



UNITED NATIONS
VIET NAM



VIET NAM COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS

2024 UPDATE

Hanoi, Viet Nam

November 2024

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the Government of Viet Nam, represented by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), are committed to implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022–2026 (Cooperation Framework or CF) to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In alignment with Viet Nam’s Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2021–2030 and Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021–2025, the Cooperation Framework was developed based on a comprehensive and thorough Common Country Analysis (CCA) prepared in 2021.

The CCA is the UN’s integrated, forward-looking and evidence-based analysis of the country’s context for sustainable development. In accordance with Cooperation Framework guidance, the CCA must be updated periodically, as deemed necessary by the UNCT. To inform strategic planning and programming of the UN system, the CCA is updated to reflect the evolving context of sustainable development and emerging challenges in Viet Nam.

This CCA update was prepared using a “light approach” – building upon the comprehensive CCA 2021, UN annual results reports and other knowledge products of the UN system. This 2024 CCA update should not be treated as a standalone CCA. Instead, it should be read alongside the 2021 CCA that serves as a baseline. To enable a smooth transition between evidence generation and strategic planning, this CCA update is structured in line with the four main outcomes of the Cooperation Framework, alongside a main section capturing major trends, cross-cutting issues and emerging challenges.

The update primarily focuses on developments, trends and prospects related to each thematic topic listed under each Cooperation Framework outcome. This may include changes in Viet Nam’s performance across development indicators (multidimensional poverty rate, informal employment rate, unemployment rate, social insurance coverage, for example), new or amended legislation and policies as well as major national events.

As such, this CCA iteration provides up-to-date descriptions and analyses of and insights into the sustainable development context in Viet Nam. Together, it will help underpin the collective efforts of the UN system in strategic planning and implementation of development programming, policy advocacy and outreach, and other interventions towards accelerating achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

Key Highlights and Cross-Cutting Topics

Commitment to sustainable development

- The President of Viet Nam led a high-level delegation to the Summit of the Future and the 79th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in September 2024. In his speech to the UNGA, the State President emphasized the necessity to “adopt innovative thinking to build a transformative future across all sectors, focusing on digital transformation, green transition, and global governance transformation. Green transition and digital transformation are essential tools for countries, especially developing ones, to build resilience and self-reliance, enabling a timely and active prevention of and response to shocks, crises and potential disasters. We must also prioritize reforming multilateral mechanisms, especially the UN system and international financial and monetary institutions, to ensure better representation, equity and transparency. Enhancing their capability, effectiveness, and future readiness is essential for remaining relevant in our changing world.”¹
- In 2023, with presentation of the second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the High-Level Political Forum in New York, Viet Nam also prepared the National Commitments to SDG Transformation for the SDG Summit. Viet Nam is committed to accelerating efforts towards achievement of the SDGs as well as poverty and inequality reduction through strengthening of institutional frameworks and implementation of major transitions to leave no one behind. Following the VNR recommendations, the government reviewed implementation of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, enhanced institutional arrangements for SDG implementation – including reforming the National Council for Sustainable Development, refined the set of Viet Nam SDG indicators including data availability and created an online platform for data sharing and SDG monitoring and reporting.

Recent economic performance

- In September 2024, northern Viet Nam, particularly the northern mountainous region, was hit by Typhoon Yagi, with 321 deaths and estimated damage of VND81.5 trillion (US\$3.3 billion).² It threatened to chip away 0.15 percentage point from GDP growth in 2024.³ The devastating impacts, including on employment and livelihoods in impacted areas, underline the importance of enhancing climate resilience, early warning systems and disaster risk reduction.
- Viet Nam has shown remarkable resilience with a robust recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by 8 per cent in 2022, but growth slowed to 5 per cent in 2023 due to softening exports and turbulence in the property market.⁴ Exports staged a recovery at the end of the year, which carried into 2024, to brighten growth prospects for 2024. GDP growth is likely to exceed 6 per cent for 2024, propelled by exports, foreign direct investment and domestic credit growth.⁵ Increased levels of public investment and a large public sector wage rise will support domestic demand growth. Risks to the recovery include continued instability in the real estate market and high levels of non-performing loans.
- Inflation in 2023 was recorded at 3.25 per cent, but held steady in 2024 despite rising food prices.⁶ The State Bank of Viet Nam (SBV) expects the inflation to stay below the target of 4.5 per cent in 2024. Stable prices have allowed for a relaxation of monetary policy, which will support growth, but could unsettle foreign exchange markets. The local currency, the Vietnamese Dong, reached an historic low of 25,500 against the U.S. dollar in June 2024, but has since staged a recovery before dropping to around VND 25,400 per US dollar again since October.
- In past decades, Viet Nam has demonstrated stable unemployment and a resilient labour market. It recorded low unemployment rates of 2.28 per cent in 2023 and 2.27 per cent in the first half of

2024.⁷ Overall, in the first six months of 2024, the average income of workers was VND7.5 million per month, an increase of 7.4 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2023.⁸ However, informal employment remains pervasive and accounted for 65.1 per cent of all employment in 2023.⁹

- A new Law on Credit Institutions was approved in 2024 to tighten regulations on domestic and foreign banks and reduce financial instability risks. The law includes provisions on management of non-performing loans and introduces safeguards to prevent related party lending.

Major political developments

- Viet Nam has experienced significant political developments in the past two years. With the passing of General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong in July 2024, the position was filled by Mr. To Lam, the former Minister of Public Security. Mr. To Lam also held the position of State President from May to July, when his predecessor resigned in the midst of corruption allegations. The current State President, Mr. Luong Cuong, was elected by the National Assembly in October 2024. The current Chair of the National Assembly, Mr. Tran Thanh Man, has held the position since May 2024 following the resignation of the former chair. Despite changes in the country's top leadership, Viet Nam remains committed to promoting high economic growth, attracting foreign investment and fostering industrial upgrades and innovation.
- Since 2022, Viet Nam has sustained a high-profile anti-corruption campaign. This has led to investigations of numerous State officials, including high-ranking ones. The campaign has received mixed reactions from the public, with some viewing it as a crucial effort to improve effectiveness and accountability, while others consider it as politically motivated purges ahead of the Party Congress in 2026. While maintaining political and social stability, the campaign has instilled an overcautious atmosphere within the public sector, resulting in bureaucratic delays and slow public service delivery.
- The government has committed to reducing the number of government personnel and improving government system efficiency (Decree 29/2023 issued by Ministry of Home Affairs). Government agencies at national and subnational levels are instructed to reduce agency headcounts by 10 per cent by 2030. Provinces and cities are to consider merging administrative units to reduce staff cost burdens and improve operational efficiency. Whereas this commitment is applaudable, how it is implemented by different localities could have potentially adverse impacts on public services, especially at community level.

Key legal and regulatory developments

- The Law on Land was amended in 2024 to expand the scope of land use rights, introduce additional requirements for land expropriation and compensation, and increase transparency around land valuations. The law also requires formulation of land use development plans at national and local levels.
- The new Law on Housing, recently been adopted, is a vital instrument to promote development of affordable housing and social housing projects and provide housing subsidies for low-income households to deliver increased volumes appropriate housing.
- The Law on Public Investment is undergoing amendment with the goal of decentralizing and delegating power associated with reducing administrative procedures, promoting responsible leadership, and diversifying project management and implementation for projects using ODA and concessional loans from foreign donors.¹⁰
- In 2020, the Prime Minister's Decision No.402/QĐ-TTg on Implementation Plan of the United Nations' Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, demonstrated Viet Nam's commitment to the identification, reduction, and protection of stateless persons and eventual

accession to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness. In July 2024, the 2023 Law on Identification took effect, superseding the 2014 Law on Citizen Identification and allowing all individuals of undetermined nationality to obtain identity documents in Viet Nam.

- Other legal and regulatory developments are elaborated in relevant sections of this CCA update, including social, environmental, economic and governance updates.

