



COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION AND AUDIT

VIET NAM

Synthesis Report



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report, and the overall evaluation process, were informed by the participation of more than 58 stakeholders, UN Women personnel and partners. Without the support and active participation of all these women and men involved in the consultation process, this report would not have been possible.

This was the first combined Country Portfolio Evaluation and audit exercise for the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women. The audit was led by Malika Mukhitdinova, Chief of Audit Service, and the evaluation was led by Sabrina Evangelista, the regional evaluation specialist (RES) for Asia and the Pacific Region. The evaluation team comprised three team members: Lilia Ormonbekova, evaluation consultant; Truong Thi Hong Nhu, junior evaluation consultant; and Vu Thanh, national consultant. The audit team members included: Rowena Cayabyab Dimaampao, audit specialist; and Saadat Ali, audit specialist.

The Evaluation Management Group, benefitted from the active involvement of staff from the UN Women Viet Nam Country Office, including: Elisa Fernandez Saenz, Country Representative; Vu Phuong Ly, Programme Specialist; and Pham Nguyet Linh, Operations Manager. We thank them for the time they invested in supporting

the evaluation process and in facilitating the engagement and inclusion of a wide range of partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries.

We thank the Evaluation Reference Group – a broader group of key stakeholders engaged to provide input on the evaluation process and the key products of the evaluation – with representation from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australia; Gender Equality Department of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA); the Center for Education Promotion and Empowerment of Women (CEPEW); and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office based in Viet Nam, for their thoughtful comments and insights and for investing significant time and effort to ensure that the evaluation would be of maximum value to UN Women, local and international partners, and the women and men of Viet Nam.

We also extend our thanks to Inga Sniukaite, Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service; Lisa Sutton, Director of IEAS; and Michael Craft, RES for Latin America and the Caribbean, for contributing their feedback and expertise throughout the evaluation.

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ACRONYMS

AWP	Annual Work Plan
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPEW	The Center for Education Promotion and Empowerment of Women
CO	Country Office
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
CPE+A	Country Portfolio Evaluation and Audit
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DaO	Delivering as One
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DRF	Development Results Framework
DRR/M	Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
DRR/CC	Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change
EU	European Union
EVAW/G	Ending Violence Against Women/ and Girls
FTA	Fixed-Term Appointment
GAP	Gender Action Partnership
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GHG	Green House Gas
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GTG	Gender Theme Group
HA	Humanitarian Action
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRC	Human Rights Commission
HRD	Human Rights Defender
IAS	Internal Audit Service
IB	Institutional Budget
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
LTA	Long-Term Agreement
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MIC	Middle-Income Country

MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee
OEEF	Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSP	UN System's One Strategic Plan
P4P	Partners for Prevention
PO	Purchase Order
RBM	Results-Based Management
RC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
RCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
RES	Regional Evaluation Specialist
RO	Regional Office
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
SC	Service Contract
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SN	Strategic Note
SSA	Special Service Agreement/ Consultant
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNPFD	United Nations Partnership Framework for Development
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAW	Violence Against Women
VWU	Viet Nam Women's Union
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WEP	Women's Empowerment Principles
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
XB	Extra-Budgetary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION AND AUDIT

VIET NAM

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This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation and Audit (CPE+A) of the UN Women Viet Nam country office (CO) conducted between February and August 2020. The CPE+A was jointly led by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) and Internal Audit Service (IAS). A CPE is a systematic assessment of the normative, coordination and operational aspects of UN Women's contribution to development results relating to gender equality and women's empowerment at the country level. A risk-based internal audit of a CO aims to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls in planning and implementing strategic priorities, programme and project management, organizational structure and control environment, and operational processes.

CPE+A purpose

The purpose of this CPE+A is to support: strategic learning and decision-making for the CO's current Strategic Note (SN) 2017–2021; design of the next SN 2022–2025; the CO's strategic positioning and challenges in the context of UN reform and overall country context; enhanced accountability, governance and cost-effectiveness of CO programmes and interventions; and capacity development and mobilization of national stakeholders to advance gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE).

CPE+A objectives and intended audience

The CPE+A had the following objectives:

- Assess the **relevance** and **coherence** of UN Women programmes vis-à-vis the UN system; the added value of UN Women; and identify contributions to the One Strategic Plan (2017–2021) outcomes.
- Assess **governance**, **risk management**, **effectiveness** and **organizational efficiency** in progressing towards the achievement of GEWE results.
- Analyse how a **human-rights approach** and **gender equality principles** are integrated in the design and implementation of UN Women's work in Viet Nam and contribute to the sustainability of efforts.
- Provide **actionable recommendations** to support UN Women strategic positioning in Viet Nam for the future.

The scope of the CPE+A covered UN Women's normative, coordination and operational work across all thematic areas of engagement during the current SN. The geographic coverage of the CPE+A spanned Viet Nam, with field visits

to Phu Yen and Da Nang. The primary target audience and intended direct users of this evaluation are UN Women personnel (including the CO, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific [ROAP], headquarters units and IEAS), government partners, the UN Country Team (UNCT), civil society representatives and funding partners.

CPE + A methods

The CPE+A employed a **non-experimental, theory-based gender-responsive approach**. In consultation with the CO, a reconstructed theory of change (ToC) was developed and used as the basis for contribution analysis. Evaluation questions were developed using the ToC and assessed against the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee's (OECD DAC) criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, gender equality and human rights. UN Women evaluations are gender-responsive and apply the key principles of a human rights-based approach: they are inclusive, participatory, ensure fair power relations and are transparent; and analyse the underlying structural barriers and sociocultural norms that impede the realization of women's rights.

The CPE+A followed UN Women procedures to ensure high-quality evaluation processes and products and ethical conduct as outlined in the UN Women Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Handbook. All evaluation products were subject to quality review by IEAS, a peer reviewer, the Evaluation Reference Group and the Evaluation Management Group. IAS followed the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing in contributing to this CPE+A.

Conclusions

CONCLUSION 1



The CO has been able to use various funding modalities including regional and global to grow its portfolio and enhance its partnerships, and these efforts are recognized as relevant in contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment in Viet Nam. Yet, it has been challenging to mobilize resources in a middle-income country (MIC) with decreasing Official Development Assistance, despite the continuing need for dedicated investments and GEWE as a priority in MIC context to ensure progress towards the sustainable development goals. A reduced operating space for development partners – COVID-19 and its economic effects may only further complicate this situation in the longer-term. Current reliance on regional and global funds presents a risk to the sustainability of the office. Given these uncertainties, this is an opportune time for UN Women to determine its strategic vision for its small office presence in the region of Asia and Pacific, such as the CO, for the next four years. The vision should take into consideration reduced traditional funding options and assess possibility of new funding through different collaborations, e.g. high quality and relevant technical support to the government and other partners enabling gender-responsive investment in other sectors such as climate actions, sustainable development financing and others.

CONCLUSION 2



Gender-responsive programming and policy advocacy is needed in all areas and at a much larger and deeper scale to stimulate the type of change required for achieving gender equality in Viet Nam, but UN Women cannot do it alone. Due to funding challenges, the current Strategic Note was implemented through individual short-term projects without a coherent theory of change for umbrella programmes tying them together. The CO would benefit from the opportunity to consolidate and prioritize its areas of focus, so it is not spread too thinly. Revisiting its thematic areas of focus and having a more strategic integrated approach in line with local needs, national priorities and UN system work would help to ensure that the new Strategic Note is relevant, impactful and cost-effective. Moreover, technical expertise of partner agencies should be leveraged during its specific interventions and conversely the CO should advocate for its inclusion with appropriate resourcing as a gender subject matter expert in UN agency initiatives to ensure gender mainstreaming.

CONCLUSION 3



The CO's work was in line with the Leaving No One Behind principle: the CO's efforts directly supported knowledge and evidence generation on underrepresented groups; inclusion of gender into policies on HIV/AIDS, ethnic minorities and women migrants; and engagement of youth and LGBTIQ as GEWE champions. Nevertheless, in terms of community-level interventions, UN Women's work did not always provide evidence of reaching those most in need and addressing underlying causes of gender inequality. Prioritizing efforts to change informal norms and exclusionary practices and measure social norm change along with enhanced practices related to engaging rights holders will be required to ensure progress.

CONCLUSION 4



The CO has proactively led UN system efforts to mainstream gender. The CO's ability to leverage networks and reach and amplify the voices of diverse groups representing the most marginalized in society is UN Women's added value within the context of the UN system in Viet Nam. Recognizing that coordination requires the collective and collaborative engagement of all actors, there are opportunities for both strengthening UN Women's role in coordination and advocating for integrated gender responsiveness of the United Nations and Government of Viet Nam One Strategic Plan.

CONCLUSION 5



UN Women's ability to engage with civil society and strategic partners has enabled it to remain relevant and enhanced its reach, yet efforts have remained without a strategic focus on how to leverage and more effectively build partners' capacities in a long term. As a core strategy for implementation, capacity building requires a coherent, long-term and strategic approach to ensure cost-effective and sustainable efforts. An overarching capacity development plan for the CO's strategic partners would lead to more sustainable results, increased national ownership and better value for money in terms of the funds invested in capacity development across projects. Integrating and systematic tracking of results from capacity building would help to ensure the CO's efforts are cost-effective and impactful.

CONCLUSION 6



The impact of the field programme could be enhanced by systematically improving data collection, validation and reporting, focusing on results and milestones, and prioritization and control of key risks and opportunities in its project management and operations. The office could benefit from a dedicated monitoring and evaluation resource to systematically design solid results frameworks at the project design stage and collect and report result-focused evidence against those results frameworks. Systematic measurement of results and reporting would contribute to demonstrating a stronger impact and, accordingly, adjust programmes based on lessons learned. Moreover, using it as a tool for partnership development and resource mobilization represents another benefit, as the CO would be able to showcase the impact of its work in Viet Nam through results-focused reporting.

CONCLUSION 7



An effective and efficient Operations team complements field programme / projects through the timely acquisition of key human resources and programme supplies necessary to deliver programme activities. The CO was proactive in managing procurement and travel by taking advantage of the long-term agreements in place between the UN and suppliers for most of its procurement and travel needs. There is still a need for better coordination between Operations and Programme teams to properly align the CO's priorities and effectively plan for human resource, procurement and programme-specific requirements.

These conclusions were developed based on the key findings and in consultation with members of the Evaluation Reference Group.

Main recommendations

The presentation of the preliminary CPE+A findings and discussion on the way forward took place with members of the Evaluation Reference Group in August 2020 and fed into the final recommendations presented below. The recommendations were reviewed by the Evaluation Management and Reference Groups and subsequent changes were integrated as appropriate in a transparent manner. The main report prioritizes and identifies the key target audience for the recommendations. IEAS will track the implementation of the recommendations through the management response tracking systems.

RECOMMENDATION 1



ROAP and CO management, in consultation with Change Management in headquarters, to define a vision for the CO's sustainability and footprint in the country for the next SN cycle, considering the external and internal context, particularly the impact and opportunities of COVID-19. Based on this vision the CO should conduct a functional analysis to review its office structure and necessary skill set to fulfil this vision.

RECOMMENDATION 2



The CO should prioritize the thematic areas and the related activities with a view to building a coherent theory of change, identifying possible areas of duplication with development partners, and leveraging partners expertise. This should be done through the Strategic Note, with the aim of advancing GEWE in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and ROAP priority areas and within the context of MIC and COVID-19 to ensure that the Strategic Note is relevant, impactful and cost-effective.

RECOMMENDATION 3



Building on the existing plans of the UN system and development partners for strengthening synergies and coordinating efforts to leave no one behind, the CO should prioritize the needs of the most disadvantaged groups of populations through timely and participatory engagement of rights holders and duty bearers in project design, monitoring and reporting (i.e. in needs analysis, target group selection and validation, feasibility assessment and value for money analysis). The CO should also strengthen its analysis and data collection of intersecting forms of inequality and its approach for measuring social norm change, including through its partners.

RECOMMENDATION 4



In line with UN reform, under the Resident Coordinator's overall guidance, the CO to

- Leverage its mandate for UN system coordination for GEWE and urge for integration, coherence and synergies between UN system actors to further amplify impact.
- Develop a CO coordination strategy and success indicators that are regularly measured, consolidating key stakeholders' expectations and addressing potential overlaps between different existing forums to ensure that coordination mechanisms are leveraged for strategic issues.
- Within the context of the new UNSDCF planning process, advocate for a dedicated gender outcome and gender responsive indicators across the next UN-Government One Strategic Plan for Viet Nam and a review of the coordination architecture to ensure coherence of results and working groups.

RECOMMENDATION 5



The CO should establish an integrated strategic partnership and capacity building approach based on its thematic priorities and programmes:

- Integrate work across thematic areas, projects (horizontally) and different levels of the partner organization (rather than on a siloed project basis), consolidating established partnership principles and building upon existing efforts. The strategy should specify how the CO will specifically engage in strengthening civil society through its convening role and platform which offers a bridge between civil society and the government on issues related to GEWE.
- Develop a capacity building strategy for those strategic partners with performance indicators so that its cost-effectiveness can be measured over time. This strategy should be based on principles for capacity building, partner needs/capacity assessment, followed by an implementation plan with measurable indicators and collaborative review.

RECOMMENDATION 6



The CO should strengthen its RBM practices, and identification, prioritization and control of key risks and opportunities in its project management and operations.

- Develop an integrated M&E framework consolidating strategic priorities and annual workplans cascading into project and partners results frameworks and consolidate efforts of all relevant stakeholders involved in monitoring. During planning/inception phase conduct a needs assessment, feasibility analysis of interventions, value-for-money analysis and provide for the sustainability of CO initiatives (including projects, communications, and coordination efforts) and regularly monitor these aspects during implementation.
- Ensure that data in the reports is independently validated from those who collect those data, including validation on a sample of reached beneficiaries compared to targeted ones.
- Establish a knowledge management system that captures monitoring, evaluation, and reporting information in a systematized manner to facilitate learning both internally and externally.
- Depending on available resources (budgeted and pooled from different projects), consider establishing a dedicated M&E post. If not available, the monitoring function could be shared between project managers with monitoring and data validations protocols and training. The M&R Officer from RO could provide technical support in establishing this.

RECOMMENDATION 7



The CO should strengthen its risk management and controls in key operational areas to ensure cost-effectiveness and to avoid unnecessary delays in implementation. In particular:

- Strengthen its management of consultant recruitment by designing clear ToR with well-defined deliverables, timely recruiting and managing performance, and by ensuring competition, transparency, and fairness. Proactively use procurement plans to ensure timely procurement, justifying significant deviations from planned procurement actions.
- Ensure that field travels are consolidated and limited to necessary ones focusing on results and demonstrating cost-consciousness. Creating a network and/or roster of potential partners for future competitive selection.



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INTRODUCTION

1. Viet Nam country context

Background

With impressive transitioning to Lower Middle-income Country status in 2010,¹ Viet Nam is integrating into the global stage and increasingly moving away from cross-country relationships of Official Development Assistance (ODA).² However, according to the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Index, Viet Nam has been losing momentum in its efforts to achieve gender equality, ranking 87 of 149 countries, compared to 65 of 144 countries in 2016. Women represent one quarter of members of parliament in Viet Nam, but there is only one woman in the cabinet of 25 ministers, one of the world's lowest ratios. Violence against women and girls in schools, workplaces and public spaces is a serious problem in the country, and deeply rooted gender norms have resulted in Viet Nam having the lowest sex ratio at birth in the world, on par with China and Azerbaijan (89 girls for every 100 boys) according to the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index. Intimate partner violence against women is another pressing issue with 62.9 per cent of ever-married/partnered women in Viet Nam reporting they have experienced some form of domestic violence (physical, sexual, emotional, controlling behaviours, economic) in their lifetime and 31.6 per cent in the last 12 months.³ The study also identified a productivity loss equivalent to 1.81 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2018, due to a lifetime's experience of physical and/or sexual violence among ever-married/partnered women aged 15 to 64.⁴

Female labour force participation in Viet Nam is one of the highest in the region at 79 per cent,⁵ yet women earn on average only 65 per cent of men's wages⁶ and are disproportionately concentrated in the informal sector (two thirds

are women). Women's economic empowerment is an area of huge potential in Viet Nam. In 2017, the International Finance Corporation, part of the World Bank Group, reported that small and medium enterprises (SME) in Viet Nam accounted for an estimated 98 per cent of all business, 40 per cent of GDP and 50 per cent of total employment. While 21 per cent of formal enterprises in Viet Nam were women owned with similar average annual revenues to those of men, the financing gap for women-owned SMEs was estimated at US\$ 1.19 billion.⁷

Among the most vulnerable groups with limited access to education and skills training are Viet Nam's 53 ethnic minority groups which constitute 14.6 per cent of the country's population.⁸ While 83.4 per cent of ethnic minority women have jobs, most work in agriculture (83.8 per cent), which is vulnerable to climate change and other disasters, and do not possess land use right certificates.⁹ Due to limited access to education and the outside community, ethnic minority women have fewer chances to obtain paid jobs or non-farm jobs.¹⁰ Labour migration has risen in recent years, and while women migrant workers' contribution to the domestic economy is obvious through remittances, they face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including violence, exploitation and trafficking.¹¹

Viet Nam, especially its coastal and mountainous regions, is highly vulnerable to and affected by climate change and disasters. The country is ranked sixteenth according to the Global Climate Risk Index 2020 for countries most affected by climate change and disasters between 1999 and 2018.¹² Disasters have caused losses of about 1.5 per cent of GDP¹³ annually over the last three decades, with women and girls among the most vulnerable groups affected.

