

Independent Country Programme Evaluation: UNDP Viet Nam

UNDP Country Office's Management Response

Recommendation 1. UNDP should develop a detailed theory of change that identifies a clear intervention logic with intermediate results and pathway to change including a detailed assessment of risks and assumptions. This TOC could better 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 a basis for the development of UNDPs new country programme and all subsequent projects and programmes (including the regional programmes) that directly contribute to the key results as well as CPD outcomes. This will mean investing more time and resources in designing for and understanding the drivers of change, clarifying the intervention logic and impact pathways, a thorough mapping and analysis of stakeholders in the design stages to clarify roles, assumptions, unintended outcomes and future expectations. It will also help identify and promote linkages among projects and build synergy and ensure coherence. A detailed TOC with short and medium-term changes will help map sequences of interventions as well as help with designing of appropriate and realistic indicators to capture intermediate changes that lead to results and CPD outcomes.

This should be complemented with institutional mechanisms that allow for periodic critical self-reflection based on project and programme monitoring and evaluation tools, after action reviews and using ToC as a dynamic and living tool for learning and decision making. 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. This current program cycle has innovatively introduced the concept of AAA governance. One way forward is to map out how it may be developed and applied to the policy processes with involvement from the CSO and private sectors to ensure their sustainability. Pilot activities need to build on areas of comparative strength, past experience, demand from government and grouped or designed as such that they 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 ICPE's recommendations.

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 (CPD) 2022-2026, mapping strategies for upstream and downstream interventions, risks and assumptions.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office (RR/DRR and Team Leaders - supported by the M&E Analyst)		
1.2 As part of the TOC/CPD formulation, a programme sense making exercise is undertaken to better define and develop interlinkages and complementarities between different solution pathways.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office (RR/DDR, CO M&E focal Point, COSQA, Programme Units and Accelerator Lab Team CO & BRH)		
<p>Recommendation 2. M&E system need to focus on outcome level results, with more frequent project monitoring and evaluation, throughout the programme cycle, that captures 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.</p> <p>Currently UNDP reporting mostly collects the reports from national partners (various ministries in the NIM modality). These reports generally focus on activities and numbers of participants, policies, etc., as well as assumptions about geographic coverage of projects providing implicit benefits. They do not provide much evidence or analysis of the changes in 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 to and frequent independent performance monitoring would clarify what exactly has changed and help in the development of business cases showing net benefits that would, in turn, support replication and scaling-up of new initiatives. Identification of appropriate performance indicators based on the needs and expectations of the stakeholders will also help monitor behavioral changes in lives and livelihoods of communities and their quality of life which can be measured during the life of the project than relying on national level statistics that cannot easily be tied back to specific initiatives. This will help shift the focus from a strictly regulatory approach to adaptive management and shape the future policy directions for a meaningful impact.</p> <p>In a similar vein, UNDP needs to better leverage the gains it has made in mainstreaming and promoting GEWE initiatives and go beyond reporting numbers to identifying improvements in normative behaviour and changes in lives and livelihoods of the vulnerable communities. Together with the review of gender markers, a report on the implementation of the CO Gender Strategy can help inform gender analysis and provide an accurate picture of the level of focus for transformative level results in leaving no one behind.</p>				

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 weakness and gaps, strengthen the CO capacity and revise the approach to address the current weaknesses.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
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2.1 New output level indicators are formulated to measure behavior change, improvement in communities' livelihoods, their quality of life and transformative changes on gender equality and social inclusion with disaggregated data to measure such improvements.	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office (RR/DRR and Team Leaders - supported by the M&E Analyst, the newly established M&E task team and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Task Team)		
2.2 An appropriate mechanism is developed to regularly monitor/track and measure CPD's indicators, risks and assumption log, including performance indicators and data extracted from project monitoring systems (point 2.3 below)	June 2022	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office (RR/DRR and Team Leaders - supported by the M&E Analyst, the newly established M&E task team and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Task Team)		
2.3 Country Office's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Action Plan is developed as part of the new CPD 2022-2026, ensuring that LNOB is a cornerstone of UNDP's work in Vietnam (in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation)	December 2021	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office (RR/DRR and Team Leaders - supported by the M&E Analyst, the newly established M&E task team and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Task Team)		
2.4 The CO's project cycle management approach (formulation, appraisal, implementation/monitoring and evaluation) is strengthened with appropriate roles, capacities and	June 2022	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office (RR/DRR - supported by the Operation Manager, M&E Analyst, the newly established M&E task team and all programme teams)		

mechanisms to improve project monitoring and evaluation, throughout the programme cycle, which will allow the CO to identify and measure changes on the ground, and allow course corrections when needed. (same as 3.2 below)				
<p>Recommendation 3. UNDP needs to systematically reflect on how to properly design and measure the impact of capacity-building and awareness-raising that it supports.</p> <p>UNDP needs a more comprehensive approach to capacity development delineating the pathway to change and knowledge management processes that ensure integration of learning and innovation into the capacity development process. UNDP needs to reflect more systematically on how to support capacity-building of its implementing partners across the country programme portfolio, including those at sub-national levels to promote innovation and achieve the objective of no one left behind outlined in the NTPSPR, the Master Plan for Social Assistance and the upcoming NTPSED in Ethnic Minority Areas.</p> <p>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 on which aspects of their capacities will be required to implement multi-dimensional poverty reduction programs, the social assistance frameworks and the climate change and adaptation programmes. Emphasis should be given to both institutional capacity and the capacities of 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 the 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.</p> <p>Management response: UNDP accepts this recommendation.</p>				
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 (RR, DRR, Programme Units)		

3.2 The CO's 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 CO 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 above)	June 2022	UNDP Viet Nam Country Office (RR/DRR - supported by the Operation Manager, M&E Analyst, all programme teams and the newly established M&E task team)		
<p>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 monetize the benefits of 'green' actions to inform the government, private sector and civil society and promote their up-scaling and sustainability.</p> <p>To address the lack of understanding behind the 'green' concepts like 'green growth', 'green chemistry' and 'circular economy' and their limited replication, uptake and buy-in across the various stakeholder groups including the government ministries, private sector and civil society, UNDP should advocate for and (resource permitting) support the government in undertaking economic evaluations, in some important sectors, to monetize the long term benefits of green actions.</p> <p>The energy sector, transport sector, and food production are three examples of areas 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 all inputs, actions, and outputs, with each of these examined 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, the private sector, civil society, and the citizens. This would help ensure better buy-in from stakeholders, promoting the uptake of green concepts and their sustainability.</p> <p>Management response: UNDP accepts this recommendation with the clarification that UNDP has been responding to requests by the government to undertake economic evaluations 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.</p>				

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.

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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 (Climate Change and Environment programme team)		
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 (Climate Change and Environment programme team)		

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 the strengthening of accountability institutions mechanisms in order to identify entry points for future interventions to promote government integrity and performance. These focuses should contribute to the government’s priorities for 2021-2030, especially the transition to IR 4.0 in the context of COVID recovery and digital transformation of government administrative service delivery. The focus on accountability institutions and mechanisms should also contribute to the socio-economic and association rights of marginalized groups (PWDs, 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 cross-cutting element throughout all UNDP outcomes and interventions such as: improving policy/legal frameworks and institutional functions as well as mechanisms to promote the government integrity, transparency and performance, as well as oversight by people-elected bodies. Additionally, Governance is a standalone outcome of the new UN 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	
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5.1 The Theory of Change for the Governance and Justice outcome is elaborated and validated during the formulation of the UNSDCF and Country Programme Document (CPD) 2022-2026, based on the GOVN'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 (RR/DRR, Governance and Participation Team)		

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