Demographic shifts

- Similar to regional peers, Viet Nam's population is undergoing profound changes in demographic structure, with a transition from high to lower birth and mortality rates. That means people live healthier and longer – that is notable development progress. The change in population structure has substantial economic consequences, presenting opportunities and challenges for development and requiring comprehensive and agile policy interventions.
- Total fertility rates in Viet Nam have nearly halved from 3.80 children per woman in 1989 to 2.09 in 2019¹¹ and 1.95 in 2023.¹² Low fertility is not a temporary phenomenon, but a new reality for Viet Nam. It is now heavily influenced by personal reproductive choices shaped by wider economic and social contexts, gender-related evolutions, marriage, parenting, care work and working life. Efforts are needed to shift the narrative around declining fertility to focus more on promoting demographic resilience and reducing barriers to parenthood.
- The National Transfer Account (NTA) analysis conducted by GSO and UNFPA in 2023 revealed that people aged 15–64 years accounted for 67.4 per cent of the total population, while those aged under 15 years and aged 65 years and above comprised 24.1 and 8.5 per cent, respectively. With such a demographic structure, Viet Nam is currently in the "window of demographic dividend," where each dependent person is supported by two individuals in the working-age group. This window is projected to last until 2039.¹³ Therefore, policies to capitalize on the window of demographic dividend – especially those related to creation of decent employment, skills development and social security extension – are crucial and need to be consistently implemented to reap economic gain and social harmony.
- Meanwhile, the proportion of older population (aged 60 years and above) has increased rapidly, from 10.1 per cent in 2011 to 14.3 per cent in 2023. It is projected that Viet Nam will experience a transition from an "ageing" to an "aged" society (with 20 per cent of the population aged more than 60 years) by 2036. By 2061, the proportion of people aged more than 60 years is forecasted to occupy 30 per cent of the total population (equivalent to 31.78 million people), with Viet Nam defined as a super-aged society.¹⁴
- While Viet Nam's rapid population ageing offers a significant opportunity for socio-economic development such as the care economy for older persons, it requires informed policy choices to meet individual needs of a growing older population in terms of healthcare and social assistance. This trend also has a significant impact on women's labour force participation as the aged care system still relies heavily on informal carers – mostly women. Without better recognition and redistribution of caregiving duties within households and communities, women's socio-economic opportunities and civic participation will be affected. In this context, offering affordable alternatives to home-based care and strengthening healthcare systems and social protection programmes are vitally important.
- Poor health and disability are common issues facing older persons in Viet Nam. Nearly 45 per cent of older persons face at least one difficulty in daily living activities, while most (90 per cent) want to receive care at home.¹⁵ The study also showed that more than 60 per cent of older persons have chronic diseases that require long-term care services and medical treatment. The need for comprehensive care of older persons is increasing in terms of infrastructure and human resources such as social, medical and caregiving workers. Currently, almost all older persons (99.91 per cent)

live at home, with long-term care primarily provided by family members. Only a tiny share of older persons (0.083 per cent) are cared for by institution-based care services. The community-based care system is limited and highly fragmented. Given a rapidly aging population, a comprehensive and integrated care system for older persons is critical.

- The National Transfer Account analysis also revealed that the total economic life-cycle deficit of the population in 2022 was VND364.6 trillion, equivalent to 3.8 per cent of GDP. The average economic life-cycle deficit per person was VND3.7 million. People aged 0–21 years and 54 years and above are considered the demographic groups with economic life-cycle deficits, while those aged 22–53 years generate an economic life-cycle surplus, whereby total labour income exceeds total consumption. With an average life expectancy of 73.6 years, Vietnamese citizens have approximately 31 years (aged 22–53 years) to generate an "economic life-cycle surplus" and 42 years to experience an economic life-cycle deficit. As the population is ageing rapidly, the number of people aged 60 years and above will increase significantly, constituting a larger dependent population. This could lead to greater deficit if the economic life-cycle remains unchanged.

Key Updates on Inclusive Social Development

Multidimensional poverty declined, but is unevenly distributed

- Despite the socio-economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, Viet Nam continues to make poverty reduction progress. While the multidimensional poverty has declined significantly from 9.2 per cent in 2019 to 3.2 per cent in 2023¹⁶, poverty reduction is uneven across population groups and regions. High levels of chronic poverty persist among ethnic minorities, especially children and older persons, persons with disabilities and non-registered migrants. Despite accounting for just 15 per cent of the population, ethnic minorities comprise more than 50 per cent of the country's poor. While the multi-dimensional poverty rate was 9.35 per cent in 2022, the average poverty rate for ethnic minorities was 35.5 per cent.¹⁷ Poverty gaps between different regions and population groups have not narrowed and require a more effective, comprehensive and synchronous system of policies and interventions.
- A high proportion of the population remains just above the poverty line. Almost 75 per cent of the population are in the near-poor and lower-middle income groups.¹⁸ New forms of urban poverty have emerged among migrants and informal workers, due to rapid urbanization and social changes.¹⁹ Nearly 11 per cent of children suffered from multi-dimensional poverty in 2022.²⁰ This was mainly concentrated in ethnic minority children (33.1 per cent in 2022) and those aged 0–4 years.²¹
- Since 2021, Viet Nam has implemented three National Target Programmes (NTPs): for Sustainable Poverty Reduction, for Building New Rural Areas and for Improving Living Standards for Minorities and Mountainous Areas. The three NTPs aim to: (a) gradually narrow gaps in living standards and average incomes of regions, compared to the national average, (b) support poor and vulnerable households to rise above the minimum standards of living, (c) provide access to basic social services according to the national multidimensional poverty line and (d) improve people's quality of life. By March 2024, disbursement of investment capital was 83 per cent of the plan, while non-investment capital reached 36.3 per cent.²² Whereas the NTPs are anticipated to reduce poverty and improve living standards, especially among vulnerable groups, their impacts have not been fully assessed due to limited data availability.

Social protection system was strengthened

- In November 2023, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Viet Nam endorsed the new Party Resolution 42-NQ/TW on reforming social policies for 2023–2030, with a vision to 2045. This resolution outlines a strategic direction for establishing a comprehensive social policy framework in Viet Nam, aiming for universal coverage in social protection and increased linkages between social protection and employment policies. Emphasis is placed on addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and older persons.
- In line with Resolution 42, the amended Social Insurance Law adopted by the National Assembly on 29 June 2024 will come into effect in July 2025. The law is expected to strengthen the social protection system, enhance linkages between social insurance and social assistance programmes and move towards universal coverage, especially for vulnerable groups. This will likely have positive impacts on women's access to social insurance, with seven new provisions to address gender issues in coverage extension, retirement pensions, lump-sum withdrawals, and proposed voluntary social insurance expansion focused on maternity benefits.

- Meanwhile, the government adopted Decree No.76/2024/ND-CP stipulating that, from 1 July 2024, the standard minimum social assistance benefit would climb from VND360,000/month to VND500,000/month, representing a 39 per cent increase in value of all non-contributory benefits.²³ In the long term, the government plans to develop and enact the Law on Social Assistance. This will be essential for advocating for a social protection floor to ensure adequate living standards for vulnerable groups.
- Social health insurance coverage reached 93.35 per cent by the end of 2023, according to data from Viet Nam Social Security (VSS), with 18.26 million workers enrolled in social insurance, representing 39 per cent of the working age population.
- By the end of 2023, 3.7 million vulnerable people received social assistance benefits.²⁴ To widen social inclusion coverage of people with disabilities, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs issued a decision to launch the Master Plan for implementation of Assistance Programme for People with Disabilities for 2021–2030.
- The social assistance and pensions coverage for older persons remains low. By the end of 2023, only 0.95 per cent of persons aged 60–79 years and 16 per cent of those aged 80 years and above receive monthly social assistance, while 83 per cent are not recipients of any social benefits.²⁵ In terms of pensions, only 37 per cent of the working age population contribute: 34 per cent to mandatory schemes and 3 per cent to voluntary ones. Currently, 76 per cent of eligible citizens do not receive any type of pension, while 16.7 per cent access contributory pensions and 7.3 per cent have social pensions.

Steps forward in education, but vulnerable groups still lag

- Viet Nam has achieved positive results in implementation of SDG4 (quality education). Net enrolment rates at all levels from pre-school to upper secondary school increased during 2016–2020, despite a slight drop during the pandemic.²⁶ The rate of trained employed workers aged 15 years and above climbed from 20.4 per cent in 2015 to 26.2 per cent in 2022 (males 28.7 per cent and females 23.6 per cent).²⁷
- Viet Nam has strived to enhance education and training development, especially through the nationwide policy of waiving tuition fees for preschool and primary school children in ethnic minority populated, disadvantaged and mountainous areas as well as islands.
- According to VNR 2023, the Gender Parity Index has reached an ideal level for primary and lower secondary schools. As of 2022, all schools had delivered basic education programmes on sex, violence and abuse prevention, and HIV-related knowledge.
- The proportion of children under-five years appropriately developed in terms of health, learning and psychosocial wellbeing is still modest, with significant gaps between different ethnic groups. A low percentage of teachers meet training standards or higher as required by the Education Law in 2019.
- The percentage of schools with basic conditions and services to serve learning needs of all children, including with disabilities, remains low.²⁸
- While Viet Nam has achieved success in increasing access to basic education, in contrast vocational, technical and university-level education remains underdeveloped. This results in a shortage of skills required to achieve national transformation into a digital and green economy. Investments are necessary to strengthen digital education at all levels and equip the country's workforce with skills to develop a digital and green economy. Reforming Viet Nam's technical and vocational training system remains a key priority.
- According to UNESCAP, Viet Nam needs to invest 0.5 per cent of GDP annually between 2021–2030 to achieve SDG4 by 2030.²⁹