1 UN Women Viet Nam, accessed online on 8 September 2020: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/vietnam>

2 UN Women Viet Nam CO, AWP Cover Note (2020)

3 National Study on Violence Against Women in Viet Nam 2019 – Journey for change, available at: https://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/o_vaw_study_main_report_1.pdf

4 National Study on Violence Against Women in Viet Nam 2019, p. 37, available at: https://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/1_eng_summary_report.pdf

5 The Economist, accessed online on 8 September 2020: <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/06/08/vietnam-has-one-of-the-highest-shares-of-women-in-work-in-the-world>

6 [Global Gender Gap Report 2020](http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/data-explorer/#economy=VNM,Global%20Gender%20Gap%20Report%202018,Viet%20Nam,World%20Economic%20Forum), available at: [http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/data-explorer/#economy=VNM,Global Gender Gap Report 2018, Viet Nam, World Economic Forum](http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/data-explorer/#economy=VNM,Global%20Gender%20Gap%20Report%202018,Viet%20Nam,World%20Economic%20Forum)

7 International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group, "Women owned enterprises in Viet Nam: perceptions and potential", 2017; access online: https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/86bco493-78fa-4c7d-86ec-5858aa41fa1a/Market-study-on-Women-owned-enterprises-in-Vietnam_Eng_vi.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=I-Yi6gF

8 Irish Aid, y ban dân t c, & UNDP. (2017). T ng quan th c tr ng kinh t xã h i c a 53 dân t c thi us Hà N i, p.21

9 The proportion of ethnic minority households with land use right certificates held only by men is 74.2 per cent and by both men and women is 21 per cent (y ban dân t c & UN Women, 2017).

10 y ban dân t c & UN Women, 2015.

11 UN One Result Report 2019.

12 Germanwatch. Global Climate Risk Index 2020, The Long-Term Climate Risk Index (CRI): The 10 countries most affected from 1999 to 2018 (annual averages): https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/20-2-01e_20Global_20Climate_20Risk_20Index_2020_14.pdf

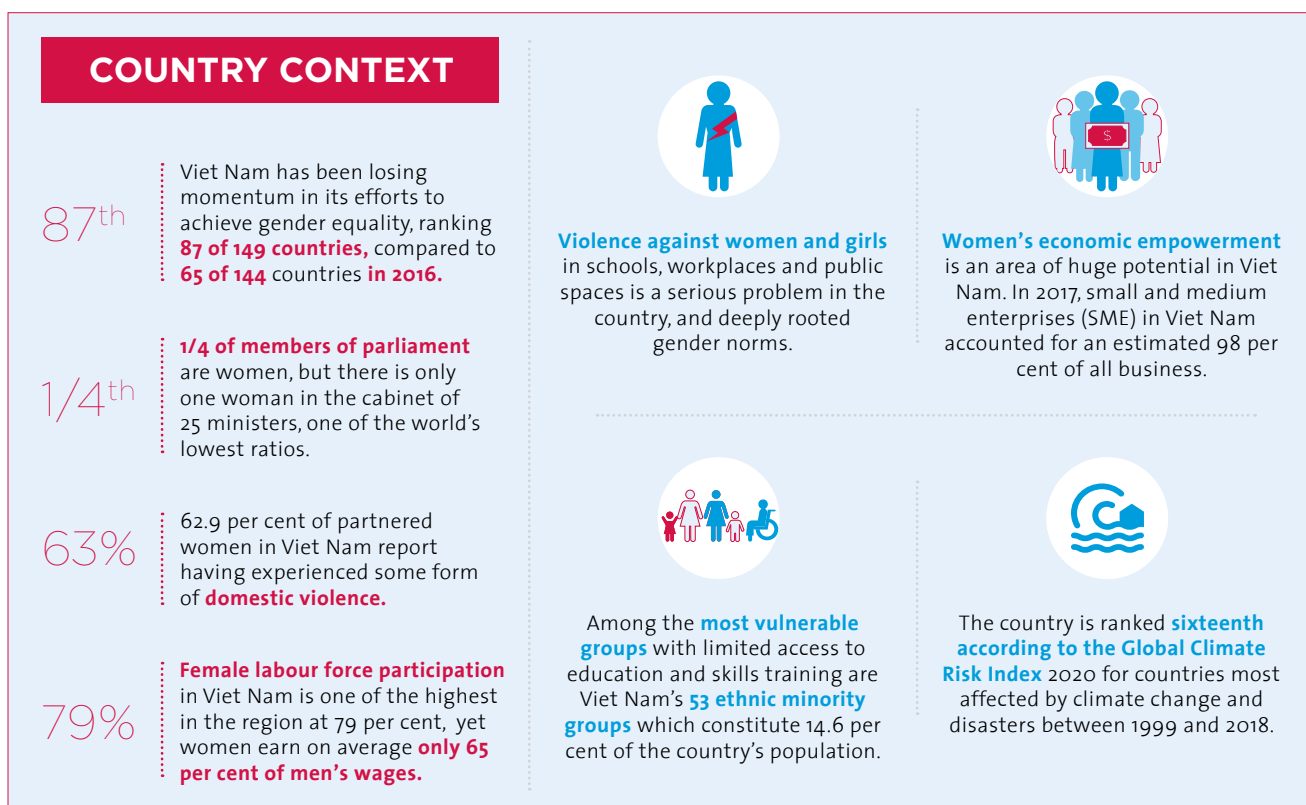
13 Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Intended Nationally Determined Contribution of Viet Nam, p.8, accessed online on 8 October 2020: https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Viet_20Nam_20First/VIETNAM_27S_20INDC.pdf

Women and girls are negatively impacted by these crises, resulting in more unpaid care and domestic work and less paid work, which affects long-term health outcomes, economic status, and the risk of violence against women and children increases.

During 99 days of the first wave of COVID-19 between January and April 2020, Viet Nam was recognized globally as one of the world's most successful responses to the worldwide pandemic with zero deaths and no community level transmission.¹⁴ However, in July 2020, Viet Nam faced a second outbreak of COVID-19, and as of early October 2020 there have been more than a thousand active cases and 35 deaths.^{15,16}

Viet Nam international commitments on GEWE

At the international level, the Government of Viet Nam is committed to the major conventions that seek to advance the rights of women, such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. Viet Nam submitted its last combined seventh and eighth periodic report to the CEDAW Committee in 2015 and is planning to submit the ninth periodic report in 2020.¹⁷ The government enacted an action plan for implementation of the recommendations made by the CEDAW Committee; and formulated and submitted the National Review Report on 25-year implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2019. Viet Nam also ratified the Paris Agreement, committed to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and is implementing the country's National Determined Contribution with the target of reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by 8 per cent by 2030.



¹⁴ UN News, The key to Viet Nam's successful COVID-19 response: A UN Resident Coordinator blog, accessed online on 8 September 2020: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1070852>

¹⁵ VN Express, Vietnamese brace for second Covid-19 wave, accessed online on 8 September 2020: <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/life/trend/vietnamese-brace-for-second-covid-19-wave-4137429.html>

¹⁶ UN Women Asia and the Pacific, accessed online on 8 September 2020: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2020/05/new-pioneering-effort-to-protect-women-and-children-in-quarantine-centres-during-covid-19>

¹⁷ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Viet Nam: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/VNIndex.aspx>

2. UN Women in Viet Nam

Background

UN Women established a CO in Viet Nam with Delegation of Authority in 2012 and has been part of the UN Delivering as One (DoA) approach in Viet Nam since 2006. The CO's programme of work, as outlined in its SN, is aligned with the government and UN System One Strategic Plan (OSP) for 2017–2021.

Strategic Note 2017–2021

UN Women in Viet Nam focused on two areas: (1) Ending Violence against Women (EVAW); and (2) gender-responsive Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). The CO captures the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change (CC) areas of work under the WEE outcome. There have been no major strategic changes between the previous and current SN. The CO's work in supporting normative and policy frameworks, women's participation and gender-responsive budgeting was cross-cutting throughout the thematic areas. Annex 2.3 lists the 22 projects active during the period under review, 9 of which were completed at the time of this CPE+A.

Normative and coordination efforts

The CO's normative area of work was cross-cutting throughout all thematic areas. The CO provided technical support and capacity building to the government to amend, develop and pass national plans and policies to address violence against women and girls and to advance GEWE. The CO also supported the government in upholding its commitments to international agreements such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action + 25.

As a member of the DoA initiative in Viet Nam and the UNCT, UN Women worked to facilitate gender mainstreaming across the UNCT; led coordination mechanisms; and provided external coordination support to government and non-governmental partners to implement and report against international commitments and advocated for policy change. Key UN agencies collaborating with UN Women on joint initiatives included: the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNAIDS, International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Financial and human resources

The total budget of the SN period 2017–Q1 2020 was US\$ 10.1 million including core, non-core, Institutional Budget (IB) and extra budgetary (XB) funds. The CO's total annual budget almost doubled from US\$ 1.7 million in 2017 to US\$ 3.5 million in 2020 (according to Atlas) due to the rise in non-core funding.

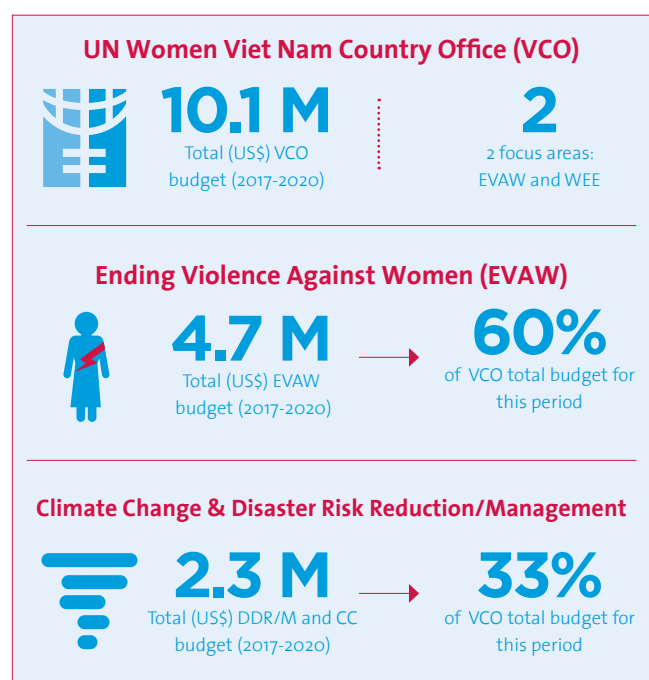
Core funds and IB remained constant over the period, while non-core funds tripled between 2017 and 2020. One contributing factor to this surge was the large increase in funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Government of Ireland during 2017–2020.

During the period under review, the CO's human resources included six fixed-term appointment (FTA) staff, between two and four office-based consultants on Special Service Agreement (SSA) contracts and between six and ten service contract (SC) personnel.

Core donors during the SN period included the Government of Australia DFAT, Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office, Government of Ireland, Government of Luxembourg, Government of Japan, Government of Republic of Korea, European Commission and Foundation Chanel.

Key partners

A comprehensive human-rights based stakeholder analysis is presented in Annex 5. The CO worked with a diverse range of local and international partners, including UN partners, donors, government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and was also active in mobilizing youth. The Government of Australia and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) were also long-standing partners throughout the period under evaluation. The CO also cultivated relationships with partners in the private sector and academia.



3. Evaluation + Internal Audit purpose, objectives, scope and methodology

Purpose

This is the first combined CPE and audit (CPE+A) jointly led by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) and Internal Audit Service (IAS). CPEs are a systematic assessment of the contributions made by UN Women to development results relating to gender equality at the country level. A risk-based internal audit of a CO aims to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements, risk management practices and control processes in delivering the CO's strategic priorities, programmes and operations.

The purpose of this CPE+A is to support: strategic learning and decision-making for the current SN 2017–2021; design of the next SN; the CO's strategic positioning in the context of the next One Strategic Plan and UN reform;¹⁸ enhanced accountability, management and cost-effectiveness of programmes and interventions; and capacity development and mobilization of national stakeholders to advance GEWE.

Evaluation and internal audit scope

The scope of the CPE+A covered UN Women's normative, coordination and operational work across all thematic areas of engagement during the SN. All programming efforts were covered and field visits were undertaken to Phu Yen and Da Nang. Given the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) global health emergency and ensuing global economic downturn, the report includes an analysis of UN Women's ongoing efforts to respond or adapt to the crisis while at the same time analysing UN Women's strategic positioning within this dynamic context.

The scope of the CPE+A included governance arrangements, risk management practices and control processes relating to the following areas and subareas:

- **Strategic priorities, programmes and project management:** strategic positioning, priorities setting, programme and project management, management of programme partners, coordination of gender mainstreaming, advocacy and resource mobilization.
- **Governance, risk management and internal control system:** office structure and delegations of authority, control environment, risk management, data quality and implementation of prior audit recommendations.

- **Operations:** management of procurement, human resources (HR), finance and budget, information and communication technology (ICT), travel, assets, and safety and security.

The CPE+A covered the state of governance, risk management and internal controls, based on a sample of CO activities from 1 January 2018 to 28 February 2020.

Methodology

The CPE+A employed a **non-experimental, theory-based approach**.¹⁹ Two in-depth case studies were the primary source of information for the assessment of contributions to outcomes in the selected thematic areas – Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change (DRR/CC) and empowering ethnic minorities – and specific analyses focused on the normative and coordination mandate. With a focus towards utilization by stakeholders, the CPE+A was tailored to the needs of UN Women and employed a **participatory approach** that included stakeholder perspectives throughout each phase. The evaluation was also **human rights-based and gender-responsive** and took a **systemic perspective** in analysing UN Women's contributions toward outcomes (see Annex 6). This assessment answers the key questions and sub-questions as defined in the evaluation and audit matrix (see Annex 4). The evaluation applied OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability) and a human rights and gender equality criterion.

Data collection and analysis

The ongoing COVID-19 global health emergency caused unprecedented issues for the evaluation resulting in delays and reliance on mostly remote data collection using a mixed-methods approach (see Annex 6.5). The plan for adhering to ethical guidance was outlined in the inception report and is aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidance and World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines for researching violence against women (see Annex 7). Multiple methods of data collection and analysis were carried out using both primary and secondary data to triangulate evidence, including desk review, quantitative and qualitative analysis (see Annex 6) and by using NVivo software (a qualitative data analysis tool). This was summarized in an evidence map (Annex 8).

¹⁸ The United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 was adopted on 31 May 2018, which has initiated a comprehensive reform of the UN Development System (UNDS).

¹⁹ A detailed note on the methodology can be found in Annex 6.

Limitations

Travel restrictions related to COVID-19 limited the possibility of in-person data collection to selected sites aligned with the case studies. The trips to Phu Yen and Da Nang city were short and therefore a limited number of people were consulted in person. There were also challenges for some participants in attending the meetings. The CPE+A team relied on the accuracy and completeness of the documents provided by the CO, including supporting documentation for the sample of individual transactions. Moreover, supporting documentation for FACE forms were not reviewed in this remote audit. To avoid biases raised, the information has been triangulated and validated with the CO and Evaluation Reference Group.

4. Evaluation + Internal Audit governance and quality assurance

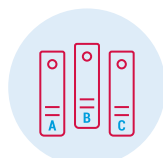
UN Women evaluations follow established mechanisms to ensure high-quality evaluation processes and products in line with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and Handbook and according to UNEG established norms and standards. All products are subject to quality review by the IEAS Director, Chief of Evaluation, peer reviewer, the Evaluation Reference Group and the Evaluation Management Group. The Evaluation Reference Group included UN Women programme staff, national government partners, civil society representatives, development partners/donors and UNCT representatives. The Evaluation Reference Group was engaged for its input on: inception, data collection, preliminary findings and the draft report. The group's feedback was important to ensure the factual accuracy; accurate interpretation of contextual information; and identification of gaps in the analysis. Further details on the evaluation governance structure is outlined in Annex 2.

IAS followed the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing in conducting the audit.



58 Interviews

The majority of interviews were conducted remotely.



100 documents reviewed

Annual Work Plans, evaluations, project documents reports etc.



Mixed methods

Mixed-methods to collect data | non-experimental, theory-based approach.



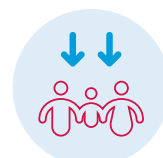
2 in-depth case studies

Case studies focusing on DRR/CC and Empowering ethnic minorities.



2 online surveys

Two surveys with CO personnel and UNCT partners.



2 focus group discussions

With an EAW Male Club in Da Nang and Lotus farmers in Phu Yen.



Photo © Nguyen Duc Hieu - UN Women Viet Nam Country Office

FINDINGS

FINDINGS

Is the Country Office's thematic focus and strategy for implementation the most relevant for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Viet Nam considering its added value vis-à-vis other actors?

FINDING 1

The Country Office's convening power and linkages with civil society were identified as a key added value in Viet Nam. The Country Office has facilitated effective advocacy and social mobilization for gender equality and women's empowerment.

While millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in Viet Nam, gender inequalities between groups and harmful social norms and practices persist, including when data is further disaggregated by ethnicity, LGBTQI persons, migrant workers, persons living with HIV and persons with disabilities. The UN system and development partners positioned their support in line with government priorities to “provid(ing) more timely demand-driven advice and technical support, leveraged together with key expertise in the public and private sectors, in a client/partner rather than aid recipient relationship.”²⁰ The CO remained a relevant player within this dynamic context, demonstrating an ability to bring together stakeholders from both civil society and government, without losing sight of persistent inequalities and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Civil society is essential in advancing the gender equality agenda as it represents the diverse voices, priorities and needs of rights holders. The latest CEDAW observations on Viet Nam (2015) identified concern at the “limited possibilities for civil society organizations, including women's rights organizations, to participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes relevant to the implementation of the Convention.”²¹ Within this context and given its mandate and implementation modalities, the CO was able to provide opportunities for civil society to convene, assess progress from their perspective; advocate for change contributing to strengthening normative processes, such as CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Voluntary National Review; and translate international norms and standards into national-level policies and strategies.

