

Executive Summary

The Joint Programme on Gender Equality in Viet Nam is one of 128 Joint Programmes funded by the MDG Achievement Fund worldwide. It is the first of three JPs that is financed by the MDG-F in Viet Nam.

Over a period of three years twelve UN agencies and programmes, i.e. FAO, ILO, IOM, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNWOMEN UNODC, and WHO; in partnership with the Government of Viet Nam have aimed to provide strategic, coordinated and multi-sectoral capacity building and technical assistance to foster the capacity of national and provincial duty bearers. This support aimed to put them in a position to better implement, monitor, evaluate and report on the Law on Gender Equality (GEL) and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (DVL) from 2009-2011. With the 12 UN agencies forming a critical mass and aiming to speak with one voice, the JPGE strived for changes at the highest level towards gender equality in Vietnam.

Based on a review of the literature, UN experiences working on gender equality initiatives, and as a result of extensive consultation with national partners in Vietnam, the Vietnam Joint Programme on Gender Equality (JPGE) has identified the following three problem areas, which it sought to address:

1. Despite a sound policy and legal framework supporting gender equality, institutional capacities in the area of reporting, gender analysis, data collection and monitoring remain weak and unsystematic.
2. Institutional weakness is evident in the area of networking and sharing of information, data, research and experiences on issues of gender equality.
3. Institutional weakness is also evident in the area of gender equality research and sex-disaggregated data collection, analysis and dissemination systems.

The Joint Programme specifically aimed to build national institutional capacity to fill the above listed gaps and has developed the following three Joint Programme Outcomes with its related outputs to do so:

Strategic Result: Improved capacity of relevant national and provincial authorities, institutions and other duty bearers to effectively implement the GEL and DVL
Joint Outcome 1: Improved skills knowledge and practices for the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control.
Joint Outcome 2: Enhanced partnerships and coordination around gender equality within and outside of government
Joint Outcome 3: Strengthened evidence-based data and data systems for promoting gender equality.

The JPGE is the first experience in Viet Nam setting up a complex Joint Programme mainstreaming Gender Equality and Domestic Violence in 17 NIPs and CIPs and 12 UN agencies. Several new and valid experiences have been gained in course of its implementation, for example by UNFPA as MA for a pass through mechanism for the funds allocated to the GoV, a financial management system composed of pass through and parallel funding mechanisms, and the piloting of HPPMG. The PMU hosted in Molisa and co-chaired between Molisa and UNPFA, overseeing the three CPMUs working on the three components of the JPGE are another innovation in the history of cooperation of GOV and UN.

The JPGE has created new forms of closer cooperation among the GoV agencies, among the UN agencies, and between both groups. New experiences in peer reviewing, knowledge sharing and jointly developing research pieces. The document of outstanding dimension is National Study on Domestic Violence against Women, an example for the joint work of UN Women and The World Bank is the Gender Assessment Report also compiled in course of the JPGE.

A challenging set up as the JPGE with many aspects of tested for the first time has obviously shortcomings as well. The time and quality of human resources involved for a JP of this dimension and its coordination requirements was underestimated. None of the UN partners but ILO had budgeted focal points representing their agency in the programme coordination mechanisms.

As a consequence most UN agencies working in the JPGE have involved Junior Professional Officers (JPOs), UN Volunteers (UNVs) or Interns. High staff turnover rate due to short term contracts has caused some discontinuity in implementation, resulting in reduced efficiency and effectiveness of implementation. This has caused also critical comments of some of the NIPs.

The lack of sufficient and all-encompassing M&E results framework and quality assurance mechanisms shared by all agencies involved is a shortcoming in the JPGE Management. This refers mainly to the lack of a capacity building strategy and respective shared evaluation tools applied on training provision by all implementing partners

The continuation of the partnership between GoV and UNCT in working on GE, DV and GBV is secured under the One Plan 2012-2016 approved in February 2012. This means a good opportunity to sustain achievements of the JPGE. If also those outputs of the JPGE that have been completed just prior to or at the closing ceremony 16 March 2012 will be utilized and applied under One Plan there is a fair chance to sustain several of the achievements of the JPGE. Care has however to be taken of a truly joint implementation of the One Plan and the joint approach of UN agencies working towards the same outputs and outcomes.

