



# 2018 VNR VIETNAM

Statement with questions



With its substantial progress in implementing the SDGs to date, Vietnam should be congratulated on volunteering to undertake the VNR in 2018. Civil society working in Vietnam would like to raise some concerns and questions in response. More detail is in our written statement.

- Progress on gender equality is less positive than suggested in the VNR, and is threatened by discriminatory laws and norms.

- Unsustainable urbanization, uncurbed deforestation, biodiversity loss, hydropower projects and rare earth mining threaten Vietnam's natural environment and the lands and livelihoods of many;

- Inequality is increasing in Vietnam. Informal workers make up 2/3 of the workforce, but 90% have no social insurance. Ethnic minority communities continue to experience poverty at more than three times the rate of the majority;

- The Government's efforts towards disability and ethnic minority inclusion are insufficient to address barriers regarding: discrimination, violence and abuse, and the accessibility of public education, healthcare, infrastructure and ser-

vices.

- CSOs appreciate being consulted on the draft VNR, which unfortunately does not discuss CSO's role in Goal 17, or the partnership between government, business and CSOs. We recommend government formally recognizes CSOs as official partners in SDG implementation and monitoring.

#### **Our questions are:**

- What are Vietnam's plans to address gaps in the framework of indicators to monitor the SDGs - particularly for marginalized groups, and how will the gov-

ernment mobilize resources to ensure no-one is left behind in SDG implementation?

- How will CSOs be recognized in that framework for better partnership in implementing, monitoring and evaluation in all levels?



This statement was prepared by a coalition of CSOs working in Vietnam, based on consultations with more than 150 organizations - including local and international CSOs.

We, CSOs working in Vietnam, very much appreciate the Vietnamese Government's preparation of the VNR and presentation at the HLPF in New York 2018. The government's efforts in developing the National Action Plan on the SDGs, with detailed targets and responsible agencies are also welcomed by CSOs. The Statement below is to highlight the views of CSOs on the VNR, as well as our recommendations on the way forward.

## **1. Inequality in Vietnam**

Rapid economic growth, industrialisation and unsustainable urbanisation in Vietnam are seeing development in GDP (SDG 8) at the costs of increasing inequality in the country. Inequality locks the poorest – particularly women - into low-paid, low-skilled jobs and/or jobs that keep them in a vicious cycle of poverty. Vietnam's minimum wage levels are below a living wage<sup>1</sup>, increasing the ranks of the 'working poor'. Informal work-

ers comprise over two-thirds of Vietnam's workforce<sup>2</sup>, but these workers are not covered by the Labour Code and have low coverage of social insurance.

While overall poverty is decreasing, ethnic minorities continue to lag behind on almost every development index in Vietnam. Poverty amongst ethnic minority people is three times higher than that of people from the majority. Ethnic minorities have lower access to water and sanitation

1 Living wage calculations available at;

<https://wageindicator.org/salary/living-wage/vietnam-living-wage-series-january-2018>

2 GSO, 2017



and higher maternal mortality than the majority. Stunting among ethnic minority children under five is nearly two times higher than the rate of Kinh children<sup>3</sup> Ethnic minority children, particularly those in remote and mountainous areas, have lower educational outcomes, especially those of primary and secondary school age who have never attended school or have dropped out, with girls particularly impacted. Fewer ethnic minority people can read and write the Vietnamese language than the national average, and is a significant barrier to equality, as well as hampering awareness of the National Action Plan on the SDGs. While the VNR notes this gap, it does not demonstrate how this issue will be resolved. Unless significant action is taken now, Vietnam's ethnic minority communities will continue to be left behind.

Regulations to prevent violence and discrimination against children, young people, people with disabilities, LGBTQI and other marginalised groups are not adequately implemented in practice and not well addressed in the VNR.

