a fair business environment in ASEAN (2018-19) has recorded considerable results. In 2018, UNDP support to the development of the 2018 Anti-Corruption Law, along with a consultation workshop with the Judicial Committee of the National Assembly, gave National Assembly deputies the new concept of anti-corruption in the private sector. The project supported Vietnamese partners to implement the law, focusing on anti-corruption provisions in the private sector, alongside a survey and consultation workshop on codes of conduct and internal control mechanisms for businesses, and a draft training manual for business. UNDP also supported research on foreign experiences to provide recommendations for Viet Nam to develop a decree detailing the Anti-Corruption Law. In 2019, UNDP worked closely with the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry to support businesses to enhance their integrity through guidance to develop and apply codes of conduct and internal control systems. Subsequently, they signed a MoU for the delivery of technical assistance to the Viet Nam Maritime Corporation to pilot building and apply an internal control system. This marks an important step in UNDP promotion of business integrity.

Overall, UNDP support has aligned Viet Nam's legal framework on anti-corruption and its implementation with UNCAC. While these results address some functions, institutions and accountability issues, they have been framed in isolation of a comprehensive package of public sector reform measures that could systematically address transparency and accountability in key public management areas and would have the potential for more significant and larger impact.

Finding 21. UNDP has supported SDG implementation in Viet Nam through interventions in areas ranging from SDG planning, monitoring and data

systems, to financing and implementation. However, the size and scale of these interventions, and the absence of a coherent programmatic framework/theory of change that brings together or links the results of various UNDP interventions across the outcomes, makes it difficult to discern the overall UNDP contribution to SDG implementation in Viet Nam.

UNDP support to SDG implementation in Viet Nam cuts across all outcome areas and is driven by a life cycle approach, consisting of programme and policy interventions to support SDG planning, monitoring, data, financing and implementation. Through its work on policy support, UNDP has contributed to the formulation of the National SDG Action Plan, VNR and NDC review and provided inputs to Viet Nam's review of the first five-year SDG implementation report and recommendations for mainstreaming SDGs in the SEDS/SEDP.

Support in the area of planning included the development of a National SDG Plan and integration of the SDGs into the new SEDS/SEDP. In the area of implementation, support focused on the integration of the SDGs across UNDP policy and programme work. In the area of data, UNDP focused on the concretization of the 'leave no one behind' principle and its work on citizen satisfaction with PAPI and the SDG Youth Survey, the results of which are being used to identify interventions to support young people's participation in the achievement of the SDGs. PAPI uses explicit indicators taken directly from the SDGs, including 16.1.3, 16.5.1 and 16.6.2 which focus on citizen satisfaction with public services. UNDP also supports provincial governments to understand PAPI data and results and develop action plans to improve their score. In the area of monitoring, UNDP focused on supporting the Government with VNR and Annual Review reporting. In the area of financing, UNDP focused on supporting the Development Finance Assessment and INFF, a joint initiative of the United Nations SDG Fund.

The crosscutting approach adopted by UNDP is well recognized, and the multiple UNDP interventions contribute in various ways to the different country

programme outputs and outcomes. However, they only produce partial results related to the development of national data collection, measurement and analytical systems to monitor progress on the SDGs and inform plans, policies and budgets at national and subnational levels. One of the reasons for this is the small and fragmented nature of UNDP interventions, scattered across the different outcome areas, and which alone have very limited impact and sustainability potential. Another, more important, reason is the absence of a coherent programmatic framework or ToC to bring together or link the results of various UNDP projects and interventions towards SDG implementation in the country.¹⁶⁹ This raises the question of whether there is a need for a separate key result area focusing on the SDGs and bringing together all related interventions, or whether the aggregated results of all UNDP projects across different outcomes are a sufficient contribution to SDG implementation in Viet Nam.