Recommendations for the transition of JPGE Gender Themes to One Plan

Recommendation 1

Before embarking on the implementation of One Plan to take stock and using the momentum gained with a joint approach in implementation of the JPGE. What has worked well, where are gaps left, or how can products only very recent or in draft made available (M&E frameworks, action plans) be sustained, which actions have not led to the expected results (outputs and contributions to outcomes)? Work proactively on closing these gaps or work on the sustainability, as inputs to the next five years of implementation on GE related subjects in the OP and beyond.

Issue/s to be addressed: How to generate a seamless transition and continuation between JPGE and One Plan on the Gender theme. This was already summarized in the sustainability plan, however, it shall be updated to the status at JPGE end.

Recommendation 2

Address the question if and how existing coordination mechanism established under JPGE shall be set forth, with human resources allocated, and how some new ones shall be established. Discuss the role of UN Women in their strengthened role as agency in coordination of the gender related outputs of the OP. Also address which can be the role of the gender expert in RCO within the OP.

Issue/s to be addressed: Potential risk of weakening or losing coordination and joint implementation mechanisms and information exchange established in JPGE by 30 March 2012. GAP is engrained as indicator 2 under 2.4.4 of One Plan as an indicator of sustainability. The Gender PCG with its working groups, co-chaired by MOLISA and UN Women, is planned to continue in the next OP.

Recommendation 3

Elaborate on joint working groups around one or several outputs of the One Plan to use synergies, combined knowledge and joint implementation mechanism. After introducing the GE and DV subjects broadly with 12 UN agencies under the JPGE, consider to form smaller joint UN teams of 3 to 5 agencies and respective GoV partners to address specific subjects with a few relevant UN agencies, for example ILO, IOM, UNFPA and UN Women contributing to the same output 2.4.3 of One Plan. Stand alone activities by singular UN agencies and a "silo-like" approach mean a backlash and shall be by all means avoided in particular for horizontal themes.

Issue/s to be addressed: Secure coherence of interventions between the UN agencies and utilization of synergies beyond lifetime of JPGE.

Recommendation 4

Continue to actively utilize the Gender Action Partnership (GAP), as a coordination and information forum to bring closer not only the UN agencies and the various stakeholders involved line Ministries, but continue to involve also other donors like WB and their initiatives and NGOs. The latter reported about difficulties to meet Ministries on their own directly. To secure alignment and complementarity of other donors as well, as well of the NGO who are one element of sustainability of the JPGE. Consider UN

Women to heading the GAP from the donor side.
Issue/s to be addressed: Secure coherence and coordination between the different stakeholders supporting GE in Viet Nam.

Recommendation 5
Discuss how the clearly and repeatedly detected gap in accessible quality M&E expertise, as well as for the JPGE itself as also in the set up and operation of M&E systems for internal project management use as well as for macro systems at GoV side, for the monitoring of progress in implementation of laws. Indicators in One Plan need partly revision as well, as they are showing several weaknesses observed also in earlier documents. Consider to involve the M&E Expert and the UN M&E working group, or evaluation expertise at Regional Offices in Bangkok or HQ level.
Issue/s to be addressed: Low quality or none existence of M&E systems for project management as well as of QA systems.

Recommendation 6
Once the source(s) of M&E expertise are identified, give priority on the approval and operationalization of the M&E frameworks for MOLISA (GEL) and MOCST (DVL), thus to allow a sustainable and measurable implementation of the respective strategies and Action Plans within and beyond the period of One Plan. Base the work on the versions of the M&E frameworks already composed under the JPGE and avoid inefficient duplication of efforts. Both tasks will remain under ONE PLAN outputs areas 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.
Issue/s to be addressed: Monitoring of the strategies and action plans needs to be introduced frontloaded at the beginning of One Plan implementation.