Improved health care, yet more efforts required for vulnerable groups

- Viet Nam has made encouraging steps in the health arena. Alongside a strengthened health system, there has been a significant decrease in maternal mortality rates (88/100,000 live births in 2000 to 46/100,000 live births in 2020)³⁰, under-five child mortality rates (30/1,000 live births in 2000 to 20/1,000 live births in year 2020)³¹, impressive reductions in transmission of HIV (11,000 in 2015 to 6,100 in 2023)³² and malaria (9,331 in 2010 to 412 in 2022)³³, while 93.35 per cent of people now have social health insurance.³⁴ Overall, service coverage (a component of Universal Health Coverage [UHC]) increased from 60 to 68 per cent in the past decade, although coverage of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension remain low (30 per cent). The current average life expectancy is 74.5 years (72.1 years for men and 77.2 years for women), an increase of 15 years over the past few decades.³⁵
- In contrast, the maternal mortality ratio remains as high at 100–150 per 100,000 live births in mountainous and ethnic minority-populated regions, particularly in Northern Midlands and Mountains, and Central Highlands. At a national level, the percentages of women receiving at least four antenatal care visits and healthcare facility-based delivery were 88.2 and 96.3 per cent, respectively. In contrast, these percentages are just 10.6 and 37 per cent for the Hmong ethnic group.³⁶
- The country is undergoing a transition in its health burden, from communicable to non-communicable diseases. NCDs now account for 80 per cent of the total disease burden.³⁷ Societal changes due to urbanization and ageing result in health inequities. In addition, health impacts triggered by climate change, such as altering infectious disease patterns and their (re)emergence, are likely to intensify.
- To address NCD risk factors, a circular was released in late 2023 requiring food products to include labelling of ingredients, notably salt. This represents a major step forward for more transparent labelling and ensuring informed public choices. Furthermore, in early 2024, the Ministry of Health issued recommendations on maximum salt levels for pre-packaged foods such as fish, fish sauce, processed meat and salty snacks to further reduce uninformed consumption.
- Primary healthcare capacities are being optimized to include more services, such as screening and management of NCDs. In specific intervention settings, increases in NCD service availability and accessibility has led to substantial increases in patient footfall resulting in 20 per cent more patients having controlled blood pressure and 56 per cent more patients having controlled blood sugar levels.³⁸ Similarly, extending primary health services through community outreach has also led to increased access, acceptability and uptake of services, especially for cases of HIV, Hepatitis and Syphilis through strong collaboration with provincial administrative and health authorities together with local community-based organizations. Notwithstanding, wider expansion of primary healthcare services is needed through strengthening related legislation governing primary health care services and reorienting resource allocation.
- Viet Nam is currently experiencing a large-scale outbreak of measles, underlining a highly contagious disease that can cause severe illness and death in young children. There are also worrying signals of potential resurgence of other vaccine-preventable diseases. While immunization coverage has improved since the pandemic, it remains below pre-pandemic levels, particularly due to interrupted vaccine supplies in late 2022 and 2023. Efforts have focused on securing supply of vaccines and recovering immunization coverage and preventing immunization backsliding across the country, including hard-to-reach areas and vulnerable populations.
- Addressing health risks due to air, water and soil pollution as well as plastics is critical to ensure people's health. About half of healthcare facilities in Viet Nam cannot rely on the quality or

quantity of water they need. Furthermore, climate change is set to worsen water scarcity and quality.

- In March 2024, Viet Nam confirmed its first human death from H5N1 avian influenza in 10 years, followed by the first human infection of avian influenza subtype H9N2 in April 2024. Since early 2024, three Cambodian provinces bordering Viet Nam reported nine human cases of H5N1 avian influenza, one of which was fatal. Recent outbreaks underscore the transnational nature of public health threats, requiring contingency strategies, particularly at points of entry with neighbouring nations. In August 2024, the General Department of Preventive Medicine (Viet Nam) and Communicable Disease Control Department (Cambodia), from each country's respective Ministry of Health held their first bilateral workshop in over a decade to review the 2006 Border Health Quarantine Agreement signed between the two governments.³⁹
- Through its COVID-19 response, Viet Nam strengthened surveillance capacities across infectious diseases, their treatment and management, laboratory diagnostics, and increased investment in domestic production capacity of medicines and medical products. For the latter, support is being provided to Viet Nam's POLYVAC (State-owned vaccine manufacturer) to benefit from the World Health Organization's mRNA technology transfer programme, established to improve global health security through transfers of mRNA manufacturing technologies to low- and middle-income countries.
- The pandemic prevention, preparedness and response capacity of the health, agriculture and environment sectors is being strengthened at central and local levels within the framework of the Viet Nam One Health Partnership on Zoonoses. Since Viet Nam joined the One Health Partnership in 2013, the agenda has expanded to cover new concerns about zoonoses, plant and ecosystem health, pandemic threats, and anti-microbial resistance (AMR). These require more robust programmes and investments in surveillance, laboratory capacity, biological control, prevention and mitigation of pest/disease consequences to fauna, flora and humans. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan also calls for application of a One Health approach to address infectious disease risks in wildlife, domestic animals and humans, in line with the Global Biodiversity Framework (2022).
- Laws related to road safety were passed by the National Assembly in 2024, requiring children to sit in the backseat of vehicles with additional specifications. While this represents good progress, strong enforcement of the law and related regulations is required to monitor adherence and demonstrate real impacts, as road traffic accidents remain the leading cause of injury-related deaths.
- Based on NTA analysis in 2023, health expenditure shows significant variations across different age groups. In the younger age group (up to 45 years old) average health spending remains stable, while it increases with their age for the cohort aged 45 years and above. In particular, for those aged 51-75 years, health spending increases by VND200,000–VND300,000 per person for each additional year. Average per capita health expenditure for those aged 75 years and above is 2.7-fold higher than for children aged to 15 years.⁴⁰ With rapid population ageing, Viet Nam's healthcare system will require significant investment.

Sexual and reproductive health

- According to a General Statistics Office study (2021), the majority of Vietnamese women make informed decisions on sexual intercourse (84.8 per cent) and use of contraception (70.7 per cent). However, autonomous decisions on sexual intercourse are lower among Mong ethnicity women (42.6 per cent), those with pre-primary or no education (61.4 per cent), while autonomous decisions on contraceptive use are lower among adolescents aged 15–19 years (25.5 per cent) and Mong women (61.2 per cent).

- Nationally, 59.8 per cent of women married or in-union use modern contraceptive methods.⁴¹ The national average total unmet need for family planning is 10.1 per cent, but 17.7 per cent among ethnic minorities in remote mountainous regions and even higher at 40.7 per cent among sexually active women and adolescents currently unmarried or not in-union.⁴²
- Cervical cancer, as reported by UNFPA Viet Nam in 2021, was the sixth most common cancer in women in Viet Nam with 4,177 new cases (7.1 per 100,000 women) and 2,420 deaths (4 per 100,000 women) annually. Unless preventative action is taken, 218,907 Vietnamese women are expected to die from cervical cancer by 2070 and 449,656 by 2120. Regarding prevention measures, only 28.2 per cent women were screened for cervical cancer and 12.0 per cent vaccinated with HPV (Human papillomavirus) vaccines (15.6 and 9.2 per cent in urban and rural areas, respectively). However, there is no financing mechanism in place to support the national rollout of cervical cancer prevention.
- Viet Nam's national HIV response has made strong progress thanks to strong strategic direction, evidence-based policies, and effective programme implementation. The estimated number of new HIV infections in 2023 represents a 59 per cent drop compared to 2010. With an estimated 250,000 people in Viet Nam living with HIV in 2023, 94 per cent know their status, and 78 per cent received antiretroviral treatment (ART).⁴³ However, achieving the goal of ending AIDS by 2030 remains a significant challenge and requires substantial strategic investment and sustained effort. This entails interventions targeting men who have sex with men (MSM), including innovative approaches for those difficult to reach through traditional outreach methods. Further improvements in HIV service quality is essential, specifically addressing challenges with PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) retention, promoting consistent condom use among MSM, enhancing the quality and sustainability of the methadone maintenance therapy (MMT) programme for people who inject drugs and increasing ART coverage to ensure 95 per cent of people living with HIV are on ART.