The stakeholders interviewed for this CPE noted that, in general, CSOs have strong technical capacity. Stakeholders also identified that UN Women's unique role was in providing a platform for civil society to influence key normative processes, which are critical to ensuring human rights remain on the agenda and the government is held to account. Stakeholders pointed to UN Women's ability to tap into civil society networks, leverage their expertise and reach grassroots organizations that might not normally be heard. These relationships also supported social mobilization to advocate for policy change (see Finding 11). For example, the CO provided technical and financial support to the youth and civil society independent reviews of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action to mark the declaration's twenty-fifth anniversary.²² The Civil Society report was led by the Gender-Based Violence Network in Viet Nam (GBV-NET), representing 17 CSOs and reviewed progress between 2014 and 2019, with a focus on gender-based violence (GBV). Additionally, the Center for Education Promotion and Empowerment of Women (CEPEW), engaged a group of 20 young people to draft the review of progress from the youth perspective with support from UN Women. The CO reported that it supported CSOs to advocate and raise visibility of gender perspectives in the global UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. Despite evident achievements in this area, a strategy for engaging and building civil society did not exist, rather the CO engaged with civil society on an ad-hoc basis through projects or specific events. Establishing a strategy could help to organize the CO's efforts more systematically and ensure it is not spreading its efforts and resources too thinly.

20 One Strategic Plan 2017-2021 between the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and the United Nations.

21 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, CEDAW Concluding Observations, 2015; CEDAW/C/VNM/CO/7-8; accessible at: http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkGtd_2fPPRICAqhKb7yhsl2YoYMjGrSfy7wV721E18VK-deE3T7cAq_2bg8u1ormSza_2bEljxZ1_2feYG2C8f89XyuvbIWtHiXzalaIZNaRseZelGcTgHLluL2gYNkUXC7FFp

22 UN Women, Independent report: 25 year implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the perspective of Youth, October 2019; <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/independent-report-25-year-implementation-of-the-beijing-declaration---youth> and UN Women, Independent report: 25 year implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the perspective of Civil Society, 2020; <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/independent-report-25-year-implementation-of-the-beijing-declaration-and-platform-for-action>

FINDING 2

The Country Office could better articulate UN Women's specific niche within the thematic areas aligned to Viet Nam priorities and prioritize activities to ensure the Country Office's work is coherent with the UN system and its efforts and resources are not spread too thinly.

The CO used its SN to guide its five-year vision for advancing GEWE, aligned with the national priorities and UN system's One Strategic Plan (OSP). As articulated in the reconstructed theory of change (ToC) for this evaluation, the CO's thematic focus was on ending violence against women (EVAW) and women's economic empowerment (WEE), the latter being integrated in the DRR/CC area. Women's leadership and participation, normative work and budgeting were cross-cutting themes throughout the thematic areas rather than specific outcome areas. A gap in the CO's programming persists with respect to women's political participation and empowerment, which is currently led by UNDP under the OSP.

With respect to EVAW, lack of clarity between the agencies involved in this area in Viet Nam affected the UN system's ability to maximize coherence and synergies across programming efforts. Although the DoA approach in Viet Nam has come a long way since its inception in 2006, agencies would benefit from working within the true spirit of coherence in the programmatic area of EVAW, leveraging each other's expertise, networks and reach to amplify impact. Coordination at national level for joint programmes, such as Partners 4 Prevention and the Essential Services Programme (both regional and headquarters driven – for more information see Finding 6), and integrated policy support should be strengthened. For example, interviews with stakeholders and the document review identified instances where UNFPA and UN Women were working with the same partners, but there was limited consultation, and efforts to coordinate key work with government counterparts was complex, e.g.: the “National Study on Violence Against Women in Viet Nam (2019)”; and the revision of the Gender Equality Law. While there were examples of UN system coordinating efforts, strategic planning and sharing of technical expertise related to work on violence against women and children (e.g. in Da Nang schools and communities) could be strengthened. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, agencies were working jointly to im-

plement programmes, and this will hopefully reignite a new sense of purpose in DoA.²³ UN reform and the changes relating to the new matrix management approach between a UN agency and the Resident Coordinator (RC), initiated in 2019,²⁴ provide an opportunity for the RC to play a more proactive role in facilitating coherence and holding agencies accountable.

During the development of the current SN, Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRR/M) and CC were combined with WEE to meet corporate requirements for outcome-level investments. Some stakeholders consulted identified the current placement of DRR/M and CC under the WEE area of work as having clear interlinkages, yet noted that this coupling may have detracted from each area of work; while others pointed to the need for clarity on where UN Women would focus within this broad area of work. While WEE, DRR/M and CC are clearly national (and global) priorities, it is an area where UN Women in Viet Nam (and globally) does not have a long history and the Entity is building knowledge and its positioning. Recognizing that there are many actors in this field (e.g. FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, etc.) with highly technical knowledge, UN Women would benefit from partnering with other agencies recognized as subject matter experts in these areas. With very limited project-based personnel dedicated to this work (two project managers – one on livelihoods and one on the Empower project), CO personnel were stretched thinly between managing projects; contributing to UN coordination mechanisms; and other related tasks. Findings 7 and 8 explore contributions to DRR/M) and CC.

Women's leadership and political empowerment remains a key challenge for Viet Nam causing its overall ranking in the Global Gender Gap Index²⁵ to weaken in 2020: the political empowerment ranking slipped from 84th in 2016 to 110th in 2020.

23 UNICEF, The Government of Viet Nam, the Government of Australia and UN agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women) join hands to protect women and children from violence in COVID-19 context, 18 June 2020; <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/press-releases/government-viet-nam-government-australia-and-un-agencies-unfpa-unicef-and-un-women>

24 Whereby the heads of UN agencies report on their respective agency's contributions to the UN Cooperation Framework objectives and on the collective results of the UNCT towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda at the country level.

25 World Economic Forum. Global Gender Gap Report 2020. 16 December 2019.

In 2015, CEDAW's Concluding Observations expressed concern at the low participation of women in political and public life.²⁶ Stakeholders identified a missed window of opportunity with the upcoming shift in party positions to take place during the 13th Communist Party Congress, a quinquennial event, and the 14th national general election in May 2021. While UNDP led efforts to empower women in politics on behalf of the UN system, UN Women did not have a targeted programme on women's political participation and leadership (WPPL) and was instead mainstreaming women's leadership throughout its work. However, a concerted strategy (even without a specific UN Women project) based on close coordination with UNDP and other stakeholders involved in this area, could have contributed to shifting gender norms in this unique moment.²⁷

Women's political empowerment ranking in Viet Nam

84th

in 2016

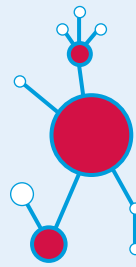


110th

in 2020

Global Gender Gap Index World Economic Forum

Deeply rooted patriarchal beliefs and voter bias



- Many stakeholders pointed to the deeply rooted patriarchal beliefs that see men as more capable in leadership positions.
- This was confirmed by a survey (PAPI) published in 2020 by UNDP Viet Nam.
- Most respondents did not have a preference, but those who did favored men over women.

FINDINGS

Has UN Women's contribution to the COVID-19 response been timely and relevant to the needs of Viet Nam?

FINDING 3

The Country Office's analysis related to COVID-19 has been timely and relevant to the needs of Viet Nam. Partners noted that UN Women is in a unique position to tackle gender inequality, exacerbated as a result of the pandemic, through a focus on women's economic empowerment and by leveraging its convening power as a strategic niche in the future.

The needs of Viet Nam were articulated in the UN COVID-19 Socio-economic response plan in Viet Nam, which was issued by the UN system in Viet Nam in March 2020, focusing on three pillars: 1) ensure continuity of essential public health and social protection functions; 2) assess economic impact; and 3) education.²⁸ Stakeholders consulted for this CPE+A recognized UN Women's proactive role and significant contributions in response to the COVID-19 crisis. For example, the CO issued a brief on gender-responsive quarantine measures²⁹ to support the government, which was replicated by other UN Women COs.³⁰ The Government of

Viet Nam together with UNICEF and UN Women worked together to protect women and children in quarantine centres across Viet Nam through accelerated safeguarding measures.³¹ The CO was involved in three–four different funding proposals (migration, Multi-Partner Trust Fund and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) including efforts aimed at reaching marginalized populations with cash to sustain livelihoods. The CO took the opportunity to identify the needs and priorities from the perspective of stakeholders, such as through the WeEmpower study: "Viet Nam and COVID-19: Impact on

26 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Viet Nam [Concluding observations \(2015\) CEDAW/C/VNM/CO/7-8](#)

27 Gender Action Partnership Meeting Minutes December 2019.

28 United Nations in Viet Nam, COVID-19 Socio-economic response plan <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/SERPhtml>

29 UN Women Viet Nam, Safety Instructions for Children and Women in Quarantine Centers to prevent the spread of COVID-19, 2020; <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/safety-instructions-for-children-and-women>

30 UN Women Asia and the Pacific Regional Humanitarian team COVID-19 response dashboard

31 UN Women Asia and the Pacific, accessed online on 8 September 2020: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2020/05/new-pioneering-effort-to-protect-women-and-children-in-quarantine-centres-during-covid-19>

the private sector” published in July 2020.³² The CO also worked with UNDP to complete an assessment of the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable households and enterprises, as summarized in a joint report.³³ In addition, the CO funded a study conducted by civil society on the relationship between COVID-19 and GBV/domestic violence and facilitated several meetings to discuss how to work together to address GBV during the pandemic. One key stakeholder praised UN Women for the high-quality of information received both globally and regionally on gender and COVID-19, which brought more visibility for the CO.

In the survey conducted for this CPE+A (see Annex 10), coordination partners stated that UN Women was in a unique position to tackle the increased gender inequalities expected as a result of the pandemic, including those related to the burden of family care; exposure to domestic violence; loss of job and/or income sources; and other underlying issues COVID-19 has only exacerbated, through a focus on WEE and by leveraging the CO’s convening power as a strategic niche for the future.

FINDING

What contribution is UN Women making to coordination and coherence on GEWE?

FINDING 4

While the Country Office contributed to enhancing the coherence of the UN system on gender equality and women’s empowerment through tools for holding the system accountable and supporting broader coordination efforts, a complex coordination architecture in Viet Nam represents challenges for a small agency to effectively engage.

As a DoA country, a coordination structure was established in which agencies are expected to actively contribute to enhancing the coherence of UN system efforts in Viet Nam. As seen in Figure 1 below, the CO engaged in at least 16 working groups and was also active in several other CSO networks. The CO leveraged its coordination mandate for greater impact, despite the lack of dedicated personnel for coordination activities and broader coordination strategy. Stakeholders consulted for this CPE+A noted that the CO provided technical expertise and perspectives that other UN system agencies were lacking. For example, while gender was mainstreamed across the OSP and to an extent across all work of the UN system, stakeholders identified the CO’s human rights-based analyses and focus on empowerment as helping to shift from a gender-targeted to a

gender-responsive approach.³⁴ Examples of how the CO influenced both the UN system and specific national policies are discussed under Findings 5 and 11.

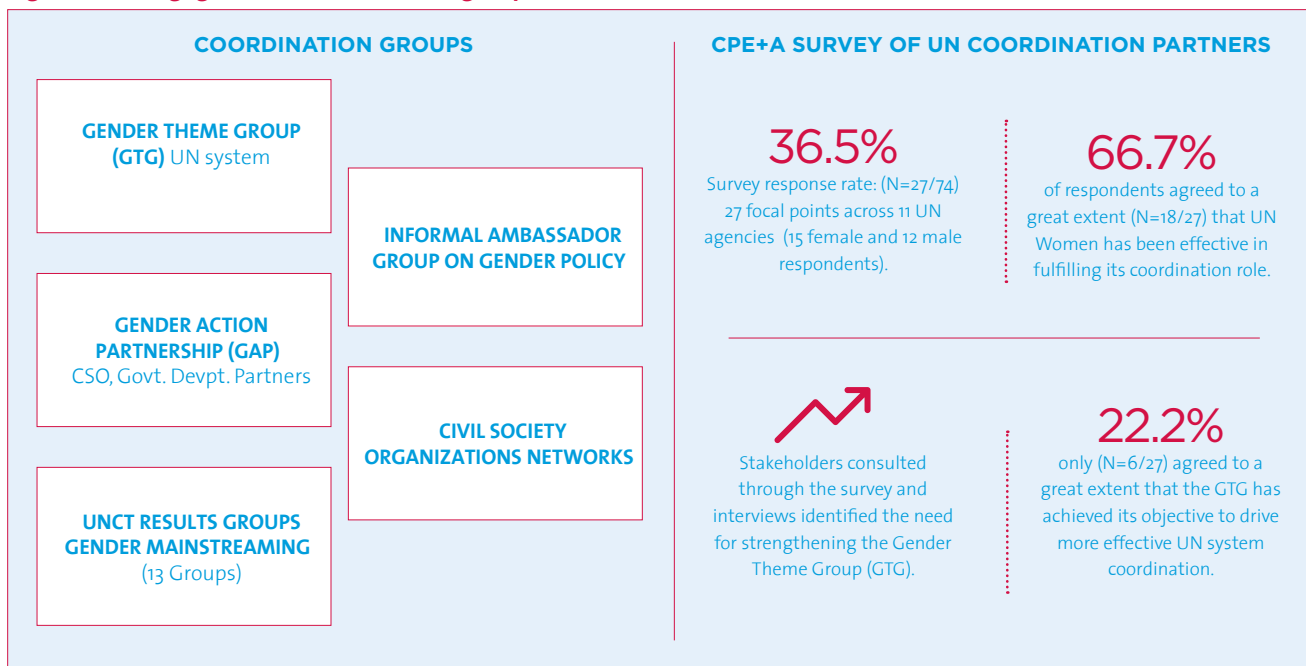
However, multiple coordination bodies existed whose membership and purpose varied, with potential overlaps. This presents an opportunity for streamlining and using these groups more strategically. There was no GEWE coordination strategy in the country to map different stakeholders’ priorities in contributing to different aspects of GEWE. Such a strategy would help the CO to prioritize activities; make its approach clear to partners; and avoid duplication of activities among actors.

³² The report is based on two survey’s conducted in May 2020 during the height of the pandemic: the first consisted of 600 individuals who are employed in the private sector and the second was an employer survey of 38 private sector companies UN Women, WeEmpower, Viet Nam and COVID-19: impact on the private sector; July 2020; DRAFT (see Annex 10)

³³ United Nations Viet Nam, UN Assessment on Economic Impacts of COVID-19 and strategic policy recommendations, Aug 31 2020: <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/Ecolmpact.html>

³⁴ The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES), developed as a tool for the Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (2015), captures the type and quality of gender results that an organization achieved at an aggregate level. It consists of a five-point scale showing different levels of effectiveness, both positive and negative, moving towards transformation (i.e. gender blind, gender negative, gender targeted, gender responsive or gender transformative).

Figure 1: CO engagement in coordination groups



The CO co-chaired the UN Gender Theme Group (GTG) and the UN Gender and Protection Working Group (under the UN NGO Disaster Management Group) and sat as a gender focal point on 13 UN results working groups, contributing to normative processes, such as consultations on policies/strategies, and reporting processes for CEDAW, SDGs, the UPR of Human Rights and Beijing +25 National Review. Based on the 2017 UN-SWAP Scorecard and capacity assessment completed in 2019, the GTG decided to focus on internal capacity building of UN gender focal points; information sharing; and coordinating key events, such as the 16 Days of Activism. However, as reflected by several stakeholders, the survey results and a review of the minutes of GTG meetings, the expectation was that the GTG and UN Women play a more strategic role, such as identifying the key priorities and needs of Viet Nam with respect to advancing GEWE and in supporting UN system strategic planning efforts to address these, for example by mapping efforts, coordinating programmes, providing input on the design and implementation of programmes, and identifying opportunities for strategic policy advocacy. The need for greater participation by senior staff members from across agencies in the GTG was also identified as an area for improvement.

The CO also served as Secretariat of the Informal Group of Ambassadors and Head of UN Agencies on Gender (co-chaired by the UN RC with UN Women providing the Secretariat), which meets quarterly to discuss broad strategic issues impacting advancement of GEWE and to pro-

mote coordination on policy issues related to the national response. Many stakeholders consulted identified this group as a success because of its approach to engaging senior-level leaders in a common platform for advocacy, which was credited for contributing to key changes to the labour code adopted in 2019 (to be discussed in more detail under Finding 5). The CO noted that secretariat support is time intensive as immense efforts go on behind the scenes and the office's human resources were already overstretched (see Finding 14 for details).

The CO also provided technical support to the Gender Action Partnership (GAP), led by MOLISA, to coordinate dialogue on gender equality priorities among government, UN agencies, CSOs and development partners. UN Women and the Office of National Committee for the Advancement of Women commissioned a review of the GAP in 2016, identifying it as "an open forum for information sharing, effective networking, and increased understanding of government's and development partner's work on gender equality".³⁵ However, as with the feedback on the GTG, the stakeholders consulted identified the need to strengthen the strategic focus of the GAP. The recommendations of the GAP review conducted in 2016 remain largely relevant today, namely, to use the GAP for "a coordinated advocacy approach and for coordinating activities to increase impact...". The review also recommended expanding membership of the GAP to government departments outside of the Gender Equality Department of MOLISA, and to the private sector and media.

With respect to UN system coordination, the CO reported that it supported implementation of the gender marker, with the OSP 2019 annual report indicating that 35 per cent of OSP allocations were related to GEWE – interviews also confirmed the contributions of UN Women. However, there was no indication about the extent to which the funds allocated to GEWE by the UN system could be considered gender transformative (as opposed to gender targeted, for example). The CPE led coordination survey found that just under half of respondents agreed “to a great extent” (48 per cent, 13/27 respondents) that the UN system in Viet Nam mainstreamed gender in the OSP; and just over half of respondents (51 per cent, 14/27 respondents) indicated that their agency had “somewhat” mainstreamed gender

in its work, leaving room for strengthening efforts. UN Women coordinated the last UN SWAP Scorecard assessment in Viet Nam in 2016: the assessment revealed that the UNCT in Viet Nam met or exceeded minimum standards for 12 of the 18 indicators. Areas identified as not yet meeting minimum standards and requiring strengthening were: gender-sensitivity of monitoring indicators; regular UNCT discussions on gender equality issues; systematic approach to capacity development of personnel; and the need for a system to track budgetary allocation to GEWE. UN Women facilitated development of the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan to facilitate follow-up; however, the role of UN Women vis-à-vis other UN organizations with respect to follow-up was unclear.