Recommendation 7
Organize a M&E training workshop to bring all GoV and UN agency staff involved on the same page about RBM, PCM and M&E, ideally also on special indicators of gender-monitoring. Draft M&E plans for GEL and DVL or the results framework of One Plan can be used as case studies to work on.
Issue/s to be addressed: Existing M&E systems are Low quality or none existence of M&E systems for project management as well as of QA systems.

Recommendation 8
Assume the comparison of existing training assessment methods, between the UNCT members and also between the GoV agencies involved (MOCST, MOLISA, MoH, MoET....), and to develop a joint training assessment tool that can be used by all UN agencies. In this way results encompassing various inputs from various providers. Training quality starts already with the selection of participants. A small guideline with the major steps and templates should be compiled from the existing material. In course of the evaluation all standards between very good to not existent have been observed.
Issue/s to be addressed: Training efficiency of JPGE has been hampered by varying quality control mechanisms throughout the process at output and sometimes also at activity level, and of varying quality

and existence of assessment tools for capacity building and training. Whereas some training activities have shown and documented good results, some courses rendered less than 10% success rate, measured in utilizing newly accumulated knowledge.

Recommendation 9

In cooperation with Ministries involved in 2.4.3 and 2.4.4 capacity building activities under One Plan, work at a joint capacity building strategy and implementation plan with set targets and on joint set of training and human resources development assessment methods. JPGE partners shall be in the position to provide good practices and Apply similar or same training assessment methods among all partners involved. Make a transparent training assessment a must for any training activity and to utilize it for a continuous improvement process. Do not provide any further capacity training under outputs 2.4.3. and 2.4.4 as long as no capacity building strategy and plan have been completed.

Issue/s to be addressed: In course of the JPGE some QA issues have been detected, i.e. provision of capacity building measures without a detailed plan and strategy of what kind of capacity is going to be built. Greater attention need to be paid to the sustainability of capacities developed.

Recommendation 10

After a period of six to eight months to assess the impact of the capacity building and training provided under JPGE; apply lessons learned as well for new overall capacity building measures foreseen under One Plan. Capacities at central level have been created, but the impact of training and knowledge transfer should be also verified at provincial and district level, possibly combined with initiatives in the same regions or via electronic media where possible. Follow up is required to verify if the training provided was useful for the task the respective trainee has to perform.

Issue/s to be addressed: Training assessments has been performed only rather patchy in course of the JPGE.

Recommendations 11:

Working towards a new corporate culture in line with One UN as future model, including required changes at HQ level.

Although HPPMG have been introduced in Viet Nam many processes are not harmonized yet. Review financial, management and reporting modalities among UN agencies and to explore how these modalities could be better aligned among UN agencies. This process has to be initiated at respective HQ level.

Issue/s to be addressed: Each UN agency has its own set of rules and procedures to implement programmes and projects. This becomes an obstacle when joint programmes want to work in an Applying the "One UN" concept necessitates the harmonization of these rules and procedures at HQ level. This will optimize the implementation effectiveness and efficiency of future joint programmes or approaches, for UNCT members as well as for the partners in GoV .

Recommendation 12

GoV should use wherever possible existing staff for gender related aspects under the One Plan, as now

GoV staff has been trained and with expected enhanced capacity being a sustainable elements in the structure who are knowledge carrier.

Issue/t to be addresses: Avoiding the establishment of parallel structures and involve in-house staff.

Recommendations 13

Appreciate the necessity to find suitable and, if required, highly qualified staff for potentially high value added work pieces, as well in policy advice work as for technical assistance. Should junior staff get involved s/he needs to be backed and supervised by an experience senior staff member.

Issue/s to be addressed: Staff turnover and not sufficient qualified junior staff were considered as hampering factors, and often coinciding with each other.

