

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

## *Creating a more effective United Nations*



**W**ithin the context of the Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness, and based on the shared belief that the UN 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 ahead. This update reviews progress made in the past year on the “One UN Initiative” since the expanded “One Plan” was signed in June, 2008, integrating the work of 14 resident UN organizations in Viet Nam into a single planning framework. Through the hard work of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and with the strong support of the Vietnamese Government and donors, significant changes have taken place and various initiatives undertaken to improve coordination and coherence, and help the UN in Viet Nam “Deliver as One”.

### PROGRAMME COORDINATION GROUPS

To ensure coordinated implementation of the One Plan, 11 **Programme Coordination Groups** (PCGs) have been established. This unique mechanism facilitates UN agencies working together on key shared issues such as social and development policies, education, HIV or governance. Most of the PCGs are co-chaired by two UN agencies working in the PCG topic area.

### JOINT PROGRAMMES & MISSIONS

As the PCGs have become operational, they have facilitated the expansion of joint activities and initiatives. **Joint monitoring missions** to Kon Tum, Lao Cai and Dak Lak provinces have been conducted to review and monitor UN-supported projects. An additional joint monitoring mission was undertaken in April of this year as part of UN support to Viet Nam’s 2009 population census. Also in early 2009 the **Joint Programme on Gender** was launched. It is anticipated that new joint programmes on integrated nutrition and food security strategies for children and vulnerable groups, and on green production and trade, will be launched later this year.

### JOINT RESEARCH & POLICY PAPERS

To support the Government in developing effective, evidence-based policies and programs, UN agencies in Viet Nam are increasingly collaborating on **research** initiatives and **policy papers**. This analytical work is a response to Government calls for more “upstream policy support” from the UN. Specifically, research in the past year led to papers on the social impact of the financial crisis; the impact of the crisis on international migrants and on employment levels; climate change; and Viet Nam’s population situation. Current research is also focusing on the links between natural disasters and migration, the impact of the economic crisis on enterprises, the links between climate change and gender, and the needs of Viet Nam’s youth.



## COMMUNICATING AS ONE

To help the UN “speak with one voice” to partners and the media on a range of key development and policy issues, the **One UN Communications Team** continued to experiment with ways to integrate and coordinate communication work across agencies. The experience of this unique collocated team is providing important lessons in terms of the changes and challenges that are coming as UN agencies work ever more closely together. In the past year communications staff from UNAIDS and UNV joined the original agencies of UNDP, UNICEF, and UNFPA, and a new structure and management board for the team were approved. Job descriptions and posts are also being revised to reflect the new structure and responsibilities. As a result of better collaboration and more centralized communication capacity, the UN is better able to have a **common advocacy voice** and present a clear position on issues of relevance for Viet Nam such as the economic crisis, food security, domestic violence, road safety (especially helmet wearing by children), health insurance, and avian and human influenza (A/H1N1), among others.

## HARMONISING PROCEDURES

The complex procedures and business practices of the UN’s system are being reorganized in a more effective way so that they are better aligned with those of the Government. An important step in this process was the recent approval by the UNCT to adopt the revised 2009 **UN-EU cost norms**, which will help harmonize the process of project implementation for UN agencies, national implementing partners, and other counterparts in Viet Nam.

## COMMON REPORTING, MONITORING AND PLANNING

Over the past year changes have been made to simplify and streamline the UN’s reporting, monitoring and planning work as well. To reduce the time spent reporting on each UN-supported project, the 11 interagency PCGs held **annual reviews** for 2008 with their donor and Government counterparts for all projects within their purview – and project annual reviews were abolished. In addition, an annual **One Plan Report** was prepared for donors and the Government, instead of the usual annual reports from each of the 14 One Plan UN agencies. Joint monitoring and review missions also were part of the monitoring process. And to improve planning, PCGs now prepare **joint annual reports and joint annual plans**, leading to better coordinated support, new synergies, and reduced overlap among agencies.



## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

As a pilot country for UN reform, the UNCT is trying to encourage and facilitate change in various ways. In the past year a series of surveys were undertaken 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 useful a baseline as to where realignment may be needed in terms of existing technical and human resource capacity within UN agencies in Viet Nam, and the requirements 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** was held in May, 2009. Senior management and staff associations’ representatives facilitated discussions on a draft action plan to address needs identified in the survey.



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

## THE FIVE ONES

### 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. At the 13 May 2009 Tripartite National Task Force (TNTF) Meeting, the Joint Results Framework and the corresponding “Traffic Lights” update showed that of 26 actions listed as critical to the success of the One UN Initiative in Viet Nam, 20 were “completed” or “on track” and only three “required special attention”. And as described above, clear **monitoring and evaluation** mechanisms have been put in place to consistently monitor progress on the development results of the One Plan as well as the process results of UN reform.

### ONE SET OF BUSINESS 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 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. Funds mobilised by One Plan agencies from core resources and sources other than the One Plan Fund are currently estimated at USD 329 million for the

### KEY FIGURES: ONE PLAN BUDGET & ONE PLAN FUND

➤ Estimated funded portion of the One Plan:	USD 329 million
➤ Funding gap:	USD 83 million
➤ One Plan Fund monies received/committed/pledged:	USD 60 million
➤ Remaining One Plan Fund funding gap:	USD 23 million

period. In addition, the UN has mobilized USD 45 million in contributions to the One Plan Fund and there are future commitments of USD 8 million as well as pledged funding of USD 7 million. Therefore, donor funds received, committed and pledged into the One Plan Fund total almost USD 60 million. However, current projections indicate that there is still a funding gap of approximately USD 23 million in relation to the implementation of the One Plan.

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. Now fully funded with the 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 of the One UN House.



Regular communication with staff keep them updated on the process, and an internal staff survey allowed staff to provide feedback on facilities to be provided in the House.

## ONE LEADER

Another key element of reform is strengthening the role of the **Resident Coordinator** 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 Resident Coordinator to better represent the participating agencies in the One Plan. As the One Leader, the UN Resident Coordinator will take the lead on common issues that require the UNCT to speak with one voice, and present a common position and views. He/she will guide the strategic development and management of the “One UN” reform and promote joint decisions including all representatives of the participating UN organizations.



In addition, the UN Resident Coordinator as the One Leader has ultimate authority on allocation from the One Plan Fund. Furthermore, a conflict resolution mechanism has been established for One UN issues.

However, 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.

## 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 2009. 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, **research** is currently underway on various critical issues for Viet Nam, including: the financial crisis; aid effectiveness; climate change; corruption; development in the Central Highlands, and other related topics. The results will provide useful data and recommendations for policy makers. In particular, 2009 will be a crucial year for international cooperation and commitment on responding to **climate change**, and the UN will continue assisting the Government with technical support for both national strategies and actions, and implementation of the National Target Programme on Climate Change, as well as 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 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 in Viet Nam, and the UNCT, go to: [www.un.org.vn](http://www.un.org.vn)

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