Food security and nutrition

- As committed to follow-up the UN Food Systems Summit 2021, Viet Nam was one of the first countries in the region to adopt national pathways to food systems transformation. This encompasses governance, agricultural input supplies, production, post-harvest, consumption and distribution, as reflected in the National Action Plan on Food Systems Transformation towards Transparency, Responsibility and Sustainability by 2030 (NAP-FST) issued by Prime Minister's Decision No.300/QĐ-TTg (28 March 2023). To facilitate implementation of NAP-FST, a Food Systems Transformation Partnership including ministries, development partners and the private sector was established in October 2024 to boost inter-sectoral and multistakeholder collaboration.
- Food insecurity has ascended since 2018, especially during 2019–2020 with the rate of food insecurity climbing from 0.5 per cent in 2019 to 0.6 per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic. The health crisis particularly provoked increased food insecurity and malnutrition in northern Viet Nam, especially among ethnic minorities.
- Malnutrition rates in all forms (stunting, underweight, and wasting) among children under-five years is trending downward at national level. However, the rate of stunted children in ethnic minority communities remained high in 2021 (19.2 per cent).⁴⁴ Moreover, around 200,000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition nationwide annually, the majority of whom are ethnic minorities not receiving effective treatment.⁴⁵

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

- As a country with a dense river system and focus on agricultural development, Viet Nam has strived to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. In particular, during 2018–2022, the proportion of urban population supplied with drinking water through a

centralized water supply system increased from 86.7 to 94.2 per cent, households also witnessed improvements in water sources (95.7 to 98.3 per cent) and use of hygienic toilets (90.3 to 96.2 per cent).⁴⁶

- The proportion of active industrial parks and export processing zones with centralized wastewater treatment systems meeting environmental standards rose from 80.1 to 91 per cent. Steps towards achievement of SDG6 (clean water and sanitation) has shown progress since 2018.⁴⁷
- However, given socio-economic development pressures, access to Ministry of Health-qualified clean/safely managed water and sanitation services is still limited (54 per cent for water and 77 per cent for sanitation).⁴⁸
- Facing increasingly severe climate change impacts, Viet Nam must realize solutions to control wastewater, strengthen investment and innovation in water and sanitation using cost-effective and sustainable technologies – especially for remote and mountainous areas, promote integrated management of water resources by river basins and strengthen international cooperation and benefit-sharing with countries sharing the same water sources.

Adolescents and youth

- With adolescents and youth making up a significant portion of Viet Nam's population, inclusive policies and programmes are essential to harness their potential. As such, efforts to improve access to education and training, healthcare, and decent employment opportunities for all young people are critical, especially those from marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities, rural areas, young migrants, and people with disabilities. These key steps are necessary, with 10.8 per cent of youth aged 15–24 years not in employment, education or training in 2023 (11.8 per cent young women and 9.9 per cent young men).⁴⁹ By promoting comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health services, Viet Nam aims to empower its youth to make informed decisions about their lives. Additionally, initiatives to enhance youth participation and meaningful engagement in policy-making processes ensure their voices are heard and considered in national development strategies. This holistic approach not only supports the well-being of young people, but also contributes to national socio-economic development.
- Adolescents and youth in Viet Nam face significant challenges and opportunities related to sexual and mental health. Sexual health education and services are crucial as young people navigate physiological, psychological, and social changes that expose them to risks such as early sexual activity, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Despite efforts to improve access to sexual and reproductive health information and services gaps still remain, particularly for disadvantaged groups like ethnic minorities and rural youth. Mental health is another critical area, with a significant percentage of Vietnamese adolescents experiencing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders.⁵⁰ Factors contributing to these issues include academic pressure, social stigma, and limited access to mental health services. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that integrate sexual and mental health education, improve service delivery, and promote supportive environments at home and in schools. By doing so, Viet Nam can better support the well-being and development of its young population.

Key Updates on Climate Change Response, Disaster Resilience and Environmental Sustainability

Intensified climate change, but stronger commitments to environmental sustainability

- Viet Nam continues to face critical climate challenges, including biodiversity loss, natural resource depletion, water scarcity and serious air pollution in large cities. It ranked among the top 20 greenhouse gas (GHG) emitting countries as its rapid growing economy continues to be powered by fossil fuels.⁵¹
- In Viet Nam, 20 per cent of GHG emissions come from agriculture, with half from the rice sector, which also accounts for more than 70 per cent of methane emissions.⁵² Increasing water demand due to population growth, rapid industrialization and urbanization, as well as a changing climate, are undermining water resources crucial for agricultural and the rural economy.
- Viet Nam is increasingly threatened by more frequent and severe climate-related disasters such as typhoons, floods and drought. The Mekong Delta region faces intensifying drought and salinity intrusion, affecting agricultural production and livelihoods. The Funan Techo Canal project announced by Cambodia in April 2024 has raised concerns about its potential environmental impacts, including projected alteration of water flows within the Mekong River.
- In September 2024, northern Viet Nam was severely hit by Typhoon Yagi, one of the most powerful storms in recent decades. It ravaged 26 provinces, affecting 65,479 households and 309,399 people, with 321 deaths. Estimated damage totalled US\$3.3 billion, devastating critical infrastructure such as houses, schools, hospitals, roads and bridges. This devastation underlines the importance of preparedness for disaster management and building environmental, social and economic resilience.
- According to VNR 2023, significant challenges to environmental governance are apparent, including addressing illegal deforestation, land degradation, and protection of endangered species.
- Viet Nam is committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 as declared at the COP26 in 2021. The country is one of two in Southeast Asia joining the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP). Viet Nam launched the Resource Mobilization Plan for JETP at COP28 in 2023. In line with the net-zero commitment, the country adopted the 8th Power Development Plan (PDP8) in May 2023.
- Despite major adjustments and changes in leadership and governance of the climate-energy nexus, a number of 'quick win' projects were facilitated for possible financial agreements in 2024–2025 under the JETP RMP framework. In parallel, dialogues and strategic technical assistance have helped formulate longer-term, large-scale transformative investment projects under JETP framework, enabling Viet Nam to explore a pathway for a sustainable renewable energy transition.
- JETP aims to catalyze private sector investments to implement a just and sustainable energy transition. However, the 'just' element of the JETP and its investments still needs to be unpacked and implemented properly, including protecting procedural elements of environmental rights.⁵³
- The government has consolidated laws, strategies, and policies to respond more effectively to climate change and natural disasters.⁵⁴ The Law on Environmental Protection came into effect in 2022 to strengthen enforcement of regulations, increase penalties for violations and require environmental impact assessments for development projects. The law also brings Vietnamese regulations in line with international practices and provides a legal basis for carbon pricing and trading. Viet Nam is preparing to establish a domestic carbon market, with plans to pilot a carbon credit exchange in 2025 towards full operation by 2028.

- Viet Nam is implementing a National Strategy and Action Plan on Green Growth, integrating climate change adaptation into national and local socio-economic development plans. The strategy outlines goals for sustainable urban development, including improved waste management and increased use of clean energy in public transportation.
- Viet Nam updated its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2022 in line with COP26 commitments and is implementing strategies for climate change adaptation. The country is updating its NDCs to raise its ambitions and accelerate actions to meet net-zero emissions commitments and align with global frameworks such as the Paris Agreement. Notably, 87.3 per cent of provinces and cities have created action plans to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.⁵⁵
- Marine Spatial Planning 2021–2030 with Vision towards 2050 was approved by the National Assembly in June 2024. The overall goal is to create a foundation for rapid and sustainable development of the marine economy, efficiently manage and exploit marine resources, protect the marine environment, and gradually turn Viet Nam into a strong maritime nation. Although ambitious targets have been set, much remains to be done, especially implementation and enforcement.
- To further improve disaster resilience, Viet Nam needs to take a number of steps, including: (1) enhancing monitoring and forecasting systems for natural disasters, (2) building resilient houses, particularly in disaster prone coastal areas, (3) developing community response programmes to support vulnerable populations during and after disasters, (4) implementing adaptation strategies in agriculture, such as adjusting cropping calendars and transforming crops to suit changing conditions, and (5) promoting nature-based solutions that help to sustain livelihoods and offer ecosystem co-benefits.