Recommendation 14

Establish a consultant roaster used and fed jointly by all agencies member of the UNCT; consider to put search profiles at www.unjobs.org or the www.devex.com or on www.un.org.vn/ @ jobs or tenders, respectively. The entry to the consultant roaster can be combined with some online test to secure a certain quality.

Multi-agency activity planning shall anticipate potential bottlenecks in availability.

Issue/s to be addressed: Constant lack of suitable consultants was indicated by several stakeholders interviewed as one of the hampering factors of the JPGE. Availability of consultants had often determined the time of the work not the process necessities. Activities were planned in a way that has created bottlenecks in already scarce consultant profiles.

Recommendation 15

National and International consultants working under the same project shall be passing the same recruitment process, the selection process shall be performed by a committee composed by members of the respective governmental entities and representatives of the UNCT or the JP team.

Issue/s to be addressed: Parallel recruitment of national consultants by the GoV and international candidates by the UN agencies participating in the JP was perceived as time intensive and as a challenge to coordination.

Recommendation 16

"Heavy bureaucratic procedures" must be anticipated for future programme as an aspect to be duly taken into account in the risk management as part of the programme proposal.

Issue/s to be addressed: "Heavy bureaucratic procedures" were indicated as constraint for achievement of certain results, or as constraint to introduce changes to the M&E results framework. It should be constraints that can be overcome as they are system immanent and were well known already when the JPGE was designed.

4 Conclusions and lessons learned

4.1 Conclusions

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The main strengths and weaknesses are summarized in the SWOT analysis in table 12 below.

Table 12, SWOT Analysis of the Joint Programme

Strengths	Weaknesses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First experience in Viet Nam setting up a complex Joint Programme mainstreaming GE and DV with 12 UN agencies and 17 NIPs and CIPs • Strong commitment and ownership of GoV NIP in the JPGE • UN as a strong partner in Viet Nam • Pilot country for Delivering as One • Pilot country for HPPMG • First time experience UNFPA as MA for pass through mechanism • JPGE aligned with GOV strive to operationalise the GE and DV laws • Participation of different gender stakeholders in GAP; cooperation in Gender Assessment Report • First study performed and data material on domestic violence in Viet Nam generated • New experiences in peer reviewing, knowledge sharing and jointly developing research pieces - for the UN agencies and the GoV - on the GE/DV theme • Participation of agencies (UNAIDS) with no or low budget share in the JPGE driven by the incentive of data access and exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of a M&E results framework used as a management instrument • No joint instrument to assessing training and capacity building throughout the participating UN and GoV agencies • Absence of approved and used M&E systems for implementation of GEL and DVL • Human Resources - Staffing, turnover of staff • Underestimation of time and HR required for such a complex JP • Quality assurance throughout the process (also related to the instruments applied) not available • Lack of strategic planning, no capacity building plan • PMU and CPMUs will dismantle after project end and most of the staff will no longer work for the respective entities • Questions of secured budgets at some of the participating NIP to continue and roll out the work started under JPGE 	Internal – attributes to the organisation
Opportunities	Threats	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue partnership between GoV and UNCT in working on GE, DV and GBV under the One Plan 2012-2016, Focus Area 2, mainly under Outputs 2.4.3 and 2.4.4 • GAP as JPGE supported mechanism to foster partnership with CSOs and other donors will continue • UN Women in a coordinating role on gender • Revisit choice of partners for the next JP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarify on budgeting staff for JPs • Varying commitment of partners • Lack of Financial Sustainability of some concrete partners beyond JPGE end • Representation of Civil Society in the process was limited • Beyond completion of JPGE: Losing the momentum of joint work approach and processes - not only in programming but also in implementation - started under JPGE - under the One Plan agreement 	External – attributes to the environment
Positive, potentially helpful	Negative, potentially harmful	

4.2 Lessons learned

In course of the implementation of the JPGE there have been several good practices and lessons learned generated that can be possibly transferred to similar joint programmes.