Percentage of survey* respondents indicating the outcome area where UN Women contributions were the most effective

MAIN OUTCOMES IN THE ONE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017–2021

SURVEY RESULTS



OUTCOME 1.1

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

22%



OUTCOME 3.1

By 2021, Viet Nam’s growth policies and institutions support a new economic model, which is inclusive, sustainable and more productivity-led, reaping gains from trade liberalization, international integration and migration.

15%



OUTCOME 3.2

By 2021, a fairer, inclusive labour market ensures decent work and opportunities for all, particularly for excluded groups and disadvantaged geographic areas.

15%



OUTCOME 4.2

By 2021, the protection of human rights is strengthened with improvements to the justice system, greater adherence to the rule of law, more equitable access to justice, increased gender equality and effective prevention of all forms of discrimination and violence

26%

*Source: the CPE led coordination survey

FINDINGS

How have the Country Office's contributions advanced gender equality and empowerment of women in Viet Nam, including through the UN–Government One Strategic Plan?

FINDING 5

The Country Office leveraged its technical expertise and coordination mandate to mobilize and support partners to influence national policies and programmes aimed at advancing women's rights with the potential to reach millions of people.

Over the period of the SN, the CO successfully influenced gender-responsive policies and strategies in Viet Nam across all thematic areas. Key factors for success included: producing gender analysis on the topics of concern combined with key policy recommendations; and in the most successful cases, the CO worked with multiple networks and senior leaders to advocate for these recommendations to be adopted.

Stakeholders pointed to a major achievement during the SN period being the CO's contribution to enhancing the gender-responsiveness of the revised Labour Code. During 2018–2019, the CO conducted a gender assessment of Viet Nam's Labour Code and developed recommendations for better alignment of the Code with international standards on gender equality, including narrowing the retirement age between men and women; ensuring equal rights to reproductive health care; paternity leave and child-rearing; removal of the list of prohibited occupations for female workers; supporting workers (both male and female) in childcare; and prevention and response to sexual harassment in the workplace. The combination of UN system analyses and coordinated advocacy allowed for a common voice and resulted in successfully influencing the adoption of a more gender-responsive Labour Code in Viet Nam with most of the CO's recommendations being adopted (see Finding 7).

According to the stakeholders consulted, the CO was instrumental in ensuring the gender-responsiveness of the Master Plan for the Social Economic Development of the Ethnic Minority and Remote Areas (2021–2030). The CO's contributions included gender analysis of National Data on the Socio-Economic Situation of the 53 Ethnic Minority Groups in Viet Nam (2015) and other studies on ethnic minority groups,³⁶ and facilitation of consultations across the country. The CO reported that it had supported the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) and Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) in dialogue with more than

300 ethnic minority women from communities and local authorities to identify the strategic needs of ethnic minority women that must be addressed under the Master Plan. Based on the findings, the CO issued Policy Recommendations to Advocate for Gender Equality in Ethnic Minority Groups in Viet Nam.³⁷ Furthermore, the National Assembly issued Resolution 88 that highlighted the importance of mainstreaming gender equality in the Master Plan and all projects implemented under the Master Plan (2021–2030); and state budget was allocated for a stand-alone project to promote gender equality in ethnic minority groups, which was assigned to VWU [see finding 7].



Examples of key legislation/policy/strategies for advancing GEWE that UN Women contributed to 2017–2019:

- Review of the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2011–2020) for development of the new National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021–2030
- Revision of the Labour Code
- Master Plan on Social Economic Development of the 53 ethnic minority groups
- Gender-responsive budgeting/State Budget Law
- Decree on safe, healthy, friendly and non-violent educational environment (Decree No:80/2017/N -CP)
- Circular 31/2017/TT-BGD T on guidance to implement counselling services in schools to respond to school-related GBV cases
- The Government of Viet Nam issued the National Action Plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2017, the first SDG Voluntary National Review was submitted in 2018 and reported a list of 158 nationalized SDG indicators in 2019.

36 MOLISA, Irish Aid and UN Women, Figures on Ethnic Minority Women and Men in Viet Nam 2015, published 2018; <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/01/figures-on-ethnic-minority-women-and-men-in-viet-nam-2015>

37 UN Women. Policy Recommendations to Advocate for Gender Equality in Ethnic Minority Groups in Viet Nam. 2019, p.4.

With respect to EVAW, the CO supported the Viet Nam Women's Union in 2018, to review the 10-year implementation, progress and challenges of Domestic Violence Prevention and Control Law (DV Law) through a dialogue with 150 leaders of the Women's Union 63 provinces. The CO contributed to the adoption of two policies to address sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces formulated and issued by Ho Chi Minh City and supported by the city's budget and created tools for implementation of gender equality principles in the State Budget Law. The CO also leveraged its strength in working closely with national stakeholders to build partnerships and advocate for gender-responsive budgeting allocation, which aims to promote GEWE and protect women and girls from violence and sexual harassment. UN Women also worked closely with the government to provide technical assistance (with

Australia DFAT support) in reviewing implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011–2020 to develop a new National Strategy.³⁸

Stakeholders with knowledge of UN Women's work in the DRR/M/ CC area consulted for the CPE considered the CO's technical expertise and advocacy on gender issues in 'non-traditional areas' such as climate change an important value added in comparison with other development actors. For example, through development of a technical paper on gender and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the CO influenced the mainstreaming of gender into the NDCs Plan on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Community-based Disaster Risk Management Programme.

FINDINGS

What intended or unintended results have been achieved (positive and negative)? For whom?

FINDING 6

The Country Office stimulated important awareness raising and attitudinal change and inspired city government officials throughout Viet Nam to adopt measures to end violence against women and successfully advocated for key policy-level changes that will support the government to better plan for and serve the needs of survivors of violence. Nevertheless, there was no overarching theory of change to bring together the different initiatives implemented under the area of ending violence against women in a coherent long-term vision, and without an approach to systematically capturing and measuring progress, UN Women contributions are difficult to track.

As stated in the Background Section, EVAW is a high priority for the country and despite progress on the policy front, stakeholders consulted identified the continued need to support implementation of policy and focus on social norm change to shift attitudes, behaviours and practices that are embedded in a patriarchal society. The EVAW area of work represents the CO's largest financial investment comprising approximately 60 per cent of programme funds. The CO engaged in a broad array of activities ranging from: policy advocacy (outlined under Finding 5); community-level engagement through male advocate clubs; training school administrators on curriculum for preventing GBV; engaging youth as change makers; working with city administrators to make public spaces safer; and working with the government to adopt gender-responsive budgeting and enhance essential service coordination and quality, among other initiatives.

BOX 1: Scaling up efforts through South-South exchange

The CO facilitated learning exchange between Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). As a result, HCMC was inspired by the experience in Da Nang to establish five Male Advocate Clubs in 2019 to train and engage men on becoming champions and promoters of respectful partner relations and non-violent masculinities. The Da Nang People's Committee was inspired by HCMC to promulgate a new directive on Safe Cities in 2020 after learning about the Safe Cities approach.

38 UN Women Viet Nam, December 2019; <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2019/12/un-women-supports-viet-nam-to-develop-the-new-national-strategy-on-gender-equality>

Ending Violence Against Women



- Programme on the Prevention and Access to Essential Services for survivors of violence
- Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces
- Empowering ethnic minority women and girls through gender-responsive ethnic minority policies and programmes
- Community Mobilization in Prevention of VAWG in Da Nang
- Empower youth, including from ethnic minorities and LGBTIQ groups, as peer educators
- Prevention of intimate partner violence towards lactating women
- Prevention of human trafficking and support to victims of trafficking.

4.7 M Total (US\$) EVAW budget (2017-2020) → representing **60%** of VCO total budget for this period

Recognizing that social norm change for EVAW requires a long-term, holistic approach, the CO grounded its approach in a social-ecological model that attempts to address the conditions which affect women and girls' risk of experiencing violence across different levels of society from individual, relationships, community/schools and to society at large.³⁹ The CO developed innovative approaches at community level in Da Nang, including the establishment of male clubs to discuss masculinities and violence. The CO engaged men and youth in its efforts which has resulted in enhanced awareness and attitudinal change. A qualitative endline study⁴⁰ of the original project (funded through Partners for Prevention) conducted in 2017 identified contributions to shifts in attitudes and awareness raising at the individual level, but recognized that the initiative was not conducted in isolation, pointing towards the importance of taking a multi-pronged, holistic approach that reaches across different stakeholder groups and aspects of community life.

³⁹ An ecological model was put forward by Lore Heise (1999) as an effective approach for preventing VAW, "The ecological approach aims to ensure that interventions consider and address the conditions across different levels (e.g. individual, family, community and society), which affect women and girls' risks of experiencing violence. As illustrated in the model there are biological, social, cultural and economic factors and norms at each layer that may increase men's risk of perpetrating violence and a woman's risk of experiencing it." Find more at: <https://www.endvavnow.org/en/articles/310-operating-within-the-ecological-model.html>

⁴⁰ Partners for Prevention, Qualitative endline study of a male advocate intervention to prevent violence against women and girls in Da Nang, Viet Nam, 2017; <http://www.partners4prevention.org/resource/qualitative-endline-study-male-advocate-intervention-prevent-violence-against-women-and>

⁴¹ <https://vietnam.unfpa.org/en/news/speech-ms-naomi-kitahara-unfpa-representative-consultation-workshop-national-programme>

As noted under previous findings, UN Women made extensive contributions to the generation of analysis and recommendations to support policy revision with respect to EVAW and adoption of gender-responsive budgeting that will protect women and girls from sexual harassment and influenced the adoption of essential service packages (see Annex 9 for more details).

However, an overarching CO vision for EVAW linking the different activities to a broader vision of change did not exist, mainly because SN implementation relied heavily on individual, short-term project funding without a thematic umbrella with a results-framework. Furthermore, it was difficult to compile progress for both individual initiatives and across EVAW initiatives due to the lack of an integrated M&E framework for capturing and measuring progress; the initiatives were often funded through pooled non-core or core resources and therefore donor reports with cumulative reporting may not be required. Progress reported is largely at the activity level. The lack of information impeded understanding of the extent to which capacity development through training and social mobilization initiatives were contributing to longer-term results and social norm change.

Another challenge identified was in ensuring that marginalized groups and those in vulnerable situations across different target groups within the community are reached. This gap could be addressed through the CO's improved use of needs assessments and participant selection criteria during project design; support to programme partners to select participants; and independent verification (separate from its programme partners) during implementation to ensure that marginalized groups are indeed reached. For example, as observed during the field visit the male clubs were mainly engaging retired elderly men; and the demographics of youth engaged or reached were not consistently reported. Although UN Women's global mandate and technical expertise in EVAW, preventing VAW and coordinating essential services have helped the CO to strategically position itself in Viet Nam, as identified under Finding 2, EVAW is an area of work where lack of clarity between UN agencies and potential overlap between partners limited coherence and impact. For example, until May 2020, UN Women was not engaged in the National Programme on Prevention and Response to GBV, led by UNFPA.⁴¹ Highlighted progress on all initiatives under EVAW can be found in Annex 9.

FINDING 7

The Country Office is adding value to its partners in the area of women’s economic empowerment by bringing a gender perspective to policy analysis with a focus on ethnic minorities. The Country Office also played a convening role among the business community to advocate for adoption of Women’s Empowerment Principles and engaged business leaders as agents of change. Nevertheless, the Country Office remains a small player and may be spreading its efforts and resources too thinly without clarity in its thematic focus and in leveraging partnerships.

The reconstructed ToC for the CPE+A envisions that through access and use of gender-responsive services to support WEE and reduce vulnerabilities, availability of business opportunities for women to advance a sustainable, green and inclusive economy, supported by gender-responsive WEE, DRR/M and CC laws and policies, women will become agents of economic growth and adaptation to disasters and CC.⁴² The CO focused its efforts in WEE through policy-level advocacy (e.g. the empowering ethnic minorities project – see Box 2 and Finding 5) and engaging the private sector in committing to women’s empowerment principles (WEP) to promote better opportunities and working conditions for women (See Box 2). Key highlights of these initiatives are listed below and further details outlining all WEE activities can be found in Annex 9.

BOX 2: Promoting women’s empowerment principles (WEPs)

Within the time frame of the SN, the CO has engaged with the private sector to promote better opportunities and working conditions for women. The WeEmpower Viet Nam programme (with budget of US\$ 1 million for the period 2017–2021 funded through the European Commission), builds on the CO’s previous project that focused on WEPs, with a budget of US\$ 22,000 implemented in 2018. Through the WeEmpower programme, the CO aims to empower women to participate, lead and have access to enhanced business opportunities within the private sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the CO and programme partner’s ability to implement the planned programme of work and was also fundamentally changing development partners’ focus with respect to social and economic recovery. A UN Women led survey among private sector workers in the formal economy, conducted within the framework of the WeEmpower programme in May 2020, found that “39 per cent of survey respondents reported the pandemic has had no effect of their job, an almost equal proportion (38 per cent) reported they had experienced a reduction in their hours of work and another 12 per cent reported a cut in their hourly pay rate. Workers in retail were hardest hit: two out of five workers had their job terminated, suspended or had to take unpaid leave.”⁴³ According to the stakeholders consulted during the CPE+A data collection, women, especially those in the informal economy and from ethnic minority groups were among the most affected by the pandemic because they may not be eligible for government relief. UN Women and UNDP, together with the National Centre for Information and Forecasting and the Ministry of Planning and Investment, are conducting a socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19 on SMEs, poor households, and ethnic minorities. The findings of the assessment will feed into the overall assessment by key government agencies and will inform the design of economic recovery plans.

Attention to WEE in Viet Nam has increased with several new initiatives aimed at reframing the issue around the growth potential of women-owned SMEs: the government is subsidizing training courses for women owned SMEs:⁴⁴ and the Asian Development Bank reported US\$ 20.19 million from the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi)⁴⁵ to support women-led SMEs access critical financing

42 On DRR/M and CC-related finding, see section below.

43 UN Women. Viet Nam and COVID-19. Impact on the Private Sector. July 2020

44 UN Women, https://vietnam.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/Ads_TOR_National_20Consultant_Review_20_20Map_Women_20owned_20SMEs_WeEmpower_20Asia.pdf

45 [We-Fi is governed by 14 founding contributing countries and is managed by the World Bank](#). It aims to mobilize more than US\$ 1 billion in commercial and international financial institution finance to provide women entrepreneurs with access to debt, equity, venture capital, insurance products, and other opportunities to link with domestic and global markets. The aim is to improve the business environment for women-owned or led SMEs.

and training in Viet Nam and the Pacific.⁴⁶ Additionally, the World Bank and UN agencies Country Partnership Frameworks aim to broaden economic participation of ethnic minorities, women and vulnerable groups.⁴⁷ Against this backdrop and given the comparatively limited UN Women financial resources available, there is an opportunity for

the CO to leverage cooperation with development partners and/or mobilize further resources to influence WEE efforts. UN Women can more clearly identify its role and niche by mapping potential partnerships and exploring innovative financing or platforms with the aim of ensuring that inequalities are not exacerbated.

BOX 3: UN Women's contributions to empowering ethnic minority women in Viet Nam

“Empowering Ethnic Minority Women in Viet Nam through Gender-Responsive Ethnic Minority Policies and Programmes” funded by Irish Aid with a budget of US\$ 472,000 for 2017–2021

Through this project, UN Women supported capacity development of government partners, including the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA), to integrate gender into laws, policies, plans on rural development, poverty reduction and climate change adaptation, as well as to institutionalize the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, ethnicity and types of vulnerability. Stakeholders noted that UN Women was instrumental in ensuring the gender-sensitivity of the Master Plan for the Social Economic Development of the Ethnic Minority and Remote Areas (2021–2030). Key achievements:

- Publication presenting statistics on ethnic minority women and men.
- Master Plan on Social Economic Development of the Ethnic Minority Regions and Remote Areas in Viet Nam for the period 2021–2030 with gender equality principles.
- National Assembly Resolution 88 for the development of the National Target Programme on Social Economic Development of the Ethnic Minority Regions and Remote Areas in Viet Nam for the period 2021–2030 with approval for the development of a subproject to address gender equality and the empowerment of ethnic minority women.
- UNCT data software, led by UN Women and UNDP, to analyse comprehensive data and information about the development status of ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam to inform comprehensive policy development and UN LNOB database.

FINDING 8

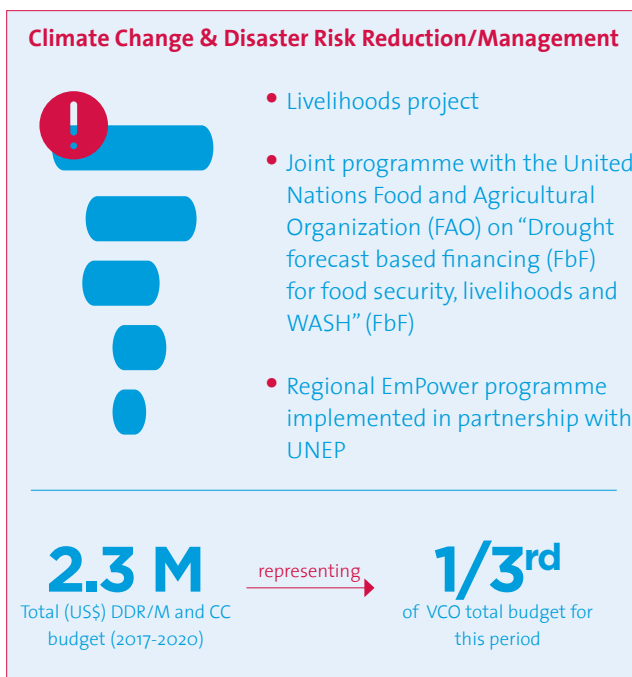
The Country Office contributed to important policy-level analysis from a gender perspective feeding into the adoption of national policies for Disaster Risk Reduction/Management (DRR/M) and Climate Change (CC) in accordance with international normative frameworks and human rights standards. The Country Office planted the seeds for supporting institutions to provide effective services aimed at reducing vulnerability to economic shocks, disasters and climate change; however, current efforts focused on rights holders and programme partners capacities may not be reaching marginalized groups or prove to be cost-effective.