Rising pollution concerns

- Viet Nam needs to strive hard to implement SDG12 (responsible consumption and production) in the context of environmental pollution and increasing waste generation due to rapid socio-economic development. The rate of collection and treatment of domestic solid waste in rural areas has only reached 66 per cent and more than 80 per cent of landfills are unsanitary.
- Resources to promote sustainable production and consumption are becoming limited; mineral resources and land have neither been properly managed nor efficiently exploited; The participation of enterprises in sustainable production and supply chains is still limited.
- Plastic pollution and marine plastic litter continue to be seen as a major challenge for Viet Nam. Total plastic consumption per year is estimated at 3.9 million tonnes, with recycling of approximately 33 per cent due to underdeveloped solid waste collection and management systems, lack of source segregation that limits plastic recycling, excessive production and use of single use plastic, and non-enforcement of producers' responsibilities and incentive mechanisms.⁵⁶
- A system-wide approach is needed to achieve a circular economy of plastics, considering their full lifecycle. In 2019, Viet Nam's plastics industry produced 8.89 million tonnes and contributed an estimated US\$17.5 billion to the national economy, representing 6.7 per cent of GDP (packaging the biggest contributor).⁵⁷ Viet Nam is also one of the largest plastic recycled waste importers globally. The revised Law on Environmental Protection, in effect from 2022, outlines a mandatory extended producer responsibility for all packaging materials. The government issued Decision No.687 on circular economy development in June 2022 which sets goals to reuse, recycle and treat 85 per cent of plastic waste and reduce 50 per cent of plastic waste in the ocean. Efforts are needed to engage systematically on production and consumption sides to achieve a circular economy.

- According to Decree No.08/2022/ND-CP and the Law on Environment Protection 2020, waste sorting at source is mandatory from 1 January 2025. This is expected to lay the foundation for a robust recycling industry, helping the country reduce pollution caused by solid waste.

Addressing biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation

- Despite being the 16th most biodiverse country globally, Viet Nam faces significant biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, with 882 species and counting listed as threatened in Viet Nam Red Book 2007.⁵⁸ Driving factors include deforestation, habitat fragmentation, unsustainable land conversion, pollution, illegal wildlife trade, and climate change.
- With the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) during COP15 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to which the Government of Viet Nam is a party, the goals and objectives of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and other related strategies should be translated into concrete actions with dedicated resources to help contributing to the framework's implementation. In particular, to meet the 30x30 goal outlined in the GBF—protecting 30 per cent of land and sea areas by 2030—Viet Nam must expand its network of terrestrial and marine protected areas and adopting measures such as Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) to meet its targets of having 9 per cent of the country's land area as terrestrial protected areas, 3–5 per cent of total sea area as marine and coastal protected areas, and 80 per cent of high biodiversity areas with adopted effective conservation measures by 2030 (Targets 1, 2 and 9 of the NBSAP 2030, vision 2025).
- Innovative financing mechanisms for biodiversity conservation, including private sector financing and investments, are critical. With the stocktake of achievements and lessons learnt from the government's Payment for Forest Environmental Services programme, a similar mechanism for other important ecosystems including marine or coastal ecosystems and wetlands should be actively explored and piloted. In addition, carbon credits (green and blue) are becoming more promising sources of finance for forest/ecosystem protectors in Viet Nam, including protected areas and local communities.
- Climate instability and biodiversity loss are interconnected crises, and so are the solutions. Protecting and restoring biodiversity, land and ecosystems enhances resilience, which in turn enhances humanity's ability to adapt to environmental change, more effectively manage its land, concurrently supporting climate mitigation and reduction of GHGs. Towards this, the government issued Decision No.1662/QĐ-TTg in 2021 to plant 20,000 hectares of new mangroves by 2030, enhancing carbon sequestration and protecting coastal communities from sea level rises. This is among potential nature-based solutions that could be explored and adopted to support Viet Nam in dealing with the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss by reducing emissions, protecting and restoring ecosystems, and ensuring climate-resilient livelihoods.

Key Updates on Shared Prosperity Through Economic Transformation

Economic structural change

- Continued strong economic growth, averaging 6.5 per cent per annum since 1986, makes Viet Nam one of the fastest-growing economies in the region.⁵⁹ With an export-led growth model, Viet Nam has structurally shifted from an agriculture-based to an industry-driven economy, focusing on production of manufactured goods and agricultural commodities. The ambitious target to achieve high-income status by 2045 requires the country to sustain an average growth rate of more than 6 per cent per annum in the remaining years.⁶⁰
- Viet Nam's economic transformation continues to be driven by pragmatic policies, deep regional and global trade integration, and a cautious approach towards global capital flows. The country needs to increase efforts to address the 'missing middle' – the lack of a productive domestic private sector, despite success in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and boosting exports.
- While the manufacturing sector has motored Viet Nam's economic development, manufactured exports are the most import-intensive in the region. Foreign investment is heavily concentrated in low value-added activities such as assembly, which employ predominantly low-skilled and low-wage workers. A sharper focus on the national innovation system is needed to develop the technological capacity of domestic firms, boost productivity and achieve greater linkages between FDI and domestic firms.
- Further development of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will increase economic value addition as well as enhance protection of workers. Incentivizing young people, women, ethnic groups and MSMEs to participate in new industries, including energy transition-related ones, will be key.
- With rapid expansion of the manufacturing sector, the agricultural sector's contribution to GDP fell to approximately 12 per cent in 2023.⁶¹ Despite its decreasing share in the economy, the agricultural sector continues to play an important role as a safety net, especially during crises. There is a rising need for mechanization, innovation and digitalization to improve agricultural production and quality to meet growing needs of population and generate surplus for exports.
- Realizing a green and circular economy through sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, materials and energy is critical. This will help diversify the economic base, drive economic growth and create more decent jobs, while protecting the environment and finite natural resources. The National Action Plan on Circular Economy is expected to be approved by the government in the fourth quarter of 2024.
- Given the ambitious goal to realize high-income status by 2045, it is essential the Government of Viet Nam take on a nature-conscious economic transition that considers the impacts of development on ecosystems and biodiversity. Sustainable economic growth needs to recognize "nature" as an economic asset and integrate its value into decision-making processes. In other words, accounting for natural capital alongside human and produced capital will be critical for Viet Nam's economic decision-making. Incorporating natural capital accounting will allow policymakers to understand the trade-offs between economic activities and ecological health, thus enabling them to choose the most appropriate development pathways.

Labour productivity and skills development

- To sustain high and inclusive growth, Viet Nam's economic transformation necessitates a highly-skilled workforce to shift towards higher value-added industries, attract FDI inflows and adapt to rapidly developing megatrends likely to shape industries, such as digital transformation, climate change and demographic shifts. Skilled workers are crucial to enhance business capabilities, leading to increased productivity and market competitiveness. Education and training systems play a vital role in skilling, reskilling, and upskilling the workforce to meet new demands. Public-private partnerships can promote skills development aligned with labour market demands.
- Projections of jobs and skills demands will be critical to inform key stakeholders – including enterprises, education and training institutions – to jointly identify challenges and opportunities to deliver training, skills upgrades and re-skilling to drive Viet Nam towards high-income status. Policy reforms such as ongoing revision of the draft Employment Law will be instrumental in modernizing the labour market in a rapidly changing economy. The Law on Trade Union, also under revision, is expected to optimize trade union operations to protect workers' rights and well-being.
- With the aim to achieve an average growth rate of 6.5 per cent per annum from 2023 to 2030, the Government announced a National Programme for Increasing Labour Productivity in 2023 (Decision No.1305/QĐ-TTg). The programme aims to establish a national productivity committee and call for regular policy dialogues with businesses and workers' organizations. The government also introduced several initiatives to stimulate investment in high-tech industries, including land use fee exemptions and preferential interest rates (Decree 10/2024/ND-CP); preferential corporate income tax rates for targeted activities including research and development centres (Decision 29/2021/QĐ-TTg); and infrastructure investments including high-tech parks.
- In April 2024, the government announced a plan to train 50,000 engineers by 2030 under its Semiconductor Industry Human Resources Development Project, calling for collaboration with 160 universities and establishing a National Steering Committee on Semiconductor Development. As of the second quarter of 2024, the proportion of Vietnamese workers holding degrees or certificates increased to 28.1 per cent.⁶²
- Despite the revised Labour Code coming into force in 2021 to improve labour standards, productivity and address socio-economic challenges, its implementation must be optimized through technical and financial resources and increased capacity of stakeholders.
- The strengthened technical and organizational capacity of the National Industrial Relations Committee, the apex level tripartite body, not only addresses current and emerging industrial relations challenges, but also ensures relevant guidelines and regular reporting. The committee was reinforced through a prime minister's decision to realize industrial relations improvements at national and sub-national levels.
- To expand wage protection coverage to more workers, including those in the informal economy, an hourly minimum wage was introduced through Decree 38/ND-CP and applied from 1 July 2022. Related to working conditions, Viet Nam has accelerated occupational safety and health (OSH) improvements through adoption of the National OSH Programme for 2021–2025 to mitigate OSH risks and reduce occupational accidents. Data for occupational fatal and non-fatal injuries as reported by national statistics indicate a decline in occupational accidents since 2021.⁶³
- Despite robust progress towards formalization, widespread informal employment remains high.⁶⁴ Moreover, gender equality-related challenges are apparent. In contrast to relatively high female labour force participation rates, there is an under-representation of women in senior management positions and gender pay gaps.