¹⁶⁹ Under the current M&E framework SDG related work is monitored under the output 'SDG National data collection measurement and analytical systems in place to monitor progress on the SDGs and to inform plans policies and budgets at national and subnational levels'. Under this output only five projects have been linked to this results. Projects include: (1) Regional Youth Project on Leadership, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship; (2) Business and Human Rights in Asia: Promoting Responsible Business Practices through Regional Partnership; (3) Promoting a Fair Business Environment in ASEAN; (4) Strengthening the Governance of Climate Change Finance to Enhance Gender Equality, Period I; and (5) Partnerships for Strengthening School Preparedness for Tsunamis in the Asia Pacific Region, Phase II. The other contribution to SGDs are scattered across all three outcomes but not linked to specific results, making it very difficult to aggregate UNDP contribution in SDG implementation.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This chapter presents the evaluation's conclusions on UNDP performance and contributions to development results in Viet Nam, along with the related recommendations and management response.

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. UNDP has played an important role in supporting the Government to implement its national development plans and strategies and has established itself as a reliable, neutral and trusted development partner in Viet Nam. The weight of programming in all outcome areas has been in policy advisory work. Greater attention is needed to the actual implementation of policy, understanding opportunities and end user perspectives, and addressing potential barriers to policy implementation and scale-up.

Its longstanding presence and partnership with the Government has positioned UNDP as a trusted and well-respected development partner in Viet Nam. It is seen as an impartial and objective broker and facilitator of projects, driven by partner needs and demands. Through its ability to work across ministries and institutions at central and local levels, UNDP has been well placed to contribute to national development through its international networks, providing policy and technical advice on development issues and leveraging policy dialogues to advance policy development and help implement reforms. Country programme outputs have fed into policy discussions and national development plans, which have contributed to reducing poverty, an improved legal framework on human rights, and greater institutional accountability. Gains have also been made through policy development and pilot projects that have helped to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve the climate resilience of communities (especially in coastal areas), and support government reporting to international treaty bodies and conventions.

While UNDP has provided considerable policy advice to the Government, there has been no coherent policy unit since the end of the 'Policy Advisory Team' project in 2017. Policy advisory work has instead been dispersed among outcome clusters, with a potential reduction of contribution and

impact, and missed opportunities for cross-sector convergence and harmonization (for example, overarching policy to enable green growth strategies in all sectors). Recently, the country office has adopted a new approach which emphasizes experimentation with the implementation of solutions, which is positive. However, an evident challenge is the absence of clear policy frameworks to which these innovative practices (like the Accelerator Lab) can be attached. Without a clear link between upstream policy work and downstream implementation support, UNDP runs the risk of being unable to support the Government and communities with nationwide impacts. Opportunities for additional benefits from convergent or harmonized policies may be missed without the whole policy 'map' in Viet Nam being examined.

UNDP multisector, multi-stakeholder, multipronged and inter-institutional approaches have, to some extent, helped to address some institutional fragmentation and overlap, and contributed towards building a more obvious whole-of-government approach. UNDP has mostly played a facilitator role, enabling cross-government, cross-sector and cross-actor (civil society and private sector) work, as different project partners try to define their respective roles in new approaches to governance, climate and natural resource management, and poverty reduction and social assistance. These roles need to be further tested and adjusted in the actual implementation of new policies and innovative approaches. This is where UNDP can take more of an active role, designing and monitoring on-the-ground implementation of policies and innovations, including associated capacity building, institutional coordination and community participation. This would allow UNDP to move to a higher level of technical expertise, becoming more of a source of knowledge (rather than a facilitator) and better able to provide country-specific expertise. At the same time, UNDP can continue to leverage its global policy networks, becoming an agent for the transfer of knowledge, expertise and innovation to

and from Viet Nam, yet better informed by lessons from on-the-ground implementation, as described. These considerations should be worked into the new CPD and associated ToC.

Conclusion 2. UNDP efforts to establish a gender-responsive environment and mainstream gender into programming are commendable. However, systematic monitoring and reporting of outcome-level results, demonstrating transformative changes in gender equality and women's empowerment, remains a challenge.

The country office has displayed a strong commitment to mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women in its interventions by mainstreaming gender issues at both organizational and programmatic levels and in programme partnerships, with results that address women's needs. This is evident in its comprehensive gender strategy (that built on the gender equality seal recommendations), and a gender task team led by senior management which effectively complements the work of the gender focal point.