As described under Finding 5, the CO contributed substantially to policy change in this area of work through the generation of data, analysis and tools to support the government to ensure gender-responsive approaches to DRR/M and CC. UN Women's niche has been identified as

bringing a gender perspective on how women and girls, men and boys are affected differently by disasters and CC and in ensuring that women not only participate but are empowered in forums aimed at preparing for, mitigating and responding to crises.

⁴⁶ Asian Development Bank, “New We-Fi Financing to Enhance ADB's Support for Women-Led SMEs in Viet Nam and Pacific” May 2019; <https://www.adb.org/news/new-we-fi-financing-enhance-adbs-support-women-led-smes-viet-nam-and-pacific>

⁴⁷ In particular, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, have programmes and projects with budgets ranging from US\$ 4.4 million (FAO) and US\$ 9.4 million (UNDP) of core funds, to US\$ 42 million (IFAD).



For example, one national stakeholder noted that although they had been working with other development partners for over 20 years on DRR/M and CC issues, it was only when they started working with UN Women that they understood the importance of integrating gender into their approaches, including the data being collected. As noted earlier, partners highlighted the great achievement of UN Women’s contribution to mainstreaming gender into Viet Nam’s NDCs.

The CO has implemented projects at community level aimed at enhancing access and use of gender-responsive services by rights holders to support WEE and reduce vulnerability and resilience to CC by empowering women to actively engage in preparing and responding to crises through: capacity development, community mobilization and engagement in piloting models. As outlined in Box 4 and Annex 9, the CO contributed to increasing awareness of rights holders and its partners, particularly VWU, to become more resilient to CC, as demonstrated, for example, through the lotus model, and water wells and loudspeakers installed in communities through the forecast-based

financing project. The evidence on changed gender norms and power dynamics in communities that participated in the projects was not yet evident (the CO’s reports did not contain information in this regard and stakeholders interviewed during the data collection phase had not reflected on changed norms or power dynamics).

There was an unclear link between pilot interventions and national-level policy advocacy. For example, links between the results of the Livelihoods project (see Box 4 below) with wider policies and strategies on WEE, DRR/M and CC were not (yet) evident. The project illustrates the need for continued engagement between communities and government to adapt initiatives as climate conditions change and to link these initiatives with overall poverty reduction strategies. The evaluation also assessed value-for-money aspects: for example, on average, the CO allocated approximately US\$ 890 to each of the 26 households participating in lotus growing, excluding its own personnel-related costs. There is a risk that the number of involved beneficiaries in the pilot models may seem rather small for the government to take the pilot to scale. Value for money considerations should be applied by the CO when deciding how best to invest its limited resources (including its limited time).

Strategic focus and a long-term vision building on the comparative advantages of agencies within the UN system in this broad area of work can support clarity and the ability to deepen impact. For example, in the DRR/M and CC work undertaken by UNDP, FAO and the World Bank, budgets range from US\$ 5.6 million, US\$ 4.4 million and US\$ 316 million, respectively.⁴⁸ The 2016 Assessment of Development Results of UNDP in Viet Nam⁴⁹ found that “in 2006-2015 UNDP significantly increased awareness; technical information and analysis; and capacity development related to climate change, green growth, energy efficiency, and disaster risk management.” In this context, there are opportunities for UN Women to identify its specific niche and increase coordination with other actors working on DRR/M and CC, in order to avoid duplication and make use of its unique expertise in ensuring gender-responsiveness of norms, policies and interventions.

⁴⁸ UNDP Country Programme Document for Viet Nam (2017-2021), p.10; FAO Country Programming Framework for Viet Nam (2017-2021), p.11-17; World Bank Country Partnership Framework for Viet Nam 2018-2022. Annex 1: Results Matrix.

⁴⁹ UNDP. Independent Evaluation Office. Assessment of Development Results: Viet Nam. 2016, p.xiv.

BOX 4: Results from the Strengthening Livelihoods Pilot

- **Project Title:** Strengthening women's livelihoods and participation for greater resilience to disasters and climate change in Viet Nam
- **Donor:** Foundation Chanel
- **Funding amount:** US\$ 850,000
- **Time frame:** 2018–2020
- **Key partners:** VWU, MARĐ, MONRE, National Agriculture Extension Centre

Within the Livelihoods project, 26 households in Phu Yen were recruited by the VWU and local authorities to shift their rice farms to lotus farms as part of the UN Women pilot project. The women learned new agricultural skills that would allow them to be resilient in the context of climate change; received knowledge about marketing; and technical advice and tools, such as pesticides. It is evident from discussions with the community members and UN Women reports that new knowledge allowed farmers to adapt to a crop more resilient to climate change and provided the potential to gain additional income.

With 500 sq.m of lotus area, one interviewed farmer obtained approximately US\$ 43 more profit through the lotus than rice (lotus profit was approx. US\$ 129 (3 million VND), while baseline profit from rice was approx. US\$ 86 (2 million VND). However, the CO did not report whether this level of profit was the same for all project participants. Although the CPE+A was only able to have a limited number of discussions with community members and thus it may not be possible to generalize, farmers reported that during the second and third lotus crops, they were unable to make a profit due to challenges in obtaining fertilizers and pesticides suitable for local conditions; and drought conditions when their cooperative had not yet invested in a well. At the same time, a lotus drying machine provided for the farmers by UN Women was not used as intended. Dried lotus has a higher market value; however, one must be connected to the value chain – whereas the farmers consulted noted that they knew where to sell the fresh lotus, which although would earn them less, could quickly provide money - rather than waiting for the seeds to be dried and then sold in a different market. According to the CO, there are plans to use the drying machine during the upcoming phases.

Although still a nascent programme and recognizing that social norm change requires long-term efforts, consultations in the field revealed that the project had not yet brought about positive changes in gender norms: community members explained that in households women had already traditionally been responsible for managing household monetary resources; time spent in the field had not reduced and tasks in the field had always been shared between men and women; and the decision-making on spending monetary resources still largely remained with men. Another challenge was reaching those that could be considered the more marginalized or groups in a more vulnerable situation namely, the interventions proposed required potential beneficiaries to have land of a certain size to allow for lotus growing, thereby excluding those members of community that did not have the required land area from participating in the pilot.

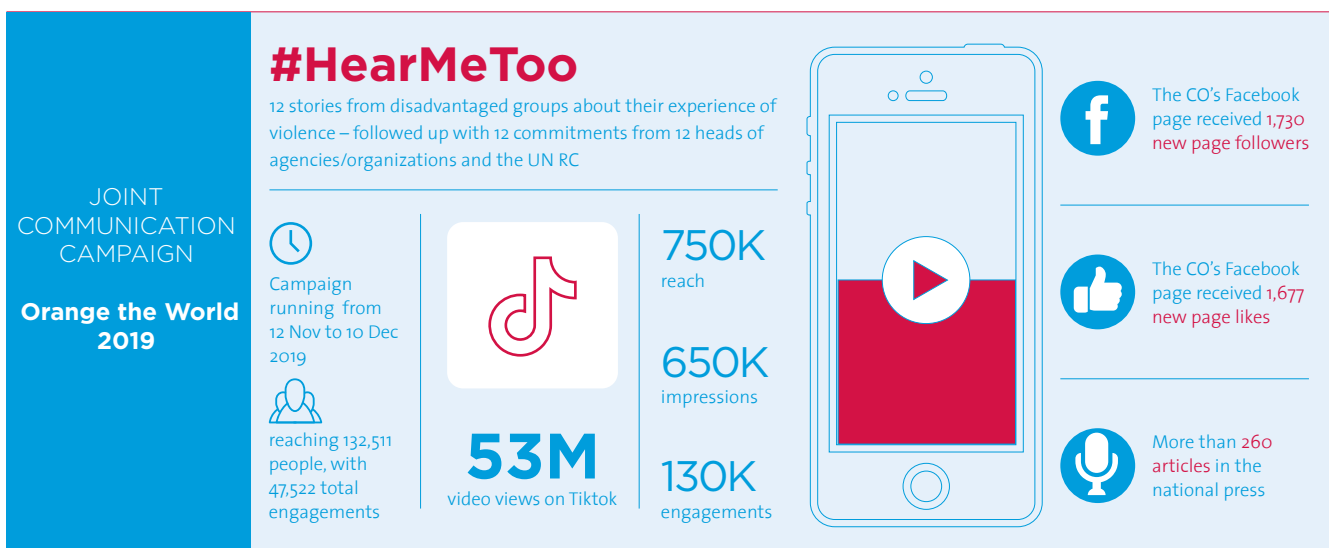
FINDING 9

Advocacy through communication efforts are a strength of the Country Office: multiple platforms, creative messaging and directly engaging journalists and influencers to raise awareness on issues around gender equality, including sexual harassment, gender-based violence, masculinities and other topics. Advocacy campaigns have also had concrete results, contributing to the adoption of change in policy reaching millions. This good practice should be captured more systematically and shared with the region.

Advocacy and communication efforts were considered a comparative advantage of the CO by its key stakeholders, as the CO effectively utilized its networks and multiple platforms. This success was exemplified by the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE campaign. The UNiTE campaign actively engaged multiple stakeholders, including Vietnamese citizens; UN system heads of office and personnel; civil society and government officials; and journalists and influencers to demonstrate the power of coming together and committing to act for a culture of zero tolerance against sexual violence and to promote GEWE and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.⁵⁰

Several key partners emphasized that the CO had focused communication activities on addressing gender stereo-

types. For example, the Safe City – safe bus and safe public space for women and girls programme issued a viral video titled “Good Banana” with both Vietnamese language and sign language,⁵¹ which was used as a radio broadcast for the bus system in Ho Chi Minh city. A communications’ package was developed to raise awareness of sexual harassment and sexual violence against women in public places for different stakeholders and to change social norms, reaching an estimated 8.5 million people.⁵² Moreover, the CO’s coordination partners also identified the high quality of communication products produced with the support of the CO, noting they had longevity. These good practices should be captured more systematically so that reach and use of communications products can be tracked and shared with other COs in the region.



50 Communications coverage report: 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM 2019: “Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against Sexual Violence”.

51 UN Women Viet Nam Facebook Page, accessed online on 10 September 2020: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=517653275418586&external_log_id=dc8866db-odoc-4e37-8f56-30c2ce1a83a9&q=unwomen_20good_2obanana

52 UN Women Viet Nam Twitter Page, accessed online on 10 September 2020: https://twitter.com/unwomenvietnam/status/1068038816605200384?s=21&fbclid=IwARo82MxPthd_nAC_AECg6mpmSOav3cmu-6qz_3Vu4U5weuxTc-dKyeAGXuE

FINDINGS

Has the Country Office's portfolio been designed and implemented according to human rights and development effectiveness principles (ensuring national ownership and sustainability of programming efforts)?

FINDING 10

The Country Office's efforts are contributing across all levels of society, from individual and community levels to the broader institutional level, in line with evidence that a holistic approach is required for realizing human rights and gender equality.

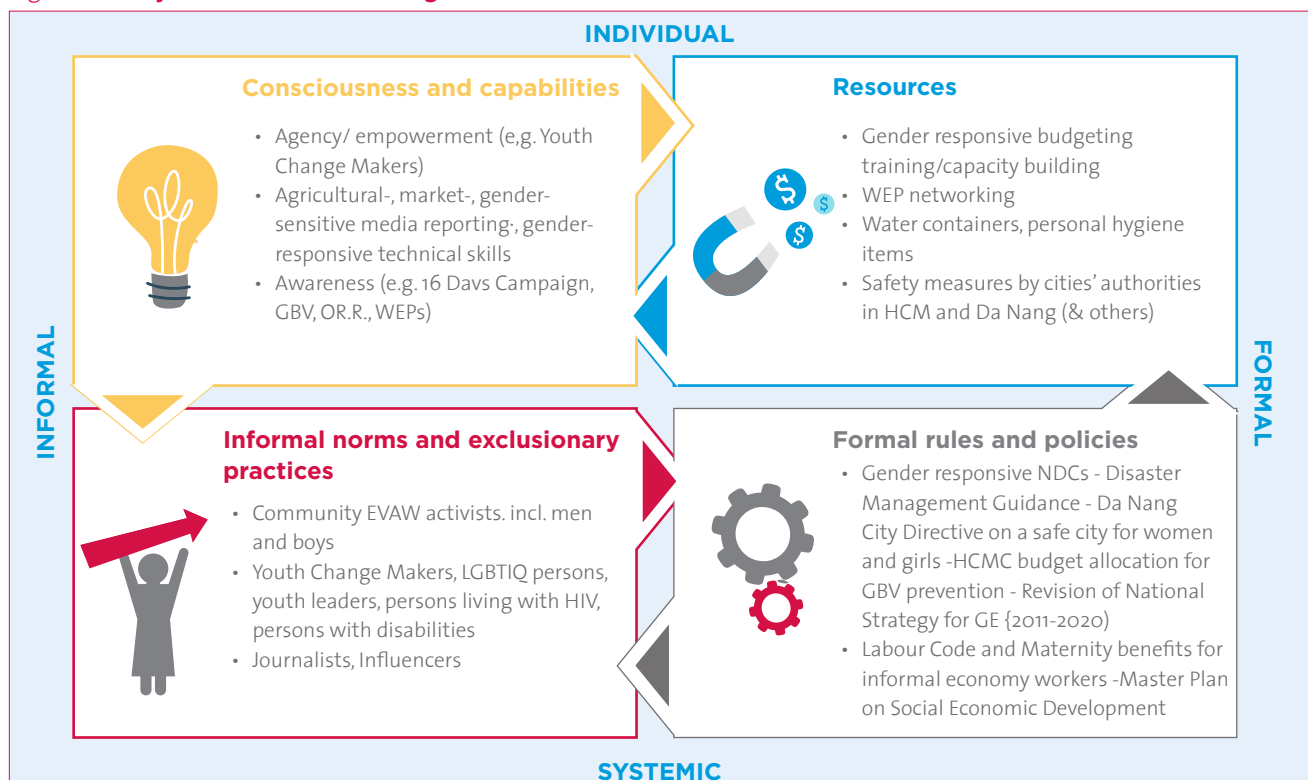
Efforts at various levels – individual, systemic, formal and informal – are required to ensure long-lasting positive changes for achieving GEWE. Whereas there was no standard approach to definitively measure gender transformative change, Figure 2 provides a snapshot of the CO's operational and normative efforts during the SN period, following the Gender@Work framework (see Annex 11),⁵³ an analytical tool used by the CPE+A to map where the CO's programming activities were concentrated. The assumption is that if the CO is adopting transformative programming aimed at shifting social norms, efforts will be present in each quadrant, and the interlinkages between the quadrants will also be recognized. Working together actions across all quadrants will contribute to the realization of human rights and gender equality.

Most of the CO's efforts focused on "formal/systemic" and "individual/resources" quadrants. As for the first, the CO's technical expertise, convening power and advocacy con-

tributed to improved gender-responsiveness of normative and policy frameworks which is expected to lead to transformative changes in the lives of women. As for the second, various groups of rights holders and partners benefitted from resources provided by the CO in the form of capacity building, awareness raising, networking and tools that can improve quality of life (e.g. water containers), among others.

The CPE+A team found some evidence of changes occurring at the "individual consciousness and capabilities" level. For example, men and youth increasingly act as gender champions. However, the data collection phase also found that, in some instances, there had been limited change in individual capabilities. Moreover, it is rather challenging to estimate the extent of these types of changes across programme interventions as no large-scale post-implementation attitude/behaviour change surveys or assessments have been undertaken by UN Women.

Figure 2: Analysis of CO work according to the Gender@Work framework



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Developed by the international feminist knowledge network, Gender@Work (www.genderatwork.org), the framework provides an analytical lens for organizations and communities to map specific opportunities and barriers for gender equality and assess the extent to which their work has contributed to shifting gendered power relations.

As can be seen from Figure 2 and Annex 11, there were more limited efforts in the quadrant on “informal norms and exclusionary practices”, which is also the more challenging quadrant to make progress in. Therefore, there is room for the CO to work on tackling negative social norms persisting at various levels, including within government struc-

tures; among implementing partners; and even within the UN system. Overall, interventions that are designed taking into consideration desired changes across all four quadrants and examining the interlinkages between quadrants have more potential for the kind of transformative change required to achieve gender equality.

FINDING 11

The Country Office has made a consistent and concerted effort to design programmes and advocate for policy-level change that reflects the priorities of groups in vulnerable situations or who have been marginalized by society including ethnic minorities, LGBTQI, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS and women migrant workers. While projects at the community level are designed to reach the most vulnerable groups within Viet Nam, it has been challenging to do so effectively.

The guiding principles of UN Women’s Strategic Plan include a human rights-based approach in line with international standards and leaving no one behind (LNOB),⁵⁴ which in accordance with Agenda 2030 “calls for particular attention to youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants.”⁵⁵ The CO stipulated alignment of its proposed SN to the promise of LNOB.⁵⁶ The ToC reconstructed by the CPE+A also included LNOB as one of the CO’s programming principles.

According to a consulted stakeholder, the CO’s value added in HIV/AIDS is the office’s “ability to provide better understanding of intersectionality of issues – how poverty, discrimination, and being of particular sexual and gender identities make these communities more vulnerable.”