International labour migration

- In 2023, Viet Nam sent its highest number of contract-based workers overseas through official channels in more than 10 years.⁶⁵ International labour migration remains a strategy for development, employment and poverty reduction, as emphasized by the government and Communist Party. The government, through the Department of Overseas Labour (Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs), tracks and manages migrant workers heading to specific countries under bilateral agreements or arrangements, particularly those classified as low- and medium-skilled. The primary destinations are Japan, Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China, and Republic of Korea.⁶⁶
- International labour migration from Viet Nam continues to be driven by a complex interplay of factors, including limited access to relevant skills development, economic opportunities, and decent work at home. Young individuals facing unemployment and substandard employment conditions are often compelled to migrate, seeking available job opportunities to alleviate financial hardship. However, the aspirations of many migrants have evolved beyond meeting basic needs: they are increasingly seeking well-paying jobs, higher incomes, and improved social status. Limited regular migration pathways, as well as a lack of accessible information on safe migration, exacerbate these challenges and increase their vulnerability to abuse or exploitation as well as motivating people towards irregular migration channels. This situation is further complicated by limited oversight and regulation of brokers and labour recruiters, as well as the existence of unlicensed labour recruiters. Efforts to combat these practices face significant hurdles due to the use of digital recruitment methods that brokers employ to reach potential migrants.
- Since January 2022, the Law on Contract-Based Vietnamese Overseas Workers (Law No.69/2020/QH14) has served as the principal legislation governing international labour migration. It emphasizes the protection of overseas workers, including provisions for fair treatment, timely payment of wages, and access to legal assistance in host countries. Most notably, it prevents recruitment agencies from collecting brokerage commissions from migrant workers, presenting an important step to removing costs borne by Vietnamese migrant workers. However, further support is needed to enforce provisions of Law 69, particularly regarding compliance by recruitment agencies and the capacity of provincial Employment Service Centres to support migration processes for overseas workers. As such, on 12 December 2022, the Central Committee of the Communist Party adopted Party Directive 20-CT/TW on labour migration to enhance inspection of recruitment agencies to ensure effective law enforcement.
- Viet Nam has actively negotiated bilateral labour agreements and memoranda of understanding with countries of destination to facilitate regular labour migration pathways. Recent efforts have strengthened agreements with countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea, aiming to improve working conditions and safeguard the rights of Vietnamese workers in these markets. Additionally, Viet Nam is expanding its agreements with Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, major destinations for Vietnamese migrant workers in sectors like construction, domestic work, and hospitality. The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs is working to promote regular migration pathways to countries with high-income opportunities aligned with Vietnamese workers' skills. While these efforts to increase regular migration pathways are essential to reduce irregular migration, it is crucial that these agreements are transparent and include comprehensive protections for workers vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse. Furthermore, establishing robust monitoring systems is necessary to evaluate the impact on migrant workers and ensure their safety and well-being.

Transition to a low-carbon economy and promotion of responsible business

- The need to move to low-carbon economy is also driven by end market requirements for products made in Viet Nam. The European Union (EU), through the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) and the European Green Deal, enforces transparent reporting and holds companies accountable for their carbon emissions. These initiatives incentivize businesses with manufacturing supply chains in Viet Nam to adopt sustainable practices, invest in clean technologies, and transition to a net-zero economy. For example, many wood processing enterprises in Viet Nam, including those exporting to the EU market, have yet to recognize the opportunities and challenges of adopting sustainable practices. They often lack awareness of environmental impacts and the benefits of greener practices. Obstacles include limited resources, technological constraints, and regulatory uncertainty.
- Viet Nam's National Action Plan for Law and Policy Improvement to Promote Responsible Business Practices in Viet Nam 2023–2027 (NAP-RBP) was published in 2023. It aims to enhance the legal framework and encourage responsible business conduct in accordance with international standards, particularly the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.⁶⁷ Key NAP-RBP priorities include investment, labour, vulnerable group protection, environmental and consumer protection. It is key step to protect the rights and ensure the well-being of all workers, including internal migrants. However, concerns remain about the lack of adequate stakeholder engagement during the plan's development as well as limited focus on access to remedies, corresponding to Pillar 3 of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.⁶⁸
- Building on this NAP-RBP, manufacturing sector SMEs are encouraged to embrace international environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards.⁶⁹ The prospect of EU Green Deal regulations – such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, EU Deforestation Regulation and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive – requiring measurement and reporting on social and environmental impacts of businesses have reinforced significant interest in ESG standards. Strengthening the capacity of firms, especially domestic SMEs, to meet ESG regulatory requirements is needed.

Key Updates on Governance and Access to Justice

Strengthening the rule of law and access to justice

- To further build a strong socialist rule-of-law state in Viet Nam, the 13th Central Committee of the Communist Party of Viet Nam issued Resolution No.27-NQ/TW on 9 November 2022. This resolution will serve as a foundation for government agencies to formulate strategies and plans. The country has also made progress in advancing the rule of law and access to justice, such as reforms to the legal framework for alignment with international human rights conventions ratified by Viet Nam, prioritizing corruption control and extending legal aid to vulnerable groups.
- The Law on Implementing Democracy at Grassroots Level was adopted in 2022 to delineate the responsibilities of agencies, organizations and individuals to ensure implementation of grassroots democracy.⁷⁰ While there are considerable implementation gaps, with several relevant government agencies unfamiliar with the scope of the law, the legislative framework provides opportunities for more grassroots participation in policymaking. Another example is the National Assembly's Resolution No.33/2021/QH15, enacted on 12 November 2021, on the organization of online trials. Since 1 January 2022, almost 20,000 cases have been resolved through online trials, helping expand the reach of the justice sector.⁷¹
- Due to active engagement and advocacy from the LGBTI community, a significant milestone was reached in 2022 when the Ministry of Health issued an official directive instructing healthcare practitioners nationwide to avoid discrimination against LGBTI individuals, aligning with the de-pathologization of LGBTI in the International Classification of Diseases [11th Revision] (ICD-11). However, participation of the LGBTI community in public consultations on the draft Gender Affirmation Law in 2023 and early 2024 was limited. On 13 September 2024, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly decided to remove the draft Gender Affirmation Law from the legislative agenda for the 8th session of the National Assembly, originally scheduled for discussion in October 2024. Additionally, results of Viet Nam's 4th Universal Periodic Review cycle indicate that four recommendations advocating for advancement of national legislation to legally recognize same-sex marriages and broaden the definition of gender to include LGBTI people were not accepted.
- The control of corruption has gradually improved, with a common decrease in the proportion of people and organizations reporting paying informal costs to use public services.⁷² The satisfaction index of people and organizations using administrative services increased, while the number of criminal offenses decreased. Since 2022, the government has sustained a high-profile anti-corruption campaign. In 2023, the government reviewed implementation of the National Strategy on Anti-Corruption to 2020 and issued a new National Strategy on Anti-Corruption until 2030 and its implementation plan. Recently, the Communist Party issued Regulation 178 on power control and anti-corruption in law-making. This regulation identified corruption acts in lawmaking and handling measures for violations.
- In 2017, the Law on Legal Aid was adopted to enhance people's access to justice and legal support. The law stipulates provision of free-of-charge legal services to vulnerable groups such as the poor, children, ethnic minorities residing in areas with difficult socio-economic conditions, the elderly, people with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, and people living with HIV.
- However, despite these developments, the justice sector faces challenges to adequately promote and protect the rights of vulnerable populations. Its capacity and resources are being stretched by fast-paced national development, which brings with it new challenges and threats to human rights,

such as climate change, migration, private sector-related exploitation, and the rise of artificial intelligence and cybercrime.

- Some vulnerable groups remain at risk of being left behind, including stateless persons or those of undetermined nationality, as well as hard-to-reach ethnic minorities. Children of vulnerable groups also face risks of becoming stateless due to a lack of birth registration. As Viet Nam continues to address gaps by committing to prevent statelessness and prioritizing capacity-building activities for local civil registrars with support at central level, challenges remain due to limited capacity and resources at local level and awareness among vulnerable groups of the importance of civil registration. Currently, there is no framework for refugees or asylum-seekers to seek protection from return to countries where they face persecution.
- On 27 September 2024, Viet Nam completed its 4th Universal Periodic Review fully accepting 79 per cent of the 320 recommendations. Several recommendations pertain to further strengthening the rule of law and access to justice.

