

AN UPDATE ON THE “ONE UN INITIATIVE” IN VIET NAM - OCTOBER 2009

Creating a more effective United Nations



Based on the shared belief that the United Nations has a vital role to play in Viet Nam’s development, the UN in Viet Nam is changing the way it works to better help Viet Nam meet the challenges that lie ahead. Through the One UN Initiative, the UN is transforming itself to deliver better results for the benefit of the people of Viet Nam through greater unity of purpose, coherence in management and efficiency and effectiveness in operations. In line with the Ha Noi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness, UN reform in Viet Nam is a three-party undertaking by the Government of Viet Nam, the UN Country Team and the donor community.

This update reviews progress made on the One UN Initiative over the past year, including on the five pillars for reform, or ‘Five Ones’: One Plan, One Budget, One Leader, One Set of Management Practices and the Green One UN House. It also includes examples of progress in achieving greater coherence and effectiveness, particularly in responding to the needs of the Government for high quality policy support as Viet Nam transitions to a middle income country.

THE FIVE ONES

The “Five Ones” are central to the One UN Initiative, and progress in each of these areas illustrates how UN organizations in Viet Nam are increasingly working together, collaborating and finding synergies.

ONE PLAN

The One Plan combines and synthesizes the work of the 14 participating UN organizations in Viet Nam within a single planning framework. Since the signing of the revised One Plan in June 2008, the UNCT has moved forward on implementation, monitoring and resourcing. To put the One Plan into action, a **One Plan Management Plan (OPMP)** has been finalized and agreed upon by all participating agencies. To ensure coordinated implementation of the One Plan, **11 Programme Coordination Groups (PCGs)** have been established. This unique mechanism facilitates coordination on key shared issues such as social and development policies, education, HIV or governance. Also, in order to better align and harmonize the UN’s planning with Viet Nam’s national development plan for 2011-2015, the UN requested an **extension** of the current One Plan by one year – through 2011. On 25

August 2009, the extension year was approved in principle by MPI Vice Minister Sinh and on 28 September, the UNDG Asia-Pacific team also approved the request.

ONE SET OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

In the past year the **Harmonised Programme and Project Management Guidelines (HPPMG)** have been agreed upon between ExCom Agencies and Government. The HPPMG has been submitted to UN headquarters for endorsement, and formal endorsement by all parties is expected soon, with implementation starting later this year. In the same spirit, the **Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT)** has been applied to all new ExCom (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA) projects since the end of 2008. By using the same modalities to handle payments to all implementing partners, the process has become much simpler and less burdensome for all involved. The ambition is to expand the HACT to all UN organizations in Viet Nam. The adoption in June 2009 of the **UN-EU Cost Norms** represents another tangible contribution toward harmonization of UN agencies’ business practices.

ONE BUDGET/ONE PLAN FUND

As part of the One Plan, a single budget provides a clear sense of total resources required to implement the One Plan, while the One Plan Fund provides a streamlined way of providing un-earmarked support for the UN's programmatic work and reduces the problem of different UN agencies competing for the same donor funds. The total budget of One Plan is USD 286 million for the 2008-2010 period. In addition to funds mobilised by One Plan agencies from core and non-core resources, the One Plan Fund has mobilized USD 71.5 million in contributions, pledges and future commitments, leaving a funding gap of approximately USD 7.2 million in relation to the implementation of the One Plan. However, with the extension of the One Plan through 2011, significant additional resources will be needed.

The significant financial contributions to the One Plan Fund are a true reflection of the strong commitment by donors in Viet Nam to support the One UN Initiative. The commitment was further emphasized in December 2008, when the One UN Donor group in Viet Nam agreed to a unique “**principles of engagement**”, including to provide un-earmarked funding and generally avoid making bilateral contributions to individual agencies.

Also in the past year the **One Plan Fund Mobilisation and Allocation Committee** (OPFMAC) was enlarged to include all 14 participating UN organisations, and a set of One Plan Fund allocation criteria were used for 2009 allocations.