The CO consistently reported employing a participatory approach to informing policy revision processes and programme inception stages by actively engaging CSOs, VWU and others at subnational level. However, efforts at community level relied upon responsible partners with limited validation of beneficiary selection by the CO, which in some cases made it dif-

ficult to ensure the most marginalized populations were included as project participants. Evidence-based targeting and clear beneficiary criteria should guide project design. While many ProDocs outlined how projects planned to target vulnerable groups, monitoring reports did not provide detailed information on the exact groups or the extent to which vulnerable populations were engaged or reached by the activities. The CPE+A field visit further validated this finding. Strategies for ensuring programmes engage and benefit the most vulnerable groups should be strengthened. In some instances, the CO engaged beneficiaries that are usually left behind, such as persons living with HIV who contributed to the UPR process; and LGBTIQ participants who were among the youth change makers. However, identification of project participants was with limited involvement of rights holders and their needs assessment. Moreover, closer monitoring of the beneficiary selection process conducted by partners; independent validation by the CO of the beneficiaries selected by programme partners against the original selection criteria; and regular detailed reporting by programme partners would enhance the CO’s adherence to the LNOB principle, i.e. project reports rarely disaggregate project participants’ data by sex and socio-economic status, age, disability, ethnicity, etc.

54 UN Women SP 2018–2021, p.12

55 Ibid, p.2

56 CO SN 2017–2021, p.6

Despite limited financial investment, the CO leveraged its technical gender expertise and convening power to engage persons living with HIV and to advocate for improvement of gender dimension of Viet Nam's HIV/AIDS policies. For example, the revision of the HIV Law and implementation of the National Working Plan for HIV Prevention and Control 2016–2020 and the 2017 Gender Assessment of Viet Nam's HIV Response⁵⁷ produced by the CO identified opportunities, gaps and challenges in gender mainstreaming in the national HIV response, and provided a set of recommendations for improvement of HIV policies and programmes.

In 2018, the CO convened consultations with women living with HIV to develop factsheets to advocate for the inclusion of gender issues in the UPR on Human Rights. As reported by the CO, in 2018–2019 in partnership with UNAIDS and the Committee of Social Affairs of the National Assembly (PCSA), the CO facilitated two regional (north–south) dialogues, which included testimonies by transgender persons and covered the issue of transgender rights in Viet Nam, with entry points being GBV and healthcare. According to the CO, after the dialogues, the PCSA took a strong stand on advocating for equal rights for transgender persons in Viet Nam. Consequently, the draft Gender Affirmation Law included content on transgender persons' equal human rights (as of the end of 2019 the draft had not been put forward for the National Congress' consideration).⁵⁸ Another such effort was cooperation with the network of Vietnamese Young Key-Affected Populations (VYKAP) which included persons living with HIV, sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM), and others, in capacity development of youth and LGBTIQ groups on gender and HIV, GBV and gender-responsiveness in HIV/AIDS prevention and responses.

Regarding persons with disabilities, as reported by CO, in 2018, the office organized a consultation workshop with

CSOs working to advocate for gender-responsive policies to end discrimination and violence against women with disabilities; and in 2019, UN Women supported Ho Chi Minh City authorities in the development of two proposals to improve the city's infrastructure for women and girls, including access to all public spaces for women with disabilities. At the time of the CPE+A, there was no evidence of the progress on these above-mentioned initiatives; and the CPE+A field data collection and desk review did not provide evidence on the identification and engagement of persons with disabilities in UN Women community-level interventions.

Recognizing Viet Nam's demographic shift, with the highest percentage of young people in its population ever (making up almost one third of the total population) the CO identified an important opportunity for engaging youth as advocates and role models for GEWE. The CO demonstrated consistent engagement of youth across all thematic areas. One example being the "Change Makers" implemented in collaboration with the Youth Union's Viet Nam Volunteer Centre (VVC) and VWU, which aimed to engage youth as agents of change in challenging gender stereotypes, transforming social norms and acting to end GBV using a peer education curriculum.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, reporting on these engagements was at the activity level and there was no information on contributions to changed attitudes and behaviours at this stage.

Overall, the CO stakeholders consulted recognize LNOB as the CO's niche given its mandate and close relationships with civil society groups, which helps in reaching and understanding vulnerable groups' priorities. Existing CO plans to expand its work in the area, and the current focus of the UN system and development partners, present opportunities for strengthening synergies and coordinating efforts to reach vulnerable and marginalized groups.

57 UN Women. Gender Assessment of Viet Nam's HIV Response. 2017.

58 Report on Activities under UNAIDS Country Envelop and Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF) 2019.

59 Access the curriculum here: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2014/9/the-changemaker>

FINDING 12

The Country Office has established strategic partnerships with key government partners to build ownership, capacities and systems for accountability aimed at advancing women's rights and gender equality, yet is engaging on a project basis; working in siloes and not systematically identifying how to streamline capacity building efforts across the different levels of partner organizations.

The UN Women Strategic Plan refers to national capacity development as a key strategy for sustainable development and includes it in the Entity's six types of support to operational activities.⁶⁰ The CO's SN refers to capacity development of government partners, rights holders, CSOs and private sector beneficiaries, across all outcomes. CO capacity development efforts are analysed below against a framework put forth by a regional evaluation of the UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office's approach to capacity development.⁶¹ The CPE+A team looked for evidence on "two levels of change"⁶²: i) individual empowerment; and ii) change in the organization or institution. Financial expenditure⁶³ over the SN period analysed by the CPE+A team was identified at approximately US\$ 656,000 spent by programme partners on participation of counterparts in workshops or training; while UN Women spent approximately US\$ 269,000 on learning costs, totalling almost US\$ 1 million invested in capacity building or learning efforts over the SN period.

There was limited evidence of rigorous capacity diagnosis or pre-training assessments. As for the design of capacity development activities, the CO leveraged its technical expertise and that of its partners; however, the CO had to ensure that the training sessions were delivered to women as targeted beneficiaries, as stakeholders noted patriarchal norms persist in many communities and men are usually the ones who attend events.⁶⁴ Although it was evident through CPE+A data collection that large and diverse groups of stakeholders were engaged in capacity development activities, there are limited indicators or reports that

demonstrate the CO and its partners systematically captured the progress across initiatives. In some cases, the CO invested in coaching to build a sustainable approach to capacity building, such as through Male Advocate Clubs and youth groups; yet multiple training sessions across VWU and with other groups took place with little understanding about the long-term effects. For example, questions remain regarding the extent to which training of government partners increased the representation and empowerment of women in decision-making bodies.

As for the organizational or institutional-level change, the CO was considering lessons learned from previous programming periods and evaluations which recommended that it continue to leverage established networks and strength of government partners, such as VWU, in order to institutionalize changes that provide a greater voice for women's concerns.⁶⁵ There were examples of where this has happened, such as in the adoption of gender-responsive budgeting (e.g. HCMC GRB Handbook) and the adoption of a training curriculum (e.g. the Ministry of Justice adopted training modules on rights-based, survivor-centred approaches in handling cases of VAW).

Nevertheless, a holistic and long-term capacity development approach by the CO aimed at its strategic partners was missing. For example, the CO had strong ties with VWU, and capacity development of this partner was included in project design across thematic areas. The CPE+A team and stakeholders consulted also noted that the VWU requires support in promoting women's empowerment

60 The other five types of support are: normative support; UN coordination for gender equality and women's empowerment; integrated policy advice; advocacy and social mobilization; and technical assistance for essential services.

61 The CO's efforts were assessed against the following categories: 1. Extent to which the cycle of capacity development was followed: diagnosis, design, delivery, and follow-up; and 2. Evidence on "two levels of change": individual empowerment and change in the organization or institution; UN Women. Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office. Regional Evaluation on Capacity Development Initiatives during 2014–17. p.16

62 UN Women. Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office. Regional Evaluation on Capacity Development Initiatives during 2014–17. p.16. p.12

63 UN Women AAA reported financial expenditure was organized by Atlas category related to learning costs.

64 Documents, such as project progress reports and interviews conducted by the CPE+A team confirm delivery of training (the team had not examined training curricula), workshops and other capacity development events.

65 Evaluation of UN Women in Viet Nam project on "Strengthening women's capacity in DRR to cope with climate change (2013-2017)", recommendation #3.

(rather than just participation) and how to apply the principle of LNOB in project implementation.⁶⁶ However, the approach to VWU capacity development was siloed in projects working with different units of VWU and at different levels, and was not strategic or cross-sectoral at VWU institutional level; and activities were not based on a comprehensive needs assessment of VWU personnel and relevant long-term capacity development plan with expected results and M&E framework to measure progress. The Letter of Agreement (LoA) is a good step; however, there is room for improvement in enhancing coordination across programmes and agencies.

The CO could also diversify its programme partner base by mapping key actors and conducting more active engagement: most projects reviewed had the same partners, which creates dependency on the partner's capacity and effectiveness to implement the interventions. Moreover, opportunities are lost to reach and build capacities of other potential partners involved in GEWE. Greater efficiencies and impact could be achieved by building upon existing efforts to streamline a partnership approach to working together across projects (horizontally) and across the different levels of the organization (rather than on a siloed project basis).

FINDINGS

Does the Viet Nam CO have appropriate governance, capacity and capability to ensure good use of resources to deliver results?

FINDING 13

Implementation of the Country Office's Strategic Note is currently reliant on small and short-term non-core funds and is increasing reliant on regional/global programme funds, limiting the Country Office's capacity to deliver sustainable results.

The CO recognized that the financial sustainability of the office is an issue given that ODA to Viet Nam has been decreasing in recent years, leading to competition for development resources among UN agencies. In this context, the CO's SN notes that "the coming 5 years will be a transitional period for the CO and the proposed programme will require review and adjustment on an annual basis, based on partnerships solidified and resources mobilized."⁶⁷ However, according to some stakeholders, during the current SN period, the CO was not always informed and involved in negotiations on possible funding opportunities for the UN system in Viet Nam, which may indicate an opportunity to enhance its visibility and partners' confidence in the CO.

The CO's resource mobilization trends demonstrated a risk to the longer-term sustainability of the CO's strategic priorities, interventions and capacity, which was also noted by

several stakeholders interviewed and surveyed. Although overall non-core financial resources have increased, the CO has become reliant on regional/global programme resources over local non-core funds, placing sustainability at risk if the regional and global funds dry up.

Although the CO could not fully meet its original resource mobilization targets (on average 56 per cent of DRF was mobilized in four years), the resource mobilization efforts resulted in much higher funding during 2019 and 2020 (57 per cent in 2019 and 91 per cent as of June 2020). The global COVID-19 pandemic is shifting social and economic dynamics and will have long-lasting effects, including on the UN system. While this has meant that funds to respond to the pandemic in Viet Nam are increasing, at least in the short-term; there is a risk that in the future financial resources may be even more difficult to mobilize.

66 A related recommendation was also suggested by the 2017 CO evaluation of the project on "Strengthening women's capacity in DRR to cope with climate change (2013-2017)". See Evaluation Report on Strengthening Women's Capacity in DRR to Cope with Climate Change (2013-2017), p.ix, available at <https://gate.unwomen.org/Evaluation/Details?EvaluationId=11209>

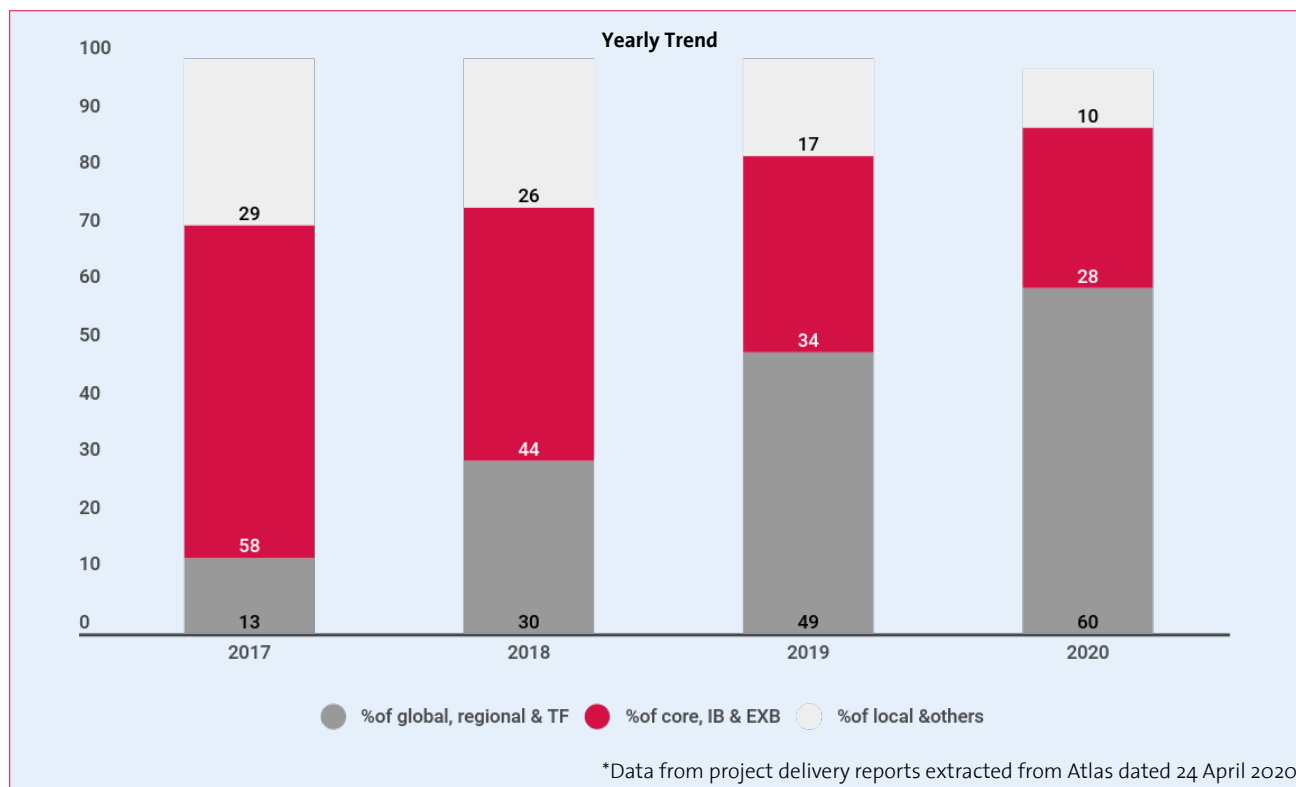
67 UN Women Strategic Note 2017-2021.

Another issue identified was that not all global or regional projects allowed the same level of CO participation at the design stage, which might impact on their sustainability. For example, the DFAT funded ERAW project and Foundation Chanel project on strengthening livelihoods did not have clear exit strategies in the ProDocs; and in the case of projects coming to an end, progress or final reports did not provide information on planned handover steps. A need to invest more in project design and the management of risks was also identified. There were cases where implementation had challenges that could have been better managed at the project design stage. Without proactive risk management practices, the project’s ownership and sustainability may be negatively impacted (E.g. Strengthening women’s livelihoods and resilience: land requirements, equipment procured but not used, lack of awareness about pesticides). Better engagement of country-level personnel in the design of regional programmes may be a way to address these issues.

Additionally, the longer-term programmatic approach of integrating related interventions under an umbrella programme was not used, e.g. ERAW had several shorter-term, stand-alone projects, both local and regional. Moreover, difficulties in contracting programme partners due to limited budgets and long approval processes, or funding source resulted in the CO being involved in direct project implementation, which creates an additional burden on its personnel, increases travel costs and lost opportunities for more strategic leadership on its thematic priorities.

At community level, strategic partnership agreements and commitments to sustain results, with potentially longer-term funding for the thematic area rather than individual projects, as well as clear plans for potential exit or scaling-up strategies should be clearly articulated in project design by the CO to ensure the project’s intended benefits are sustained after project end.

Figure 3: CO resources mobilized by type of funds 2017-2020*



FINDING 14

The Country Office's staffing situation does not ensure sustainable technical capacity or the key positions needed to deliver on its integrated mandate and has also resulted in overburdened personnel and lost opportunities for efficiency savings.

Throughout the SN period, CO personnel remained relatively constant: six FTA staff, from two to four office-based consultants (SSAs) and from six to ten SC personnel. The number of technical experts on short-term contracts fluctuated depending on project needs and non-core budget availability. While the Operations team was small, it was more sustainably funded, i.e. four personnel funded by IB and EX funding. The Programme team was in a more precarious situation from a business continuity perspective: eleven personnel were funded by non-core and core (core funding covered between 33 per cent and 54 per cent of the four positions).

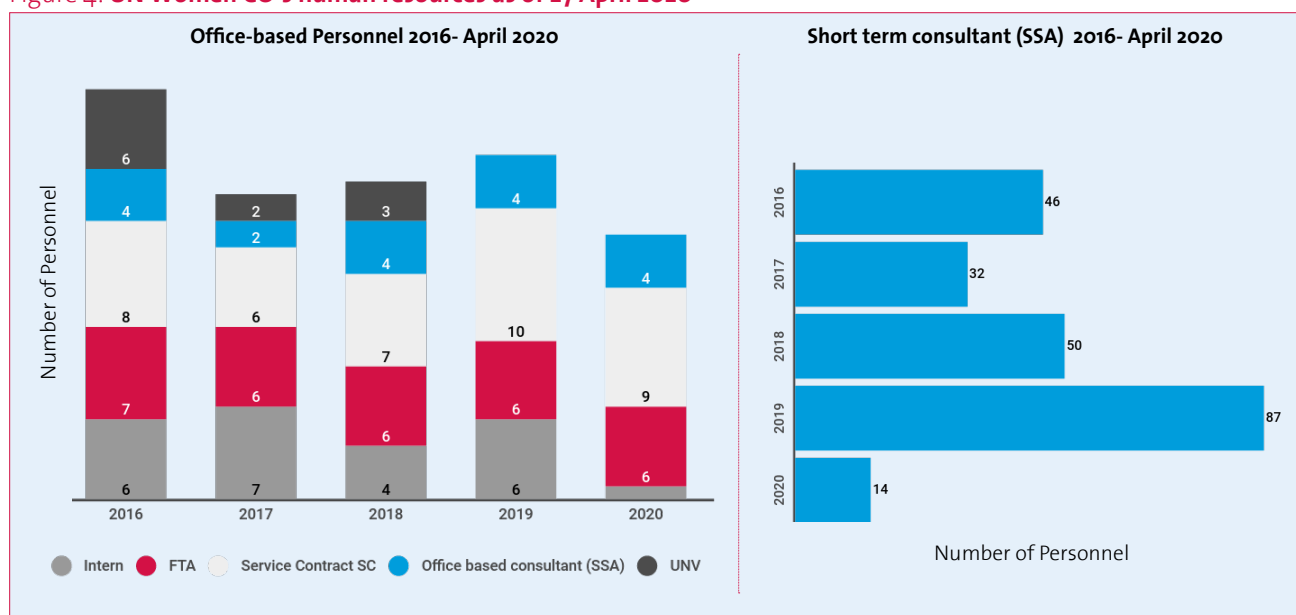
The CO's structure lacked a dedicated M&E officer, coordination specialist or thematic lead. Without thematic leads, each project officer reports to their supervisor (the programme specialist and in one case the Representative), which contributes to a project rather than strategic programmatic approach. Technical capacity and sustainability were noted as needing major improvement by many external partners interviewed.