While many laws and policies on gender equality have been enacted, there are discriminatory regulations against women, for instance, differentiated retirement ages, or prohibitions on employment of women in 77 professions. These have been justified as special treatment for women or left as an unsolved matter of history. Women account for about 40% of employees in the public sector, but very few are in leadership positions. The percentage of women members of the National Assembly has been around 25% for the last three terms compared to the expected 30-35% in elected bodies. Women migrant workers do not receive<sup>4</sup> adequate support from social policies. Over 30% of women migrants are not covered by health insurance due to barriers relating to the household registration system<sup>5</sup>. Women workers make up 80% of the electronics workforce in

Vietnam. They are workers in the assembly lines or manual workers and, “almost hold no technical or management positions”, experience health issues and can be dismissed from their job when they reach 30 years old. Miscarriage has been reported to be “very normal if they are young.”<sup>6</sup>

The current efforts of the Government towards inclusion are not sufficient to address access and related barriers faced by people with disability (PWD). There are multiple barriers faced by the people with disabilities that are not well addressed in the VNR including:

- Lack of disability-sensitive infrastructure in both cities and communities with PWD (Goal 12), which restricts the rights of PWD to access public services;

- PWD in rural areas are nearly twice as likely to live in poor households, and one in five people with severe disabilities in rural areas live in poor households<sup>7</sup>;

- Lack of opportunities for disability-friendly education, sustainable employment, health facilities, lack of proper psychosocial counseling facilities for newly disabled people, and limited skill-development opportunities.

- Gender based violence in families and communities because stigma associated with disability is still prevalent (Goal 16). Women and girls with disabilities face multiple barriers and have double marginalization, especially those living in rural and mountainous areas. Neither the SDGs nor VNR of Vietnam specifically mention this group: they are at high risk of being left behind.



3 Source: “INGO experiences in promoting human resource development in ethnic minority areas through education programmes-2013”, prepared by NGO Coalition for CEMA, 2013; and National Institute of Nutrition Report 2016

4 Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments : <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

5 GSO. 2015 National Internal Migration Survey

6 CGFED-IPEN (2017) Stories of Women Workers in Vietnam's Electronics Industry

7 Source: Economic Cost of Living with Disabilities and Stigma in Vietnam - Institute for Social Development Studies

## Recommendations:

-Devote significant, targeted additional funding to support programs developed with the active participation of children, young people, remote, rural and ethnic minority communities, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups; and strong measurement and accountability measures in such programs.

- Provide more support to promote teaching and learning ethnic minority languages in school at all level and develop education programs using local languages .

- Extend coverage of protections in the Labour Code to informal workers; increase informal workers' and migrant workers' access to social insurance and health insurance;significantly increase the minimum wage to match a living wage and expand market-oriented vocational training centers for people with disabilities;

- Ensure workers' freedom of association by ratifying the Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize, 1948 (ILO No. 87) and the Convention on the Right to Organize and Collective, 1949 (ILO No. 98)

- Immediately provide measures specified by the Law on Gender Equality (2006) as well as developing a concrete roadmap, with indicators following CRPD and put in the Resolution of People's Committee with budget allocation;

- Raise awareness and promote public education on non-discrimination and equality, strengthen enforcement of equal opportunities for all employees, especially in the public and informal sector, and improve monitoring and measures to address violations through enacting a comprehensive Law on Anti-discrimination.

- Promote participation of all different groups at all levels and community groups and organizations in the monitoring process for implementing both the SDGs and CRPD.

## 2. Environment and natural resource management

Rapid industrialisation, deforestation and continued biodiversity loss run the risk of undermining the notable progress Viet Nam has made in addressing SDGs 11 and 12. Recognising that environmental conservation is fundamental to effectively realising the SDGs, continued ecological deterioration in Viet Nam is a major concern if the country is to advance its vision of a sustainable future. Deforestation is a major challenge in Vietnam because forests have a role regulating water sources and preventing soil erosion and sedimentation. A number of sustainable forest development initiatives with communities in the northern mountainous region are showing positive results, and should be further supported.

Increasing occurrences of severe adverse weather is impacting already vulnerable communities, who need support with evacuation and restoration of livelihoods.



At the same time, natural resource exploitation and development initiatives, such as hydropower and rare earth mining, threaten the lands and livelihoods of some of the poorest people in Vietnam – ethnic minority and mountainous communities. The economic benefits of these projects overwhelmingly go to people and organisations who are not affected by the proj-

ect. Rare earth mining in Vietnam's Northwest region poses risks to the health and livelihoods of the surrounding communities, while resettlement from large-scale development has left communities struggling to develop new livelihoods.