Design

- Application of parallel and pass through approach in the financial management. This has allowed the GoV to work just with one MA, facilitating the reporting and administrative requirements.
- Fixed funding, i.e. pass through mechanism with a MA in country brings a number of advantages for the Government.
- Sustainability considerations have to start already with the Project Document.
- Challenges of the implementation (including the joint implementation in itself) have been underestimated, as well as the resources required.
- Having staff paid from JP budget is difficult for participating UN agencies having a smaller budget share.
- Placing PMU and PCMUs in Governmental premises contributes to identification and ownership.

Design, in particular related to the MDG-F JP modality

- triggers an integrated approach of the UN agencies in the direction of Delivering as One
- has forced the UN agencies to work closer together and to work closer together with the implementation partners at Governmental and NGO level
- has made it clearer that the procedures among the UN agencies are (still) very different and not aligned – wrong assumption regarding the status of development of “One UN” and Delivering as One
- has fed experience to the development of new Joint Programmes and One Plan 2012-2016 in Viet Nam.
- JP Modality and how it was interpreted in Viet Nam has generated a number of positive aspects for the GoV (see above under design).

Effectiveness and Efficiency

- Management structures, roles of participating agencies and management tools as QA, coordination and M&E tools have to be set up frontloaded.
- Introducing management structures and tools first is of crucial importance, as “retrofitting” turns to be a cumbersome exercise that often fails.

- Introduction of the HPPMG as a key element of the One Set of Management Practices; not directly related to the JPGE, but a lesson learned for other UNCTs.
- Assess the capacities of participating agencies (UN and government) first to create a baseline and translate it into a capacity building plan/strategy. Well trained human resources that remain in the system do also mean an element of sustainability.
- coordination mechanisms as GAP and Gender PCG have improved contacts and partnerships with CSOs.
- Through communication in JPGE, GAP and Gender working group a bridge between national NGOs and the GOV offices has been built. It became possible for the NGOs involved in the JPGE to participate in some consultative meetings of the National Assembly.
- The JPGE has helped paving ground to new topics and areas, i.e. a first encompassing study on Domestic Violence, research works for example on trafficking of boys , Domestic Violence and Gender Equality at local level (rising public awareness and eliminating traditional discriminatory beliefs).
- Through the JPGE and its coordination and management mechanism, dialogue between MOLISA and MOCST got closer.
- JPGE has fostered closer relation between GOV and UN agencies
- Peer reviewing of major policy documents and research work between UN agencies are beneficial. Benefits are knowledge increase and support by peers for agencies with less resources or those less experienced in specific fields.
- PR and communication strategy of the JP has have not had much effect; a communication and advocacy strategy for the JPGE exists as a document produced by the coordinator and information about JP can be found on the website. The term Joint Programme is however not well known among the public. In particular at community level the stakeholders and public are more familiar with the name of the distinct implementing agencies.
- MDG-F Secretariat should assume a more proactive and pronounced role in the process in case certain prerequisites and targets cannot/have not been achieved, providing content support and advisory. Make transfer budget tranches conditional to achievement of implementation of programme milestones and the fact that they can be measured.

Sustainability

- Continuation not only of the themes addressed in the JPGE, but also of the systems and mechanisms established as part of its joint implementation and set forth beyond JPGE's end are valuable elements of sustainability.

The Lessons Learned below have been compiled by the JPGE in their Lessons Learned document⁴⁵. The evaluators agree with those lessons and thus include them into this chapter.