Although the CPE+A coordination survey indicates that 70.4 per cent (19/27) of UN coordination partners agreed "to a great extent" that UN Women personnel had the necessary skills, knowledge and capacities needed to support

UN system coordination on GEWE, in the context of DAO, the team is required to dedicate a substantial amount of time to coordination activities and invest significant efforts to be able to contribute to the thematic groups (leading one and co-leading another) and results groups, 16 in total. The CPE+A survey shows that 85 per cent (23/27) of coordination partners had experienced bottlenecks in communication or working with UN Women. The CPE+A CO personnel survey showed that nearly half of personnel surveyed felt overwhelmed with the work (44 per cent, 7/16 respondents) and needed additional support from headquarters and ROAP in thematic and normative areas.

Another issue potentially contributing to inefficiencies was the high number of short-term consultants under SSA contracts (Figure 4), which reached a peak in 2019 with 87 individuals employed under these contracts (some of whom may have had multiple contracts). As a result, the CO was involved in the frequent recruitment of short-term personnel to compensate for the absence of fixed term staff, which leads to loss of knowledge and increased transaction costs, including staff time in recruiting. While the CO reported⁶⁸ that clear efforts were underway to establish stronger engagement between the Programme and Operations teams, there was an opportunity to further planning for recruitment and procurement.

Figure 4: UN Women CO's human resources as of 27 April 2020⁶⁹



68 Feedback on preliminary findings to the CO CPE+A report.

69 Human resources data consulted from the CO as of 27th April 2020.

FINDING 15

The Country Office results framework and its monitoring approach do not clearly define and effectively capture the progress over the results of its interventions, which is challenging without a dedicated M&E officer and integrated monitoring framework.

Overall, there was coherence between the CO's SN, AWP and field programme. Based on identified priorities and CO's resources (both human and financial), WEE, DRR and EAW were chosen as a focus for 2017–2021, which is coherent with the UN Women Strategic Plan and regional priorities (although as noted previously, there is an unmet need within the area of Women's Political Participation in Viet Nam). These priorities drove AWP and the field programme; and, in general, include key results-framework elements such as indicators, targets, annual milestones and were linked to funding partners. The following areas in result-based management (RBM) raise opportunity for further improvement during the development of the next SN:

- The number of indicators in the AWP was quite high compared with the CO's resources to implement, monitor and report on them. Each AWP had more than 80 indicators for both OEEF and DRF, excluding individual project-related result indicators.
- The evaluability assessment showed that the quality of outcomes, outputs and indicators within the SN varied. While the resource mobilization target set up to implement the original priorities was not achieved, the SN and its targets were not amended to reflect the lack of funding.
- Annual milestones were available for all indicators, which represents good practice among the field offices, as it was easy to understand the progress made by the CO for the reporting year. However, from the reports available, it was unclear in which cases the final target was annual or accumulated.
- Status categories were used inconsistently so reporting on progress might be misleading. For example, in some cases 0 per cent progress was reported as no change, while in others "some progress". In other cases, 8 per cent or 25 per cent in the third year was reported as significant, while in others 50 per cent was listed as some progress.

On project related monitoring and reporting, the following areas were identified:

- As instructed by headquarters, the CO combined funds under outcome areas of the SN from 23 projects and 11 donors,⁷⁰ which resulted in an artificial

linkage and inaccurate thematic categorization in Atlas and inefficiencies in preparing donor reports. The multiple small funding contributions towards similar areas of work without a coherent overarching strategy for the thematic area or integrated monitoring framework (aligning projects to AWP indicators and activities) created a situation where it is difficult to track and report on results and creates inefficiencies.⁷¹

- The CO provided timely and regular reports to donors and partners which was highly appreciated.
- It was observed that results-oriented and cumulative reporting was a challenge. There is room for strengthening the overall monitoring framework to integrate all field visits and other monitoring activities and to ensure that results-oriented data is being captured, validated and reported in the most cost-effective manner. This was particularly challenging for global and regional projects.
- There was no dedicated M&E personnel or process for independently validating the data provided by partners and project managers (peer reviews if a dedicated M&E personnel is not feasible), such as visiting beneficiaries and ensuring lessons are being learned. Independence of the M&E function combined with project managers also involved in direct implementation of projects is not ideal.
- Monitoring activities for projects were mostly focused on the programme partner role in the project rather than focusing on overall project achievements, learning and areas for course correction. Furthermore, the analysis of mission reports showed that there were many ad hoc field missions by CO personnel, with some locations being more frequented than others. There was no integrated field programme monitoring plan listing potential monitoring locations and requirements versus monitoring priorities due to limited resources for M&E activities.

Without an integrated monitoring framework, it is difficult to map monitoring activities and to ensure that there are no duplications or gaps, and that a mission is the most cost-effective solution.

70 The CO shared correspondence from 2016 with headquarters.

71 The CPE+A team recognizes that headquarters has not issued any guidance on how to develop an integrated framework.

FINDING 16**There is a need to strengthen risk management practices at the Country Office.**

The CO needs to strengthen its risk management practices and ensure emerging significant risks and opportunities are identified in a timely manner; assessed; and the related risk management actions are in place. Some risks were not properly identified at the programme design stage and were not regularly monitored during project implementation. Risk matrices were prepared at ProDoc formulation; however, new and emerging risks were not identified in a timely manner and addressed, e.g. the risk of long approval process for projects and partners was well known but not yet effectively addressed. Frequently delays during implementation of projects, which were beyond the CO's control, resulted in no-cost extensions of project duration. Risk of frequent project delays needs to be more closely monitored and managed. The monitoring of the overall project workplan will enhance project and risk management.

The risk register needs to be updated regularly to record the key emerging risks. For example, resource mobilization was recognized as a long-standing challenge, the risk pertaining to resource mobilization was rated as High, and the management mitigating actions (including reliance on regional programmes) needed to be regularly monitored by CO and ROAP management as this risk directly impacts the CO's sustainability and UN Women's footprint in the country. Fraud-related risks were identified in the risk register for human resources, procurement, assets/cash and project-related fraud; however, these risks were rated very low which might not fully correspond to their inherent nature and mitigating actions. The mandatory anti-fraud training had not been completed by all personnel.

FINDING 17**Some operations areas need improvement to enhance the cost-effective use of limited resources, such as improved operational planning in terms of prioritization and timing of project implementation and monitoring activities and related travels; compliance with consultancy recruitment policies; and enhanced procurement planning to reduce transaction processing costs and minimize delays in programme implementation.**

Some operational areas require improvement to ensure efficient use of limited resources and to enable planning and team collaboration in the CO's programme and project implementation efforts. Implications from ineffective planning resulted in shorter time frames for procurement and recruitment which, coupled with process inefficiencies, created additional workload and unnecessary tensions between teams. Areas where there are opportunities for improvement are discussed below:

Human resources

The CO often hired short-term consultants to help it in delivering its AWP. During the audit period, 111 consultants were hired under SSA contracts with consultant fees reaching almost US\$ 876,000. There were also instances when the CO contracted in-service government officials as indi-

vidual consultants. These recruited government officials were, at times, involved in projects meant for their government ministry or its parent entity. Moreover, in some cases, the CO issued overlapping contracts to the same consultants for an extended period while they were also engaged with their government employer.

Potential risks include engaging consultants who have an ongoing employment relationship, particularly with government partners which may create a real or perceived conflict of interest. It may also affect perceptions on whether the most qualified candidate was selected and create tensions where UN Women cannot easily hold consultants accountable for delivery. The CO should enhance its recruitment practices to ensure and demonstrate healthy competition, transparency and fairness.

Other issues with the consultant recruitment process included significant delays (at times, for several months); frequent use of direct contracting due to the low value local SSA contracts (i.e. US\$ 2,500 and below); vacancy announcements may appear too restricted to encourage wider competition; use of generic Terms of Reference (ToR) without specific and concrete performance indicators/deliverables; improper comparison of SSA proposals by cost element, i.e. including travel costs that are eventually shouldered by the CO; and performance not evaluated against all ToR deliverables.

Travel

As the CO directly implemented some of its projects and with the absence of an integrated monitoring framework, travel costs were quite significant. Travel costs (8 per cent) ranked as the fourth highest expenditure following non-staff personnel costs (26 per cent), staff costs (21 per cent), and learning and recruitment costs (21 per cent). To reduce the processing time, the CO used long-term agreements (LTAs) for most of its travel needs. Travel analysis showed that some personnel travelled more than 30 times or were away from the office for a significant time during January 2019–March 2020, including members of the management team. The absence of the management team may reduce management oversight and could delay or delegate authority for key decisions. The situation could be improved by better planning and coordination of field visits with other travel, prioritizing only unavoidable and necessary travel. Value for money should be a consideration when planning duty travel.

Procurement

The CO used LTAs for most of its procurement activities, but procurement planning (and using such plans proactively) should be maintained. For example, during 2019 the CO's actual procurement exceeded the plan by more than 300 per cent, and purchase orders (POs) raised in the first two quarters of 2019 were more than the total planned procurement for the whole year. This may suggest that procurement planning is considered a compliance activity rather than a tool to plan and deliver procurement-related activities in a timely manner.

Efficiencies might be generated by revising the CO's transaction processing. The CO raised almost 400 POs with individual value of less than US\$ 1,000. This was an added burden to the already stretched Procurement team which could be resolved by better planning and merging a number of different purchase requests, thereby benefitting from economies of scale. In one case, the CO had to cancel a PO because the procurement process took a considerable amount of time and the service provider was unable to provide a quality deliverable within a reduced time frame which required that the CO request the donor approve re-directing the funds to another project. Had the donor not agreed to redirect the funds, UN Women would have had to return the funds to the donor, which could potentially affect donor relations and UN Women's reputation.

LESSONS LEARNED



Joining forces with actors that have specific related expertise amplifies outreach and may lead to more sustainable results. For example, within the joint project on Forecast-based Financing (FbF), FAO had a coordinating and technical role, and although the CO received a relatively small amount of financial resources, the CO provided gender expertise across its own component and those implemented by other partners, such as Save the Children.



Cooperation with local actors with omnipresent representation in Viet Nam, such as the Women's Union, enabled the CO to reach out to women who might have been overlooked by other actors; and VWU, due to its mandate within the governance system of Viet Nam, is empowered to facilitate engagement with local authorities and communities. However, this approach should be strategic and integrated, and include cross-sectoral coherence, coordination and principles such as LNOB.



It is critical to engage policy makers from the initial stage until the end of an intervention and, most importantly, in the design of a project's transition/exit strategy and its subsequent monitoring during implementation to ensure ownership for results and longer-term sustainability; as well as to encourage co-financing and integration of operational and normative interventions, where possible. This would build partners' capacity in gender-responsiveness, increase national ownership and prompt potential replication, as occurred within the Safe Cities programme whereby Ho Chi Minh City's example on enhancing safety in public spaces inspired Da Nang authorities to issue the Directive on Safe Cities, and where ERAW actions were combined with gender-responsive budgeting interventions.



The CO's analytical work, for instance, by conducting WASH and Food, Security and Livelihoods assessments within the Forecast-based Financing project, Gender Analyses of Viet Nam's HIV/AIDS Response and of the national data on the Socio-Economic Situation of the 53 Ethnic Minority Groups in Viet Nam, provides evidence and has contributed to the government's uptake of targeted interventions. Although enhancing government's capacity in collecting sex-disaggregated data would enable greater support for gender-responsive policy making at the national level and across different development areas.



Engagement of women, both at community and government level, in capacity building on gender combined with a specific technical area, such as DRR/M/CC, may seem less sensitive in political terms, and allow for development actors' work in the area. Needs assessments and targeting specific beneficiaries would be highly valuable at the design stage.



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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The CO made substantial contributions to advancing GEWE in Viet Nam. The CO was able to implement its programme of work with limited personnel, many on short-term and unstable contracts and without a sustainable long-term financial outlook. The CO also faced a challenging context with strong commitment and action by the government at the policy level, coupled with huge strides in economic progress, yet underlying inequalities experienced by those most marginalized by society and harmful social norms and practices that inhibit the advancement of women and substantive equality persist. The COVID-19 pandemic added a layer of complexity to the context within which the CO was operating – creating a stressful environment with respect to mobilizing and re-programming resources to meet the immediate needs of the most marginalized, while aiming to ensure that the gains made are not lost in the medium and longer term.

The presentation of the preliminary CPE+A findings and discussion on the way forward took place with members of the Evaluation Reference Group in August 2020 and fed into the final recommendations presented below. The recommendations were reviewed by the Evaluation Management and Reference Groups and subsequent changes were integrated as appropriate. The bullet points below the recommendations represent potential key actions for consideration by the CO, based on feasibility within its current programme of work and available resources. Some of the suggested actions were already under way given the time lag between the issuance of the preliminary findings and the finalization of the report. The level of priority and suggested time frame for implementation are indicated below the recommendation. The feedback from the Evaluation Management and Reference Groups on factual errors in the evaluation report were tracked for transparency.

RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

CONCLUSION 1

The Country Office has been able to use various funding modalities including regional and global to grow its portfolio and enhance its partnerships, and these efforts are recognized as relevant in contributing to gender equality and women’s empowerment in Viet Nam. Yet, it has been challenging to mobilize resources in a middle-income country (MIC) with decreasing Official Development Assistance, despite the continuing need for dedicated investments and keeping GEWE as a priority in MIC context to ensure progress towards the sustainable development goals. A reduced operating space for development partners – COVID-19 and its economic effects may only further complicate this situation in the longer-term.

Based on findings

1-6, 13

- Current reliance on regional and global funds presents a risk to the sustainability of the office. Given these uncertainties, this is an opportune time for UN Women to determine its strategic vision for its small office presence in the region of Asia and Pacific, such as the CO, for the next four years. The vision should take into consideration reduced traditional funding options and assess possibility of new funding through different collaborations, e.g. high quality and relevant technical support to the government and other partners enabling gender-responsive investment in other sectors such as climate actions, sustainable development financing and others.
- Given the CO’s relatively small presence in Viet Nam compared with the need and potential scope of work to achieve GEWE, the CO would benefit from ensuring that it has the personnel skill set and stable human resourcing structure that it needs to deliver, measure and report on its strategic priorities. A lack of communication about the CO’s strategic vision and footprint in the country may weaken the CO’s relevance and reputation as a reliable partner and leading agency on GEWE. A challenge the CO is confronted with is to ensure sustainable longer-term funding for the programmatic approach to priority themes. Without strategic prioritization, the CO does not have the resources and skill set to address all the expectations, and proactively advocate and communicate on the advancement GEWE in Viet Nam. The sustainability of efforts at project level would also benefit from developing clear sustainability and exit strategies for projects to ensure smooth handover to government or the local community and to sustain the benefits of projects over the longer term. Regional and global programmes should also prioritize engagement at the country level during the design stage to ensure ownership and sustainability and to identify key risks.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and Country Office management, in consultation with Change Management in headquarters, to define a vision for the Country Office’s sustainability and footprint in the country for the next SN cycle, considering the external and internal context, particularly the impact and opportunities of COVID-19. Based on this vision the Country Office should conduct a functional analysis to review its office structure and necessary skill set to fulfil this vision.

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

JUNE 2021

Relevant to:

HQ, RO and CO
senior management,
programme and
operations

The following key actions can be considered by the RO and CO:

- In line with recommendations from the Regional Office Programme Presence Portfolio Evaluation and the Policy on Office Presence, ROAP should prioritize the whole of region mapping and clarify its vision for offices in the region, prioritizing those smaller field presences with uncertain financial sustainability, so that adequate resources can be invested to sustain offices deemed high priority.
- The Country Representative should monitor the resource mobilization strategy for effectiveness and amend both SN and resource mobilization targets, where applicable. The lessons learned from COVID-19 joint efforts in proposal submissions could be explored.

CONCLUSION 2

Gender-responsive programming and policy advocacy is needed in all areas and at a much larger and deeper scale to stimulate the type of change required for achieving gender equality in Viet Nam, but UN Women cannot do it alone. Due to funding challenges, the current Strategic Note was implemented through individual short-term projects without a coherent theory of change for umbrella programmes tying them together. The Country Office would benefit from the opportunity to consolidate and prioritize its areas of focus, so it is not spread too thinly. Revisiting its thematic areas of focus and having a more strategic integrated approach in line with local needs, national priorities and UN system work would help to ensure that the new Strategic Note is relevant, impactful and cost-effective. Moreover, technical expertise of partner agencies should be leveraged during its specific interventions and conversely the Country Office should advocate for its inclusion with appropriate resourcing as a gender subject matter expert in UN agency initiatives to ensure gender mainstreaming.