GREEN ONE UN HOUSE

The eco-friendly and team-friendly Green One UN House for all UN organizations in Viet Nam is essential to integration, coordination and the realization of greater synergies. The Government has contributed a



KEY FIGURES: ONE PLAN BUDGET & ONE PLAN FUND

➤ One Plan II Budget (2008-2010):	USD	286 million
➤ One Plan Fund Total:	USD	78.7 million
➤ One Plan Fund monies received/committed/pledged:	USD	71.5 million
➤ Remaining One Plan Fund funding gap:	USD	7.2 million

Note: With the one-year extension of the One Plan, significant additional resources will be required for 2011.

high-value land site, and on 8 September 2009 the Prime Minister of Viet Nam approved the Green One UN House project in Ha Noi. Now fully funded with generous commitments and pledges by donors from Norway, the U.K./DFID, Finland, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, as well contributions from the participating UN organisations and the Sustainable United Nations (SUN) program of UNEP, plans are currently being developed for construction.

ONE LEADER

Another key element of reform is strengthening the role of the Resident Coordinator (RC) as the “One Leader” for the UN in Viet Nam. A **Memorandum of Understanding** (MOU) on the One Leader has been signed by all participating UN organisations, providing enhanced functions and responsibility to the UN RC to better represent the participating agencies in the One Plan. As the One Leader, the RC will take the lead on common issues that require the UN Country Team to speak with one voice, and present a common position and/or view. He/she will guide the strategic development and management of the One UN Initiative and promote joint decisions including all representatives of the participating UN organizations.

In addition, the RC as the One Leader has ultimate authority on allocation from the One Plan Fund. Furthermore, a conflict resolution mechanism has been established. Whilst these country level initiatives have enhanced the informal authority of the RC, more guidance is being requested from UN headquarters on the One Leader in order to enhance the formal authority of the RC, beyond the voluntary nature determined in Viet Nam by the UNCT MOU.



JOINT RESEARCH & POLICY SUPPORT: “ONE POLICY VOICE”

To support the Government of Viet Nam in developing effective, evidence-based policies and programs, UN agencies in Viet Nam are increasingly collaborating on joint research initiatives and policy papers, especially through the work of the 11 Programme Coordination Groups (PCGs). Research in the past year led to **policy papers** on:

- Viet Nam’s response to climate change;
- the links between natural disasters and migration;
- the social impact of the economic crisis;
- the national response to HIV; and
- Viet Nam’s population challenges.

These policy discussion papers bring an analytical and unified UN perspective to key development challenges, and is a direct response to Government calls for more “upstream policy support” from the UN.

JOINT PROGRAMMES & MISSIONS

Where deemed useful and seen as an added value for the One UN process, UN organizations in Viet Nam have formalized the implementation framework in legally binding joint programmes. Currently, five joint programmes are established within the overall framework of the One Plan, ranging from a new programme on integrated nutrition and food security strategies for children and vulnerable groups to the Joint Programme to Fight Avian and Human Influenza. In addition, an increasing number of **joint review and monitoring missions** have taken place - either as part of joint programme implementation or facilitated by the PCGs. Joint monitoring missions have been undertaken to Kon Tum, Lao Cai and Dak Lak provinces and in April of this year members of a UN joint monitoring mission visited 21 provinces as part of UN support to Viet Nam’s 2009 population census.

ONE UN COMMUNICATIONS

To help the UN “speak with one voice” to partners and the media on a range of key development and policy issues, **One UN Communications Team** continues to experiment with ways to integrate and coordinate communication work across UN agencies. In the past year a new structure and management board for the team were established, further institutionalizing this inter-agency team of communications specialists from UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNAIDS and UNV. The results include a strong **common advocacy voice** and a clear UN position on issues of relevance for Viet Nam such as the economic crisis, food security, domestic violence, road safety, health insurance, and avian and human influenza (A/H1N1), among others. Better collaboration and more centralized communication capacity have brought greater coherence to UN advocacy messages, and has advanced the positioning of the UN on these key themes. To support the much greater internal communication needs under the One UN Initiative, the Team has developed new communication tools and services, including a One UN Intranet linking electronically all UN staff in Viet Nam for the first time.