Within the programme portfolio, UNDP interventions have targeted women's participation in decision-making, breaking gender stereotypes, collecting sex-disaggregated data for policymaking, eliminating discrimination against women with disabilities and raising public awareness on gender equality and women's empowerment. The country office has been equally successful in including the needs of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in its programming. The mainstreaming of gender into UNDP projects has contributed to gender components of the SDGs, and has been as important as having separate projects for women.

Another positive aspect is the wide use of sex-disaggregated indicators in programme design and monitoring frameworks. However, there is a significant gap in the way UNDP monitors, evaluates and reports on its performance on gender equality and women's empowerment against outcome-level transformative results. This still focuses on the level of activities and outputs (e.g. the number of women participants) rather than transformative changes in

gender equality (i.e. changes in policy or outcomes such as employment or political participation). This is a missed opportunity to learn from challenges in bringing about transformative changes and use the lessons to improve current projects or design relevant gender-focused interventions in future.

Conclusion 3. The country office M&E system focuses mainly on project-level activities and outputs. The measurement of outcome-level results remains a key challenge, as indicators at both output and outcome levels are not specific enough to demonstrate the UNDP contribution.

Adaptive management approaches, supported by a dynamic M&E system, are critical in responding to the complexities of a constantly changing development environment. However, the country office M&E system and ToC were not updated regularly enough to capture these changes and allow the country office to use them as a tool for risk management and prevention or to inform adaptive management. The ToC for the CPD outcomes lacks detail to map the intermediate changes, assumptions and risk attributes necessary for reaching and measuring key results and intended outcomes. Project monitoring and quality have been uneven and focus mainly on activities, with an emphasis on tracking beneficiary numbers. Indicators at output and outcome levels are not specific enough to show the UNDP contribution to outcome-level results.

Tracking the development of policies, rather than their mere existence, is even more challenging. Policy effectiveness is not routinely monitored and reported, and where this is done the language used is overly sanguine with hyperbolic statements not fully supported by evidence, obscuring the actual situation. The use of the ToC and M&E as management and learning tools is limited, with only one-third of planned decentralized evaluations completed, and a further third cancelled or rescheduled, mostly due to project delays, cancellations or projects not being ready. More than half of quality-assured evaluations were rated moderately unsatisfactory. Some evaluations have been used to inform project implementation and management decision-making.

Conclusion 4. UNDP has efficiently targeted its upstream policy advisory work on poverty reduction and social assistance, with downstream piloting of implementation solutions through linked projects. However, the effective integration of institutional capacity development interventions needs more systematic attention.

UNDP has done well to combine its support to the development of national policy frameworks with its implementation of downstream interventions. From poverty reduction and social assistance to inclusive growth, productivity and competitiveness, UNDP has provided critical policy advice at national level. UNDP identified and promoted innovative implementation solutions to support national policy frameworks, for example through the use of e-payments for social assistance packages, and support to ethnic minority women to market their products online.

While institutional and individual capacities are equally crucial to the implementation of poverty reduction and the social assistance framework, UNDP projects have so far only focused on the development of individual capacities, mostly through training. What is missing is a discussion and strategy for a comprehensive approach to capacity development, and measurement of its effectiveness and impact, which can be integrated into programme design, monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusion 5. UNDP-supported initiatives on climate change, disaster risk management, environment and natural resource management are highly relevant to Viet Nam's needs and priorities. They have continued to mobilize extensive partnerships, address policy gaps and provide clearer direction on management functions, roles and models for Government, the private sector and community engagement.

Implementing a diverse portfolio of environment and climate change programmes in Viet Nam, and with extensive experience in helping the Government meet its related international obligations, UNDP has positioned itself well to design projects that meet the requirements of vertical funds

(GEF and GCF) and to engage appropriate government, private sector and civil society partners in their implementation. This has helped to secure a very significant amount of funding to address issues related to climate change (both mitigation and adaptation), disaster risk management (with more emphasis on preparedness) and ongoing natural resource and environment management issues, in line with government planning priorities.

The weight of programming has been quite well balanced between the three focus areas, and has engaged¹⁷⁰ the full spectrum of government ministries, academia and institutes, the private sector (mostly in urban areas), and local communities (mostly in rural areas). These large partnerships have been key to try to address the multisectoral nature of climate change, natural resource management and environmental issues, with the development of many policies at central level and some recent delivery of related institutional change at provincial and commune levels.