Empowerment of women and participation in decision-making

- In alignment with the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021–2030, the first National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security 2024–2030 was approved by the government in January 2024, underlining a renewed commitment to the meaningful participation of women in peace building, conflict resolution and security governance in non-traditional security contexts, such as natural disasters, climate change and cyber environment. This is fully aligned with the Pact for the Future adopted at the Summit of the Future in September 2024, emphasizing an increased focus on international peace and security, science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation, youth and future generations.
- Viet Nam witnessed a positive trajectory in women's political participation during 2019–2023. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Viet Nam ranked 63rd out of 190 countries regarding women's political representation, with women making up 26.72 per cent of National Assembly deputies in 2019. In 2023, while Viet Nam remained ranked 63rd, the percentage of women National Assembly deputies increased to 30.3 per cent. This reflects a significant step forward in enhancing women's involvement in the political sphere, reflecting Viet Nam's commitment to achieving greater gender parity in political decision-making processes.
- However, key political participation targets outlined in the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021–2030, as well as in relevant government and Party directives, remain unmet. For instance, Resolution 26-NQ/TW set the goal of ensuring women make up more than 35 per cent of deputies at National Assembly and People's Councils at all levels. However, this target has not been fully realized. The proportion of women in Party Committees at all levels also falls short of targets set by Resolution No.11-NQ/TW of 2007, which aimed for at least 25 per cent female representation in Party Committees by 2020. Currently, women account for 15.96 per cent of Party Committees at provincial level, 19.63 per cent at district level, and 24.77 per cent at commune level.
- Furthermore, disparities in representation persist at provincial and local levels, with women facing significant barriers to accessing higher leadership roles, including socio-cultural norms, limited gender sensitive capacity-building opportunities and gender biases prevalent in candidate selection processes. While progress has been made at national level, more concerted efforts are needed to ensure gender parity across all levels of governance in Viet Nam.

Gender-based violence and elimination of all forms of abuse and discrimination

- Viet Nam ranked 83rd out of 146 countries on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (GPI), improving its position from 87th in 2021. Across all sectors, Viet Nam has made significant progress towards achieving gender parity in education. At the primary level, there is a slight

preference for girls (GPI 0.99), while gender parity has been achieved at lower secondary level (GPI 1.00). Additionally, the GPI improved to 1.03 at upper secondary level, indicating a modest preference for boys.⁷³

- The gender gap in labour force participation in Viet Nam has seen notable progress. According to the Labour Force Survey, women's labour force participation stood at 70.5 per cent in 2019, slightly below men's (81 per cent), reflecting a gender gap of 10.5 per cent. However, the gap decreased to 9.6 per cent in 2021 and further to 8.8 per cent in 2023. Despite this steady progress, it remains evident that women continue to be underrepresented in the labour force compared to male counterparts. According to a time-use survey, on average, men worked an extra paid hour per day, while women dedicated nearly three extra hours to unpaid work, resulting in a workload nearly two hours heavier for women.⁷⁴
- Potential positive shifts in addressing and reducing partner violence against women are emerging. A nationwide study into violence against women in 2010 and 2020 spotlighted a decrease in percentages of partner violence, particularly within the last 12 months. In 2010, 58 per cent of women in Viet Nam encountered at least one of three primary types (physical, emotional and sexual) of partner violence at some point in their lives, and 27 per cent within the past 12 months. However, in 2020, the lifetime prevalence rate of intimate partner violence fell to 52.9 per cent, together with 21.8 per cent when examining the last 12 months.
- To tackle gender-based violence during 2021–2025, Viet Nam has piloted more than 6,000 models and facilities providing services to support girls and women. These pilot models and facilities include social work and one-stop service centres for girls and women affected by violence, facilities assisting survivors of gender-based violence and clubs for women at risk of being forced into marriage with foreign nationals.
- Based on the government report on national gender equality, there were 3,193 victims of domestic violence in Viet Nam in 2023, of whom 2,628 were female (82.3 per cent), while 565 were male (17.7 per cent). Violence against women continues to be a hidden issue in society as more than 90 per cent of victims do not seek help.⁷⁵
- The issue of sex-based selection in Viet Nam remains a significant concern, with a disproportionate number of male births compared to female ones. Viet Nam was identified as one of five countries globally with the most imbalanced sex ratio at birth, with 112.2 boys born for every 100 girls. However, there has been a slight improvement by 2021 with 111 boys born for every 100 girls.⁷⁶
- While the proposed Gender Affirmation Law has been pending National Assembly consideration for several years, transgender individuals continue to face significant challenges. According to the 2021 People Living with HIV Stigma Index, transgender women reported higher levels of anticipated and experienced stigma than other key populations affected by HIV. Specifically, 27.2 per cent of transgender women avoided medical care in the past year due to fear of being outed, compared to 5.8 per cent of men who have sex with men, 10.2 per cent of female sex workers, and 3.6 per cent of people who inject drugs.
- Child marriage remains a concern in Viet Nam, with notable changes observed between 2014 and 2021. In 2014, the data showed that 10.6 per cent of women aged 20–24 were married before the age of 18 years. Disparity between urban and rural areas was evident, with urban areas reporting a lower rate (5.3 per cent), in contrast to rural areas (13.2 per cent). However, by 2021, the percentage of women aged 20–24 married before the age of 18 years had risen to 14.6 per cent. The contrast between urban and rural areas became even more pronounced, with urban areas reporting a significantly lower rate of 2.4 per cent, while rural areas saw a concerning increase to 23.3 per cent. The most alarming prevalence was in the Northern Midland and Mountainous area, with a child marriage rate of 34.3 per cent.

- Child labour remains the most traditional and widespread form of exploitation in Viet Nam with 5.4 per cent of children aged 5–17 years considered child labourers.⁷⁷ Of the one million child labourers, almost half are engaged in hazardous work and one-third work average more than 40 hours per week. Long working hours severely limit schooling and access to training, with 50 per cent not attending school.⁷⁸ Approximately 75 per cent of child labourers perform work in dire environments that negatively affect their development, with 85 per cent in rural areas and ethnic minority children are particularly exposed. Whilst being an ethnic minority is not itself a risk factor for higher levels of child labour, they often live in poor and remote areas less likely to have support services, lower quality of education and high vulnerability to economic shocks.⁷⁹ Nearly two-thirds of child labourers are male. Agriculture, manufacturing, and construction sectors register higher employment of children, although child labour is persistent in the informal sector, which poses a challenge to effectively tackle what remains a hidden problem.
- Violence against children remains widespread. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS4) 2014 indicates that 6 per cent of children from 1-14 years old in Viet Nam reported experiencing corporal punishment and violent discipline at home, with cases of serious injuries reported to be at 2.1 per cent. Yet, the Viet Nam SDGCW Survey 2020–2021 (MICS6) shows an increase – 72.4 per cent of children aged 1-14 years were subjected to at least one form of psychological or physical punishment by household members.⁸⁰ Despite being banned in school settings, corporal punishment is widespread in schools, with more than half of children in Viet Nam below 8 years old reporting witnessing teachers resort to corporal punishment.⁸¹ Boys are also significantly more likely to experience corporal punishment than girls at home and in school. Studies also found that boys are significantly more likely to experience physical bullying than girls. However, girls are often at greater risk of humiliating treatment and sexual violence. Online violence has become more prevalent, with a study reporting that one-in-five children and adolescents in Viet Nam are victims of cyberbullying and harassment from peers. Yet, three-quarters are not aware of where to seek help. It is reported that 1 per cent of internet users aged 12–17 years in Viet Nam were victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. This includes blackmailing, sharing sexual images without permission, or being coerced to engage in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts. In addition, 2 per cent of those aged 15–17 years accepted money or gifts in return for sexual images or videos.⁸²

Enabling environment for governance and participation

- Despite progress in various areas, such as corruption control and legal aid for vulnerable groups, challenges persist in relation to registration and operation of civil society organizations, with strict requirements for approval of all public gatherings, meetings, and peaceful demonstrations.
- Decree No. [26/2024/ND-CP](#) (March 2024) constrains scope for international cooperation on judicial and legislative reform.
- Moreover, the “blazing furnace” anti-corruption campaign has, in some instances, negatively impacted public sector performance due to overcautiousness of government officials, which has led to bottlenecks in public spending.
- Conversely, the advent of digitization and e-governance provides opportunities to bring public services to more marginalized communities, with significant interest from the government. It also offers opportunities to reduce corruption and increase efficiency. In this regard, implementing Viet Nam’s National Digital Transformation Programme approved in 2020 remains a top priority.