Based on findings

1-6, 13

- The CO efforts in the areas of EAW, DRR/M and CC and WEE all had important individual achievements. The CO made relevant contributions to advancing GEWE through its focus on normative and policy support to the government in implementing its international and national commitments. The CO was recognized by its stakeholders for its strong technical advice on mainstreaming gender and ensuring gender responsiveness of policies, including in areas such as CC that are traditionally gender blind. The CO strategy, through a grounded community-based approach attempting to demonstrate “what works” and long-term efforts to change social norms, coupled with upstream policy advice and advocacy, was highly relevant and with indications of emerging positive results. This approach was also recognized as necessary for maintaining credibility and accountability to the affected populations UN Women is meant to be serving.
- Nevertheless, partners saw room to clarify UN Women’s niche within the broad thematic areas to ensure clarity on the CO’s vision and that UN Women has the capacity to deliver. Both UN Women personnel and stakeholders identified opportunities for the CO to continue working closely with the Government of Viet Nam and partners in response to COVID-19 to support gender-responsive economic recovery, and identified a niche for the CO to provide insights on the pandemic’s impact on ethnic minority women and girls. They also identified the window of opportunity with respect to influencing women’s participation and leadership in the upcoming change to party members at all levels of the government.

- Nevertheless, several partners were working in these areas, including the government, with budgets that dwarf the CO's programme size.
- This situation points towards the need to re-think the best strategy to utilize limited personnel and financial resources to influence these efforts and ensure that UN Women's technical expertise is leveraged. For a multiplier effect, the CO's approach to programming should be more integrated and strategic: projects and programmes should be more interlinked under a thematic umbrella, with clear ToCs and a longer-term vision for how the different efforts will contribute to the whole theme, with clarity on how the collective efforts of partners will contribute to overall GEWE progress.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Country Office should prioritize the thematic areas and the related activities with a view to building a coherent theory of change, identifying possible areas of duplication with development partners, and leveraging partners expertise. This should be done through the Strategic Note, with the aim of advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) priority areas and within the context of Middle Income Countries and COVID-19 to ensure that the Strategic Note is relevant, impactful and cost-effective.

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

JUNE 2021

Relevant to: RO and CO senior management and programme teams, and UN RCO

- Based on the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and Country Gender Profile identify UN Women's strategic and targeted contributions within the UNSDCF and in line with UN Women's Strategic Plan, to ensure that the SN is relevant, impactful and cost-effective.
- Map UN Women's strategic partners, their expectations and UN Women's comparative advantages and identify UN Women's strategic and targeted contributions foreseen within the selected priority thematic areas to avoid spreading the CO's efforts and resources too thinly and to avoid duplication of efforts. Engage in discussions around the SN with key stakeholders as a means of confirming UN Women's strategic footprint in the country.
- Undertake a prioritization exercise, including mapping of all activities, including those that are not directly linked with a project and identify possible areas of duplication with development partners, including cross-cutting issues (e.g. ethnic minorities, child marriage, youth engagement) and identify which to strengthen/prioritize and which to discontinue or step-back from.
- Wherever possible, leverage UN system partners with expertise in the key thematic areas and established partnerships where UN Women has less long-standing technical expertise and begin considering and assessing value for money (to ensure that limited resources have the most impact possible) and their potential for transformative change in gender norms of the projects focused on the individual/household level and their sustainability.
- There is a need to ensure a clear linkage between the SN, AWP's and projects from regional and headquarters funding to be able to demonstrate an impact and UN Women's footprint in the country.
- Ensure that a "silo" approach in the CO is avoided during the formulation and implementation of new projects and programmes within the same thematic priority, to contribute to holistic and longer impact interventions.
- Design new projects and programmes with a view to UN Women's integrated mandate aiming at operational, normative and coordination outputs.
- Keep UN partners informed of upcoming and continuing UN Women's work, to allow for potential synergies and co-financing of development work.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

CONCLUSION 3

The Country Office's work was in line with the Leaving No One Behind principle: the Country Office's efforts directly supported knowledge and evidence generation on underrepresented groups; inclusion of gender into policies on HIV/AIDS, ethnic minorities and women migrants; and engagement of youth and LGBTIQ persons as Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment champions. Nevertheless, in terms of community-level interventions, UN Women's work did not always provide evidence of reaching those most in need and addressing underlying causes of gender inequality. Prioritizing efforts to change informal norms and exclusionary practices and measure social norm change along with enhanced practices related to engaging rights holders will be required to ensure progress.

Based on findings

12, 13

- The CO's work was in line with its ToC, namely focusing on empowering women to become agents of economic growth, disaster risk management and adaptation to climate change, and contributing to women and girls' lives free from all forms of violence. To enable transformative change, enhanced strategic level interventions are needed coupled with advocacy and communications aimed at countering negative social norms, in cooperation with UN, other development partners and civil society actors.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Building on the existing plans of the UN system and development partners for strengthening synergies and coordinating efforts to leave no one behind, the Country Office should prioritize the needs of the most disadvantaged groups of populations through timely and participatory engagement of rights holders and duty bearers in project design, monitoring and reporting (i.e. in needs analysis, target group selection and validation, feasibility assessment and value for money analysis). The Country Office should also strengthen its analysis and data collection of intersecting forms of inequality and its approach for measuring social norm change, including through its partners.

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

JUNE 2021

Relevant to:

senior management,
programme personnel,
RO and headquarters

The following key actions can be considered by the CO:

- Starting from the concept note stage to project closure, ensure application of a cross-cutting gender equality and human rights-based approach. The Country Representative to devise a process where needs assessment, feasibility of interventions, value-for-money analysis and sustainability of the project's benefits are conducted at the design/inception stage and are monitored during implementation. Results frameworks should contain indicators, baselines and targets, disaggregated by age, sex, types of vulnerability, ethnicity, etc.
 - Clearly outline in project design who are the most marginalized in society and in vulnerable situations and continue to ensure that the inception phase allows UN Women to directly reach and hear their voices and more clearly document how the CO is consulting directly with these groups or validating data provided by the partners to ensure their voices are heard rather than relying solely on implementing partners and ensure data based on monitoring demonstrates who the CO is reaching.
 - Clearly define which target groups the CO will prioritize and in coordination with development partners identify how to strategically engage and collectively tackle the issues. In this vein, work in support of ethnic minorities should be continued, but should more clearly leverage the broader efforts of the UN system and those initiated by other development partners.

- Assess value for money, including a cost–benefit analysis of interventions with the aim of reaching the maximum number of vulnerable beneficiaries with the limited funds available.
- As part of an integrated M&E framework (ref: recommendation 6), articulate an approach for measuring UN Women contributions to social norm change through combined quantitative and qualitative methods that look across UN Women efforts.
- The CO should support partners’ capacity development to identify, empower vulnerable target groups and report on those being reached, as well as in the collection and disaggregation of data and its validation, as well as other areas. Engage civil society and rights holders in project formulation, M&E and reporting.
- Increase engagement of persons with disabilities and those who experience multiple forms of discrimination, into programming, both at project and SN level.

UN SYSTEM COHERENCE

CONCLUSION 4

The Country Office has proactively led UN system efforts to mainstream gender. The Country Office’s ability to leverage networks and reach and amplify the voices of diverse groups representing the most marginalized in society is UN Women’s added value within the context of the UN system in Viet Nam. Recognizing that coordination requires the collective and collaborative engagement of all actors, there are opportunities for both strengthening UN Women’s role in coordination and advocating for integrated gender responsiveness of the United Nations and Government of Viet Nam One Strategic Plan.

Based on findings

4, 7-9, 10, 11

- The CO’s strength has been its issue-based advocacy efforts conducted in coordination with development partner leaders and a broad base of stakeholders, and often behind the scenes, which led to key achievements for women and girls. The CO also contributed to strengthening accountability of the UN system for delivering on gender through the establishment of the Gender Marker and related capacity building support. UN Women’s partners suggested that the CO leverage its coordination mandate to strategically lead on GEWE given that areas of work exist where agencies are not adequately coordinating, affecting the UN system’s ability to maximize coherence and synergies across joint programming efforts in GEWE. The coordination groups where UN Women is leading or co/leading require streamlining and the strategic management of these groups require enhancing.

RECOMMENDATION 4

In line with UN reform, under the Resident Coordinator’s overall guidance, the Country Office to

- **Leverage its mandate for UN system coordination for GEWE and urge for integration, coherence and synergies between UN system actors to further amplify impact.**
- **Develop a Country Office coordination strategy and success indicators that are regularly measured, consolidating key stakeholders’ expectations and addressing potential overlaps between different existing forums to ensure that coordination mechanisms are leveraged for strategic issues.**
- **Within the context of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework planning process, advocate for a dedicated gender outcome and gender responsive indicators across the next UN–Government One Strategic Plan for Viet Nam and a review of the coordination architecture to ensure coherence of results and working groups.**

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

SEPTEMBER 2021

Relevant to:
senior management,
programme and
coordination
personnel, UN RCO

The following key actions can be considered by the CO:

- Within the context of the new UNSDCF planning process, advocate for a dedicated gender outcome in the next OSP and a review of the coordination architecture to ensure streamlined results and working groups.
- Coordination groups:
 - GTG: Identify strategic issues that the UN system can advocate for collectively and devise the workplan around these issues rather than solely focused on internal capacity building and sharing of experience. Clarify UN Women's role in leading the plan of action on the UNCT Scorecard to address the outstanding recommendations by the next assessment and show progress. Advocate for more senior-level participation in the GTG and/or a standing agenda item on UNCT/PMT meetings to ensure senior managers' attention.
 - Recognizing that the GAP is led in partnership with the National Committee for the Advancement of Women, the CO can suggest that a review is conducted to measure progress on implementation of the recommendations and assess the future direction of the partnership. This would allow for its strategic refocusing beyond sharing of information to identification of key issues for GEWE and how to tackle these collectively.
 - Review CO staffing arrangements and attendance in results groups / leveraging the GTG focal points more effectively.
 - As a member of the UN GTG and other inter-agency and development actors' forums, engage civil society and academia, advocate for prioritization of gender in all areas of work, including in a post-COVID-19 context, and allocate responsibilities accordingly.
- At the policy and normative level, UN Women, together with the government and other development stakeholders, should continue the approach of the ambassadors group to focus on a set of laws and policies that would bring about transformative changes in GEWE.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

CONCLUSION 5

UN Women's ability to engage with civil society and strategic partners has enabled it to remain relevant and enhanced its reach, yet efforts have remained without a strategic focus on how to leverage and more effectively build partners' capacities in a long term.

Based on findings

1, 7, 8, 10, 12

- As a core strategy for implementation, capacity building requires a coherent, long-term, and strategic approach to ensure cost-effective and sustainable efforts. An overarching capacity development plan for the CO's strategic partners would lead to more sustainable results, increased national ownership and better value for money in terms of the funds invested in capacity development across projects. Integrating and systematic tracking of results from capacity building would help to ensure the CO's efforts are cost-effective and impactful.
- For capacity development to be tangible and sustainable, implementation of four steps is necessary: diagnosis, design, delivery and follow-up. The CO could also diversify its programme partner base by mapping key actors and undertaking more active engagement: most projects reviewed had the same partners, which creates dependency on the partner's capacity and effectiveness to implement the interventions. Moreover, opportunities are lost to reach and build the capacities of other potential partners involved in GEWE.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

The Country Office should establish an integrated strategic partnership and capacity building approach based on its thematic priorities and programmes:

- **Integrate work across thematic areas, projects (horizontally) and different levels of the partner organization (rather than on a siloed project basis), consolidating established partnership principles and building upon existing efforts. The strategy should specify how the Country Office will specifically engage in strengthening civil society through its convening role and platform which offers a bridge between civil society and the government on issues related to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.**
- **Develop a capacity building strategy for those strategic partners with performance indicators so that its cost-effectiveness can be measured over time. This strategy should be based on principles for capacity building, partner needs/capacity assessment, followed by an implementation plan with measurable indicators and collaborative review.**

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

SEPTEMBER 2021

Relevant to:

senior management,
programme and
operations personnel,
RO and headquarters

The following key actions can be considered by the CO:

- Develop a partnership management approach and framework:
 - Mapping of all partners, including CSOs, and existing areas of focus to identify synergies.
 - With current partners, collectively take stock of activities and priorities and identify ways of working to ensure streamlined and efficient processes, particularly with respect to capacity development, and develop meaningful indicators that can demonstrate the achievements of the partnerships (e.g. follow the approach taken with the MOLISA / DFAT partnership).
 - Develop a strategy which offers the CO’s convening role and platform to CSOs to provide a bridge between civil society and the government on issues related to GEWE. Provide strategic direction and institutionalize the CO’s relations with civil society through regular forums, especially with women’s organizations, and continue to engage them in normative processes, such as CEDAW commitments.
- In the capacity development area, identify needs of CO partners in gender equality and human rights knowledge, among other areas, and develop a capacity building plan with a respective M&E framework. Partners’ capacity in reporting on and empowering marginalized target groups should be strengthened in addition to continuing support to other national partners in the development and improvement of disaggregated data collection and validation. Headquarters and RO expertise should be drawn on as appropriate.

EFFICIENCY**CONCLUSION 6**

The impact of the field programme could be enhanced by systematically improving data collection, validation and reporting, focusing on results and milestones, and prioritization and control of key risks and opportunities in its project management and operations.

Based on findings

14-17

- The office could benefit from a dedicated monitoring and evaluation resource to systematically design solid results frameworks at the project design stage and collect and report result-focused evidence against those results frameworks. Systematic measurement of results and reporting would contribute to demonstrating a stronger impact and, accordingly, adjust programmes based on lessons learned. Moreover, using it as a tool for partnership development and resource mobilization represents another benefit, as the CO would be able to showcase the impact of its work in Viet Nam through results-focused reporting.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Country Office should strengthen its Results Based Management practices, and identification, prioritization and control of key risks and opportunities in its project management and operations.

- Develop an integrated M&E framework consolidating strategic priorities and annual workplans cascading into project and partners results frameworks and consolidate efforts of all relevant stakeholders involved in monitoring. During planning/inception phase conduct a needs assessment, feasibility analysis of interventions, value-for-money analysis and provide for the sustainability of Country Office initiatives (including projects, communications, and coordination efforts) and regularly monitor these aspects during implementation.
- Ensure that data in the reports is independently validated from those who collect those data, including validation on a sample of reached beneficiaries compared to targeted ones. Establish a knowledge management system that captures monitoring, evaluation, and reporting information in a systematized manner to facilitate learning both internally and externally.
- Depending on available resources (budgeted and pooled from different projects), consider establishing a dedicated M&E post. If not available, the monitoring function could be shared between project managers with monitoring and data validations protocols and training. The Monitoring and Reporting Officer from Regional Office could provide technical support in establishing this.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

SEPTEMBER 2021

Relevant to:

senior management,
programme and
operations personnel,
RO and headquarters

The following key actions can be considered by the CO:

- During the planning/inception phase, conduct a needs assessment, feasibility analysis of interventions, value-for-money analysis and assess the sustainability of the project's benefits and regularly monitor these aspects during implementation. This process should ensure that the CO validates that the targeted beneficiaries were reached.
- Agree with supranational project managers on the CO's earlier involvement in project design, so the CO has a chance to incorporate the projects into its thematic priorities.
- Accelerate the progress to be reported against OEEF indicators, validating the data.
- Establish a knowledge management system to facilitate sharing of good practices.

CONCLUSION 7

An effective and efficient Operations team complements field programme / projects through the timely acquisition of key human resources and programme supplies necessary to deliver programme activities. The Country Office was proactive in managing procurement and travel by taking advantage of the long-term agreements in place between the UN and suppliers for most of its procurement and travel needs. There is still a need for better coordination between Operations and Programme teams to properly align the Country Office's priorities and effectively plan for human resource, procurement and programme-specific requirements.

- Adequate planning and proactively implementing the plan, supported by timely and effective ToR / specifications with key deliverables and performance indicators, would help in achieving cost effectiveness. This would also ensure timely procurement of both human and programmatic inputs and the measurement of service provider performance against an agreed set of quality standards. The CO would also benefit from keeping cost consciousness as a key consideration for all its travel needs

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Country Office should strengthen its risk management and controls in key operational areas to ensure cost-effectiveness and to avoid unnecessary delays in implementation. In particular:

- **Strengthen its management of consultant recruitment by designing clear Terms of Reference with well-defined deliverables, timely recruiting and managing performance, and by ensuring competition, transparency, and fairness.**
- **Proactively use procurement plans to ensure timely procurement, justifying significant deviations from planned procurement actions.**
- **Ensure that field travels are consolidated and limited to necessary ones focusing on results and demonstrating cost-consciousness**
- **Creating a network and/or roster of potential partners for future competitive selection.**

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

SEPTEMBER 2021

Relevant to:

*senior management,
programme and
operations personnel,
RO and headquarters*

The following key actions can be considered by the CO:

- Ensure that consultancy recruitment is completed in a timely manner and justified should delays occur. Adequate planning should be introduced to facilitate the effective and efficient hiring of required personnel.
- Establish a mechanism that will encourage healthy competition and enhance fairness and transparency in the recruitment of consultants.
- Confirm that submitted clearances by hired government officials are written on the official letterhead of the government agency concerned and are signed either by the Head of Human Resources or the head of the agency.
- Build a roster of appropriately vetted consultants, including those endorsed by other UN agencies, which can be hired for new contracts instead of issuing contracts to consultants already working on other projects.
- Enhance the quality control on ToR to ensure they are concise, with SMART KPIs and are objectively used as the basis to evaluate consultant performance.
- Ensure that the procurement plan is aligned with project workplans and can be used on a three-month rolling basis to allow for timely updates or changes.
- Hold programme managers accountable for significant deviation from the procurement plan resulting in budget overruns.

Produced by the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service of UN Women (IEAS)

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**UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION
DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY
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GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND
GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED
TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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