However, a significant challenge has been to clarify management roles between ministries, build linkages between different ministries and project themes and extend ministerial actions to local level. To counter these constraints, UNDP has played a key role in clarifying responsibilities and supporting extensive awareness raising and capacity building in most projects. This has, at times, led to delays, but ultimately most of the intended results were delivered (including new or revised policies and related laws, regulations and decrees, and demonstration pilots for new approaches to climate change mitigation and natural resource management in particular), although not yet with clear self-financing strategies to support scale-up and replication.

Conclusion 6. UNDP efforts on the reduction of GHG emissions, improved environmental quality, climate resilience and disaster preparedness and biodiversity conservation are beginning to show promising results. While these have all been well-founded with new policy development, it will take more time for

¹⁷⁰ Here, "engagement" refers to involvement in a project. This does not, however, guarantee a coordinated and efficient/ effective government mechanism when projects stop.

them to be fully embraced and embedded in government, community and private sector actions. There is ongoing need for clear and compelling business cases, economic valuations and cost-benefit analyses to demonstrate the net benefits of new approaches, so that they can be more easily taken up by the private sector and civil society.

The various projects working on policy change, awareness raising and demonstrations (mostly GEF and GCF projects) have started to develop an experience base with community and private sector engagement. This has allowed some experimentation with the development of positive experiences around alternative livelihoods, payments for ecosystem services, energy efficiency options and approaches, and new mechanisms for preferential financing for marginalized communities. Most effective have been those initiatives that involved single products or technologies and a very large consumer/user population, which allows for rapid multiplication of benefits. These have included non-fired bricks, energy efficiency buildings, LED lighting and climate resilient housing, all with tangible products, demonstrated cost-savings and a potentially large population ultimately receiving benefits.

For initiatives involving local community management of natural resources, or small-scale private sector uptake of energy efficiency and green chemistry, there is a less clear picture of replication and uptake. While policy changes have tried to create standards and regulations to force change (for example, forest closures), these are apparently difficult to monitor and enforce. There are frequent references to numerous new policies and revisions in the project reports, but it is not clear how the policies are actually implemented and how they drive change, and supporting legislation and its roll-out can often take many years. There are also frequent references to increased awareness of issues and solutions, especially at the provincial level, but the impact of increased awareness and capacity is not clearly presented with evidence of ensuing changes. Again, more time is needed for these capacities to manifest in change on the ground.

The development and use of 'business case' scenarios to promote sustainability, including 'economic valuations' demonstrating the potential benefits to end users, has been less clear, limiting the replication and scale-up potential of several promising concepts. This is particularly true with 'green' concepts like 'green growth', 'green chemistry', 'circular economy', etc. These are still not fully understood or workable across the various stakeholder groups, including government ministries, the private sector and civil society. Other inducements, such as access to loans with preferential interest rates, have had some success, for example in support of climate-resilient housing. However, those involving government revenues, such as changes to the tax system or revenue generation and sharing schemes like ABS, have been challenged by bureaucracy and a very slow change process. As a result, there are frequent references to the need for further grant or project funding, or government subsidies, to maintain the momentum of new initiatives, which has a negative impact on their sustainability. Despite the significant challenges of working with communities and the private sector, UNDP experience with these partners is substantial (drawing from global initiatives through GEF and GCF), and development work with them needs to continue, to cement the gains made.

Conclusion 7. UNDP lacks a coherent approach that brings together its multiple interventions to support governance reform in Viet Nam, in general, and governance for SDG implementation in particular.

During the current programme cycle, UNDP focused on governance components that support access to justice, the participation of civil society and women, accountability, human rights, and anti-corruption, and has broadened its scope to cover peacekeeping and mine action. However, it has significantly reduced its efforts to strengthen the accountability of institutions, components for improving the performance in governance. While UNDP support to governance for SDG implementation is forward looking, it has taken the form of multiple downstream projects implemented under the rubric of SDGs and spread across portfolio and programme outcomes, with no coherent ToC that links or brings together their results.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

RECOMMENDATION 1.