## Recommendations:

- Address deforestation, including through sustainable forest development initiatives.

- Stop rare earth mining in the Northwest region.

- Ensure that natural resource projects, like hydropower and industrial development, provide adequate compensation and improved livelihoods options for the communities resettled or affected



by the projects; include participation of the community and social organizations in the consultation; and provide transparent information.

### **3. CSO role, participation, and partnership with government and private sector**

SDG 17 calls for a “revitalized and enhanced global partnership that brings together governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizes all available resources” for successful implementation of the SDGs. It includes targets 17.9<sup>8</sup>, 17.16<sup>9</sup>, and 17.7<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, it is clear that achieving the SDGs will depend on strong collaborative partnerships between governments and a range of other actors at all levels, including CSOs. The inclusion of CSOs as an essential actor/partner should occur at all stages of program-cycle planning, consultations, implementation, monitoring and reviews.

In Vietnam, CSOs play an essential role in advancement of the SDGs, including implementing development programs at different levels throughout the country, which contributes to 17 SDG goals and ensures “no-one is left behind”.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Recognizing and creating an enabling environment for CSOs in the active implementation and monitoring in SDGs: the role of local CSOs, including community-based organizations, children and young people’s organizations as well as people with disabilities’ (DPOs), should be acknowledged and recognized by law with a dedicated legal framework (Law on Associations, or for Non-profit organizations). It is also essential to develop a framework for with clear identified role, participation, contribution and partnership with CSOs with concrete indicators to implement the National Action Plan for SDGs;

- Create an enabling environment for local CSOs to access and mobilize resources from diversified sources for development;

- Strengthen the role and capacity of CSOs and invest in the partnership at all stages of program-cycle planning, consultations, implementation, monitoring and reviews.

The Government of Vietnam made efforts to engage CSOs in the VNR preparation process, including workshops and by sharing reports with CSOs as well as receiving responses and case studies from CSOs. We highly appreciate that and can see the final VNR reflects many of the

comments contributed by CSOs, particularly case studies contributed by CSOs, which were boxed/highlighted in the final VNR report. However, in Goal 17, there was an absence of discussion of CSOs’ role and contribution as well as the partnership between government, business and CSOs in the report. This restricts the full recognition of the multi-stakeholder approach by business and

government in local levels on the role and contribution of CSOs as an important partners for a successful implementation of SDGs in Vietnam. This poses one of the biggest barriers and challenges for CSOs to play their roles in SDG implementation, monitoring and evaluation<sup>11</sup>.



### **CSO role, participation, and partnership with government and private sector**

8 Indicator 17.9 : Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North South, South-South and triangular cooperation;

9 Indicator 17.6 : Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize

and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources;

10 17.7: Encourage and promote effective public, public private and civil society partnerships building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

11 Source: Survey report on CSO roles and contribution to achieving SDGs 2018, MSD, 2018. Find out more at: [www.msdivietnam.org](http://www.msdivietnam.org) .

#### 4. Other comments and recommendations to improve the VNR and the implementation of SDGs in Vietnam:

Lack of accuracy and data gap: there is currently no baseline data for the National Action Plan and no monitoring and evaluation system with concrete indicators. As a result, the VNR still includes old data or unreliable data, and could be more accurate and specific.

Specific focus on individual groups: SDG implementation could be

strengthened by including more specific policies, plans and indicators relating to ethnic minorities and vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Absence of mechanism at local and province level: though the National Action Plan has been created, it is not yet clear how it is links with sub-national government structures and how it ensures implementation of SDGs at local levels. The current local government leaders are not well trained and educated on the SDGs and their role for the implementation;



#### Recommendations:

- Implement stronger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for SDGs, including a set of indicators to measure all the targets and specific indicators relating to vulnerable and marginalised groups and ethnic minority people.
- Make information on SDG progress publicly available (eg: through a website or publicly available database).
- Invest in capacity building, set aside dedicated budgets for SDG implementation, and develop strategies and concrete plans for implementing SDGs at all levels.