JOINT PLANNING, MONITORING & REPORTING

Over the past year changes have been made to simplify and streamline the UN’s planning, monitoring and reporting. To reduce the time spent reporting on each UN-supported project, all 11 PCGs held **annual reviews** for 2008 with their counterparts from Government, as well as donors and other partners for all projects within their purview. Now, instead of having several planning meetings with individual agencies, Government ministries have only one review/planning meeting to focus on. In addition, since 2007 a single **One Plan Annual Report** has been prepared for Government, donors and other stakeholders. In the



future this report may replace the annual reports from each of the 14 One Plan UN organizations. In addition, joint monitoring and review missions are conducted to enhance synergies. PCGs now prepare **joint annual plans and joint annual reports**, leading to better coordinated support, new synergies, and reduced overlap among agencies.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

As a pilot country for UN reform, the UN Country Team is trying to encourage and facilitate change in various ways. In the past year a series of surveys were completed to get feedback from UN staff and stakeholders, and to establish baselines and inform the change process:

- A **Stakeholder Survey** gathered information on the perceptions and views of donors, Government counterparts, NGOs and the media about UN reform in Viet Nam. The results showed areas where the UN is perceived to be strong (professional expertise, trust, leadership in key areas, etc.) and areas for improvement (complicated administrative functions, need for greater focus on development results).

- A **Capacity Assessment** helped provide a baseline as to where realignment may be needed in terms of existing technical and human resource capacity within UN agencies in Viet Nam, as well as the needs of Viet Nam for UN support in the years to come.
- A **Gender and Human Rights Survey** assessed knowledge among UN staff of these cross-cutting priorities, and the degree to which they are being integrated into the work of the UN. The survey also provided feedback on training needs in these areas.
- Finally, a **Staff Survey** provided information on what UN staff understand about the One UN Initiative, their experiences thus far with the change process, what information they still lack, and staff views on how to improve the initiative.

The results of these surveys were shared with staff via email and meetings. In particular, to promote dialogue and facilitate feedback on the staff survey, a third **Town Hall Meeting** – attended by the **UN Deputy Secretary General Dr. Asha Rose-Migiro** – was held in May, 2009. Senior management and staff associations' representatives facilitated discussions on a draft action plan to address needs identified in the surveys.

LOOKING AHEAD

The UN is also ensuring that its support to Viet Nam keeps up with the changes occurring in the country and around the world. To assist the Government of Viet Nam as it develops its next Socio-economic Development Plan (SEDP) for 2011-15, and to identify what the role of the UN will be in the future, a comprehensive **study** analysing the country situation will be completed in early 2010. In the spirit of the Ha Noi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness and the principles of harmonization and alignment, this study is being conducted together with the group of like-minded donors in Viet Nam. Based on a **rights-based approach**, the study will contain an analysis of where Viet Nam is in terms of achieving its development goals. The study will also have a forward looking perspective, including a prediction of future trends with a particular focus on what the anticipated transformation to **middle income country (MIC) status** is likely to entail in terms of Viet Nam's needs for development assistance from the UN and other development partners.

In addition, joint UN **research** is currently underway on various critical issues for Viet Nam, including: aid effectiveness; climate change and gender; corruption; development in the Central Highlands; and other relevant development challenges. The results will provide useful data and recommendations for policy makers. In particular, the UN is supporting the Government in this crucial year for international cooperation and commitment on responding to **climate change**. The UN is assisting the Government with technical support for both national strategies and actions, and implementation of the National Target Programme on Climate Change, and providing support for Viet Nam's international negotiations leading up to the COP15 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009.

While the momentum of UN reform in Viet Nam has accelerated and important results have been achieved, much work remains to be done to implement the One Plan and make the One UN Initiative successful in enhancing effectiveness and coherence, streamlining coordination, and demonstrating better development results for the people of Viet Nam. At the current stage in the change process, the role of **UN agencies' headquarters** is becoming more important, as is the balance between maintaining the strengths of the various organisations and the need for greater integration. While many challenges still lie ahead, a solid foundation is now in place that will lead to enhanced development results for Viet Nam.

For more information on the One UN Initiative and the United Nations in Viet Nam, go to: www.un.org.vn

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