UNDP should develop a detailed theory of change, that identifies a clear intervention logic with intermediate results and a pathway to change, including a detailed assessment of risks and assumptions. This ToC should guide the integration of upstream and downstream interventions as well as promote synergy across and within projects, outputs and outcomes, especially if used as a living document that is consulted and adjusted on a regular basis throughout the programme cycle.

A clearer and more detailed ToC should serve as the basis for the development of the new UNDP country programme and all subsequent projects and programmes (including regional programmes) that directly contribute to the key results and CPD outcomes. This will mean investing more time and resources in the design stages to understand (and design for) the drivers of change, clarify the intervention logic and impact pathways, and conduct thorough mapping and analysis of stakeholders to clarify roles, assumptions, unintended outcomes and future expectations. It will also help to identify and promote linkages between projects, build synergy and ensure coherence. A detailed ToC with short- and medium-term changes will help to map sequences of interventions, and design appropriate and realistic indicators to capture intermediate changes that lead to results and CPD outcomes. This should be complemented by institutional mechanisms that allow for periodic critical self-reflection based on project and programme monitoring and evaluation tools and after-action reviews, using the ToC as a dynamic and living tool for learning and decision-making. The ToC needs to be updated, revised and adjusted to reflect any changes during the programme cycle. A solid ToC should guide the CPD in identifying activities with sustainable potential. This means that UNDP should avoid focusing on small-scale activities, or individual campaigns and conferences. The current programme cycle has innovatively introduced the concept of AAA governance. One way forward is to map out how this may be developed and applied to policy processes with involvement from CSOs and the private sector to ensure their sustainability. Pilot activities need to build on areas of comparative strength, past experience and demand from Government, and be grouped or designed so as to contribute collectively to results.

Management response:



UNDP accepts this recommendation. The new Country Programme Document (CPD) 2022-2026 and its ToC will be derived from the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and its ToC, taking into account the ICPE recommendations.

◀ Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
1.1 Analysis and consultations on the theory of change conducted for the Cooperation Framework is used for UNDP CPD. UNDP CPD TOC is elaborated during the formulation of the new Country Programme Document 2022-2026, mapping strategies for upstream and downstream interventions, risks and assumptions.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Resident Representative/ Deputy Resident Representative and team leaders - supported by the M&E Analyst)</i>		
1.2 As part of the ToC/CPD formulation, a programme sensemaking exercise is undertaken to better define and develop interlinkages and complementarities between different solution pathways.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Resident Representative/ Deputy Resident Representative, County Office M&E focal Point, Country Office Support and Quality Assurance, programme units and Accelerator Lab Team country office & Bangkok Regional Hub)</i>		

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database.

RECOMMENDATION 2.



The M&E system needs to focus on outcome-level results, with more frequent project monitoring and evaluation throughout the programme cycle, to capture system-level and real change on the ground, including transformative changes in gender equality and women’s empowerment and leaving no one behind. Findings from M&E should be consistently reflected upon and used for learning and management decision-making to allow for necessary course corrections in a timely manner.

Currently, UNDP reporting mostly collects reports from national partners (ministries in the NIM modality). These reports generally focus on activities, numbers of participants, policies etc., as well as assumptions about implicit benefits deriving from geographical coverage. They do not provide much evidence or analysis of changes in the quality of life of beneficiary households or improved opportunities for small businesses in a way that can be related back to policy change. More appropriate performance indicators to which different projects will contribute, and frequent independent performance monitoring, would clarify what exactly has changed and help to develop business cases showing net benefits that would, in turn, support the replication and scale-up of new initiatives. The identification of appropriate performance indicators, based on the needs and expectations of stakeholders, will also help to track changes in the behaviours, lives, livelihoods and quality of life of communities, which can be measured during the life of the project rather than relying on national-level statistics that cannot easily be tracked back to specific initiatives. This will help to shift the focus from a strictly regulatory approach to adaptive management, and shape future policy direction for meaningful impact.

In a similar vein, UNDP needs to better leverage the gains it has made in mainstreaming and promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment initiatives, to go beyond reporting numbers towards identifying improvements in normative behaviour and changes in the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable communities. Together with the review of gender markers, a report on the implementation of the country office Gender Strategy could help to inform gender analysis and provide an accurate picture of the level of focus needed for transformative results in leaving no one behind.