- Working together with many UN agencies and government institutions through the Joint Programme implementation is a good entry point to share updates of activities by implementing partners to avoid overlaps and create synergy. The message from the UN (on promotion of gender equality and elimination of gender-based violence) can also be clearer and stronger as messages from various UN agencies are collected and consolidated prior to sharing with the government
- Joint Programmes can facilitate collaboration with UN and government agencies beyond traditional partners (e.g. UNFPA & MOLISA, MOCST & UNODC, etc) to collect comprehensive views from different perspectives in planning and implementing project activities
- Broad coverage of issues in one Joint Programme may reduce effectiveness and efficiency due to significant time required for coordination and increased amount of risks to manage (e.g. delay of one activity causing delay of other activities, staff turnover, multiple reporting). Joint Programmes may increase effectiveness and efficiency by having narrower and clearer focus
- The amount of work required by Joint Programmes should not be underestimated and sufficient resources should be budgeted to secure staff to ensure smooth implementation of project without interruption caused by staff change. Currently, the Joint Programme on Gender Equality does not include staff cost under each PUNO to manage the implementation of activities as one of the aims of having Joint Programmes is to reduce the transaction/operational cost. However, Joint Programmes need to secure sufficient and appropriate human resources to implement activities and to ensure quality. Partially due to the fact that staff cost is not secured to recruit a staff to manage Joint Programme activities, existing staff of PUNO are assigned for JPGE work, and there is a high staff turnover rate as many of the assigned staff hold short-term contracts. Most of the UN staff in charge of the Joint Programme are Junior Professional Officers (JPOs), UN Volunteers (UNVs) or Interns. High staff turnover rate can cause discontinuity in implementation, resulting in reduced efficiency and effectiveness
- Regular exchange of information on progress and discussion on challenges and solutions is a minimum requirement for coordination (e.g. participation of JPGE colleagues in monthly JPGE taskforce meetings is important to ensure synergies and joint working arrangements)
- Complying with many reporting requirements (by the donor, the government, One UN, and each Participating UN Organization) consumes significant amount of time and creates burden for staff involved in the Joint Programme
- In terms of capacity building, when many activities are planned without follow-up support (e.g. one time training, without planned follow-up activities), there is a reduced chance of influencing long-term change, or sustainability. In designing a programme, or programme activities for capacity building, follow-up plan should be a part of an integral plan so that application of new

⁴⁵ No date

knowledge and skills in practice can be supported after training, and there may be higher chance of sustainability.

5 Recommendations

Recommendations for the transition of JPGE Gender Themes to One Plan

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Appreciate the necessity to find suitable and, if required, highly qualified staff for potentially high value added work pieces, as well in policy advice work as for technical assistance. Should junior staff get involved s/he needs to be backed and supervised by an experience senior staff member.

Issue/s to be addressed: Staff turnover and not sufficient qualified junior staff were considered as hampering factors, and often coinciding with each other.

Recommendation 14

Establish a consultant roster used and fed jointly by all agencies member of the UNCT; consider to put search profiles at www.unjobs.org or the www.devex.com or on www.un.org.vn/ @ jobs or tenders, respectively. The entry to the consultant roster can be combined with some online test to secure a certain quality.

Multi-agency activity planning shall anticipate potential bottlenecks in availability.

Issue/s to be addressed: Constant lack of suitable consultants was indicated by several stakeholders interviewed as one of the hampering factors of the JPGE. Availability of consultants had often determined the time of the work not the process necessities. Activities were planned in a way that has created bottlenecks in already scarce consultant profiles.

Recommendation 15

National and International consultants working under the same project shall be passing the same recruitment process, the selection process shall be performed by a committee composed by members of the respective governmental entities and representatives of the UNCT or the JP team.

Issue/s to be addressed: Parallel recruitment of national consultants by the GoV and international candidates by the UN agencies participating in the JP was perceived as time intensive and as a challenge to coordination.

Recommendation 16

"Heavy bureaucratic procedures" must be anticipated for future programme as an aspect to be duly taken

into account in the risk management as part of the programme proposal.

Issue/s to be addressed: "Heavy bureaucratic procedures" were indicated as constraint for achievement of certain results, or as constraint to introduce changes to the M&E results framework. It should be constraints that can be overcome as they are system immanent and were well known already when the JPGE was designed.

Please find further recommendations addressed to the MDG-F Secretariat in Annex 7 of Volume 2 of this evaluation report.