Trafficking in persons

- Trafficking in persons remains a serious and ongoing issue in Viet Nam. The surge in migration aspirations, driven by socio-economic development trends and demographic challenges, coupled

with the lack of safe and regular migration pathways, exacerbates the vulnerability of Vietnamese migrants to exploitative practices. Between 2012 and 2023, some 7,962 individuals were trafficked⁸³, with a rise in domestic trafficking cases. The profile of victims has also expanded, from women and children to increasingly men, infants, and even cases involving foetuses and the trafficking of internal organs.⁸⁴ Of particular concern is the emerging trend of trafficking in persons for forced criminality, especially within cyber scam compounds in the Southeast Asian region, where Vietnamese nationals are heavily represented among victims. Traffickers lure victims with deceptive promises of “easy work with high wages.” Once smuggled across borders, they are forced into illegal labour, facing brutal conditions, and often required to pay exorbitant ransoms for their release. This evolving landscape in Viet Nam underscores the urgent need for stronger, coordinated efforts to address the multifaceted dimensions of trafficking in persons and better protect vulnerable populations.

- After 12 years’ implementation, the Law on Human Trafficking Prevention and Combat (Law No. 66/2011/QH12) is set for revision, with new provisions anticipated to come into effect in 2025. The draft revision promises significant enhancements in victim protection, aligning the definition of ‘victims’ with the 1985 United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, and elaborating the concept of trafficking in persons across all groups of purposes. The revision also introduces regulations for individuals in the process of being identified as victims and establishes support and protection mechanisms for them. While these changes represent a positive step towards greater alignment with international standards, effective implementation will necessitate considerable refinement of the legal system to fully realize these improvements.

Migration governance

- Since promulgation of the national action plan to implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) in 2020, Viet Nam has made substantial progress by improving coordination among ministries, agencies, and international partners. Key achievements include strengthening regular migration channels, addressing irregular migration and trafficking in persons, particularly in response to threats such as online fraud and illicit work in cyber scam compounds.
- The country's proactive approach has also focused on safeguarding migrants and mitigating their vulnerabilities, amid rising climate-induced displacement. Continued review and prioritization of implementation strategies will be crucial for further progress.

Data availability and accessibility

- In November 2021, the National Assembly endorsed the revised Law on Statistics, in which an indicator related to working children aged 5–17 years was included in the revised law. In 2023, to implement this law, the General Statistics Office (GSO) collected data on working children and child labour for the first time with the integration of related questions into regular Labour Force Survey (LFS) questionnaires. Data collection was completed in December 2023, with the report on working children and child labour expected by the end of 2024. The report will update information and monitor developments in working children and child labour, as well as provide evidence for policymaking and developing appropriate and effective intervention programmes to prevent and reduce child labour. The GSO plans to conduct the integrated survey on working children every five years.
- According to GSO, Viet Nam SDGs (VSDGs) have a total of 158 indicators, but data are not available for 30 indicators (19 per cent). Data disaggregation (by age, ethnicity, gender, province, region and area) remains a major challenge. The GSO is leading efforts to revise the national SDGs indicators

toward alignment with the international SDG indicator framework and improving collection and production of data needed for measuring SDG progress.

- Viet Nam has significantly improved its international migration data through a range of systematic efforts. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working on developing a centralized database system to better manage international migration data. Additionally, the ministry is enhancing data collection by coordinating with provincial authorities and is committed to publishing the Viet Nam Migration Profile every two years, with the next edition due in late 2024. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Security has been piloting standardized templates for trafficking in persons data collection since 2023 to improve data consistency and accuracy. These coordinated efforts are strengthening Viet Nam's ability to respond effectively to migration and trafficking issues.
- In October 2023, the government issued Resolution No.175/NQ-CP approving the ambitious National Population Database Centre. It aims to connect existing administrative data sources administered by respective government ministries and agencies, such as civil registration and vital statistics (Ministry of Justice), health insurance (Ministry of Health) and social insurance (Viet Nam Insurance Corporation). It aims to provide reliable, timely, adequate and clean data to inform evidence-based socio-economic development planning, contributing to the goals of digital economic development. While the National Population Database Centre is considered an innovative solution to improve the national data system, additional efforts are needed to improve data quality, coherence, harmonization, privacy and security as well as coordination mechanism on data sharing and use among data holders and potential data users.

Annex: Synopsis of the Cooperation Framework 2022-2026 Outcomes

Outcome 1	By 2026, people in Viet Nam, especially those at risk of being left behind, will benefit from inclusive, gender-responsive, disability-sensitive, equitable, affordable and quality social services and social protection systems, will be free from poverty in all its dimensions and empowered to reach their full potential
1.1	The education system in Viet Nam provides gender-responsive, equitable, climate-resilient, quality education and learning, which will equip all children, adolescents, the youth and adults with relevant learning and transferrable life, and digital skills, including during emergencies.
1.2	The country's health, WASH, nutrition, and emergency and pandemic preparedness and response systems are strengthened to ensure that all people – with a focus on vulnerable groups – have equitable access to comprehensive, affordable, gender transformative, climate-resilient and environmentally sensitive services, and have healthy behaviour practices.
1.3	The national social protection and social care systems are inclusive, coherent and integrated, applying life-cycle, risk-informed, resilient and gender-responsive approaches, with a focus on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people.
1.4	Evidence-based policies and innovative solutions are adopted and scaled up to reduce MDP and inequity, with a focus on ethnic minorities and the most vulnerable groups.
Outcome 2	By 2026, people in Viet Nam, especially those at risk of being left behind, will benefit from and contribute to a safer and cleaner environment resulting from Viet Nam's effective mitigation and adaptation to climate change, disaster-risk reduction and resilience building, the provision of clean and renewable energy, and the sustainable management of natural resources.
2.1	Enhanced capacity and gender-responsive policies to identify and reduce climate risks, respond to disasters and build the resilience of vulnerable populations.
2.2	Accelerated implementation of policies and measures and enhanced awareness and engagement of stakeholders for low-carbon development, the circular economy, environmental protection and reduced environmental pollution.
2.3	Strengthened institutional capacity and action from all stakeholders for sustainable management and use of natural resources and effective conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems.
2.4	Improved capacity to reduce negative impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on human development.
Outcome 3	By 2026, people in Viet Nam, especially those at risk of being left behind, will contribute to and benefit equally from more sustainable, inclusive and gender-responsive economic transformation based on innovation, entrepreneurship, enhanced productivity, competitiveness and decent work.
3.1	Reformed labour-market institutions are used to improve labour standards for all types of workers and to formalize informal employment.
3.2	National capacities are strengthened to formulate and implement evidence-based policies and strategies, and build enabling ecosystems for inclusive, transformative and sustainable agriculture, industry and service sectors, to make decent work a reality.
3.3	Sustainable, inclusive and responsible business models and practices including MSMEs and cooperatives are promoted to increase productivity, trade development and innovation, and improve working conditions and compliance, with a special focus on economic empowerment of poor people, ethnic minorities and women.

3.4	Heritage preservation and urban creativity are strengthened to enhance cultural industries and advance sustainable tourism.
3.5	Evidence-based options and mechanisms are promoted to expand public and private finance for the realization of SDGs.
3.6	Appropriate technologies, digital tools and platforms are accessible and adopted to facilitate a smooth and inclusive transition to the fourth industrial revolution (IR 4.0).
Outcome 4	By 2026, people in Viet Nam, especially those at risk of being left behind, will have benefited from and contributed to a more just, safe and inclusive society based on improved governance, more responsive institutions, strengthened rule of law and the protection of and respect for human rights, gender equality and freedom from all forms of violence and discrimination, in line with Viet Nam's international commitments.
4.1	An enabling environment is created for innovative, responsive, accountable and transparent national systems that promote the participation of vulnerable groups in the sustainable development process.
4.2	National institutions and systems are enhanced to strengthen the rule of law, expand access to justice and combat discrimination with a focus on vulnerable groups and in a child-, youth- and gender- sensitive manner, in line with international human rights norms and standards.
4.3	The social, institutional and legal environment is enhanced to accelerate the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women and their participation in decision-making and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, girls and LGBTQI persons.
4.4	Socio cultural attitudes and practices, accountability, and legal and policy frameworks are transformed to eliminate gender-based violence and all forms of abuse, exploitation and discrimination against vulnerable groups.
4.5	National legislation, policies and agencies are strengthened to prevent and address trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling, illicit drugs, wildlife trafficking, corruption and money laundering, and to ensure equitable access to protection systems for victims, witnesses and other vulnerable groups, especially migrants, women and children.
4.6	Data production, analysis and use are strengthened to inform evidence- based and rights-based policies, planning, budgeting.

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