Management response: 

UNDP accepts this recommendation and it will be incorporated into the design of new country programme. Additionally, a thorough review of the current approach will be undertaken, to identify the weaknesses and gaps, strengthen the country office capacity and revise the approach to address current weaknesses.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
2.1 New output-level indicators are formulated to measure behaviour change, improvement in communities’ livelihoods, their quality of life and transformative changes to gender equality and social inclusion, with disaggregated data to measure such improvements.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Resident Representative/ Deputy Resident Representative and team leaders - supported by the M&E Analyst, the newly established M&E Task Team and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Task Team)</i>		

◀ Recommendation 2 (cont'd)

<p>2.2 An appropriate mechanism is developed to regularly monitor, track and measure CPD indicators, risks and assumption log, including performance indicators and data extracted from project monitoring systems (point 2.3).</p>		<p>UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Resident Representative/ Deputy Resident Representative and team leaders - supported by the M&E Analyst, the newly established M&E Task Team and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Task Team)</i></p>		
<p>2.3 The country office Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Action Plan is developed as part of the new CPD 2022-2026, ensuring that 'leave no one behind' is a cornerstone of UNDP work in Viet Nam (in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).</p>	<p>December 2021</p>	<p>UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Resident Representative/ Deputy Resident Representative and team leaders - supported by the M&E Analyst, the newly established M&E Task Team and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Task Team)</i></p>		
<p>2.4 The country office project cycle management approach (formulation, appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) is strengthened, with appropriate roles, capacities and mechanisms to improve project monitoring and evaluation throughout the programme cycle, which will allow the county office to identify and measure changes on the ground, and allow course corrections when needed. (Same as 3.2)</p>	<p>June 2022</p>	<p>UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Resident Representative/ Deputy Resident Representative - supported by the Operations Manager, M&E Analyst, the newly established M&E Task Team and all programme teams)</i></p>		

RECOMMENDATION 3.



UNDP needs to systematically reflect on how to properly design and measure the impact of the capacity building and awareness raising that it supports.

UNDP needs a more comprehensive approach to capacity development, delineating the pathway to change and knowledge management processes that ensure the integration of learning and innovation into the capacity development process. UNDP needs to reflect more systematically on how to support the capacity building of its implementing partners across the country programme portfolio, including those at subnational levels, to promote innovation and achieve the objective of ‘leave no one behind’ outlined in the National Target programme on Sustainable Poverty Reduction, the Master Plan for Social Assistance, and the upcoming National Target programme on Social Economic Development in Ethnic Minority Areas.

UNDP has supported Viet Nam to develop comprehensive policy frameworks with innovative components. Implementation success largely depends on the capacities of responsible agencies. UNDP and national partners should discuss and agree which aspects of their capacities will be required to implement multidimensional poverty reduction programmes, social assistance frameworks and climate change and adaptation programmes. Emphasis should be given to both institutional capacity and the capacities of individual actors involved in implementation. The former may include areas such as coordination with public and private institutions and technological infrastructure, while the latter may include technical capacities in areas of planning and monitoring. For national stakeholders in the public sector, and for capacity development results to be sustainable, UNDP should advocate for the expected capacities to be integrated into job descriptions, performance management and promotion in the civil service system.

Management response:



UNDP accepts this recommendation.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
3.1 Capacity building is integrated in the new CPD 2022-2026 which will guide the formulation and implementation of all UNDP projects and interventions.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Resident Representative/ Deputy Resident Representative, programme units)</i>		

<p>3.2 The country office project cycle management approach (formulation, appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) is strengthened with appropriate roles, capacities and mechanisms to improve project monitoring and evaluation, throughout the programme cycle, which will allow the office to identify and measure changes on the ground (including those relating to capacity building interventions), and allow course corrections when needed. (supported by a new M&E Task Team). (Same as 2.4)</p>	<p>June 2022</p>	<p>UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Resident Representative/ Deputy Resident Representative - supported by the Operations Manager, M&E Analyst, all programme teams and the newly established M&E Task Team)</i></p>		
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RECOMMENDATION 4.



UNDP should support the Government of Viet Nam to undertake an evidence-based full life cycle analysis of some of its procurement programmes and key state industries, that will help to monetize the benefits of ‘green’ actions, to inform the Government, private sector and civil society and promote their scale-up and sustainability.

To address the lack of understanding behind ‘green’ concepts like ‘green growth’, ‘green chemistry’ and ‘circular economy’, and their limited replication, uptake and buy-in across various stakeholder groups including government ministries, private sector and civil society, UNDP should advocate for, and (resources permitting) support the Government in undertaking, economic valuations in some important sectors, to monetize the long-term benefits of green actions.

The energy, transport and food production sectors are three examples where there is significant government control and intervention that could be changed to allow a ‘greener’ approach. A full life cycle comparative analysis of actions in these three areas, based on the previous ten years and projected ten years into the future, should include and examine all inputs, actions and outputs for energy consumption, waste production and inefficiencies. These should then be monetized in terms of GHG emissions and environmental quality, so that the benefits of investments in “greening” these sectors are clearer and understood by all stakeholders: the Government, private sector, civil society, and citizens. This would help to ensure better buy-in, promoting the uptake of green concepts and their sustainability.

Management response:



UNDP accepts this recommendation with the clarification that UNDP has been responding to requests by the Government to undertake economic valuations that monetize the long term benefits of green actions in specific sectors/sub-sectors to provide convincing evidence for triggering scalable actions by the Government and concerned stakeholders to advance sustainable development of the country. However, it is noted that UNDP is currently not engaging in, nor has been requested by the Government to review, “some of its procurement programmes and key state industries” as referred to in the recommendation.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
4.1 Undertake an assessment of the contribution of the ocean-based sectors of oil and gas, fishery, tourism, maritime transport, wind and solar power, and natural resources to sustainable ocean economy and SDGs and to inform and trigger actions for sustainability of coastal and ocean resources.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Climate Change and Environment programme team)</i>		
4.2 Undertake a review of Climate Expenditure and Investments in Viet Nam to present trends and alignment of the expenditure with the strategic priorities and trigger effective fund allocation and spending to address climate change.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Climate Change and Environment programme team)</i>		

RECOMMENDATION 5.



UNDP needs to develop a balanced portfolio to ensure its leading role in governance. Support to accountability institutions and mechanisms with an aim to buttress government integrity and performance should be considered as key components of UNDP efforts.

UNDP needs to draw lessons learned from its past support to strengthening accountability institution mechanisms, in order to identify entry points for future interventions to promote government integrity and performance. These should contribute to the Government's priorities for 2021-2030, especially the transition to IR 4.0 in the context of COVID-19 recovery and the digital transformation of Government administrative service delivery. The focus on accountability institutions and mechanisms should also contribute to the socioeconomic and associated rights of marginalized groups (people with disabilities, women, ethnic minorities, MSMEs). A ToC that includes a component of accountability institutions and mechanisms should also link how these changes may expedite SDG implementation in general, and national development plans in particular.

Management response:



UNDP accepts this recommendation, with the clarification that governance is a crosscutting element throughout all UNDP outcomes and interventions such as: improving policy/legal frameworks and institutional functions as well as mechanisms to promote government integrity, transparency and performance, as well as oversight by people-elected bodies. Additionally, governance is a standalone outcome of the new United Nations SDG Cooperation Framework, and a strong focus of the forthcoming CPD. The below action is proposed for the Governance portfolio.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
5.1 The Theory of Change for the Governance and Justice outcome is elaborated and validated during the formulation of the UNSDCF and CPD 2022-2026, based on the Government's Socio-economic Development Strategy and key policies resolutions in emerging priorities such as national strategies for IR.4.0, digital transformation and anti-corruption.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office <i>(Resident Representative/ Deputy Resident Representative, Governance and Participation Team)</i>		

ANNEXES



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12781>

- Annex 1.** Terms of reference
- Annex 2.** Evaluation Design Matrix
- Annex 3.** Country at a glance
- Annex 4.** Country office at a glance
- Annex 5.** Country office projects for in-depth review
- Annex 6.** People consulted
- Annex 7.** Documents consulted
- Annex 8.** Summary of CPD outcome indicators and status reported by the Country Office



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