



Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2024



Vietnam

Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Eradicating Poverty in Times of Multiple Crises: The Effective Delivery of Sustainable, Resilient and Innovative Solutions in Asia and the Pacific with Young People at the Forefront

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Vietnam has significantly improved social service coverage in the last 20 years to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Adhering to the SDGs consistently is the sole method to endure and bounce back from unconventional obstacles. Nevertheless, there are still policy gaps, obstacles, and hurdles in executing the SDGs.

For SDG 1, the 2022 data from the World Bank reveals significant disparities in multidimensional poverty among various social groups. The highest concentration of poverty is found in households engaged solely in agriculture (66%), ethnic minority communities (79%), and populations in the Central Highlands and Northern Mountains regions (42% and 21% respectively) in 2020. Additionally, residents in

the Mekong Delta region face prolonged economic vulnerability preceding the dual crises of drought and the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a climate-induced migration rate of 13.8% in 2021 (constituting approximately 37% of the national migrant population). Besides that, the number of economically vulnerable groups is twice the scale of the population of the poor. Around 35% of Vietnamese usually live below the economic security line or are vulnerable to occasionally falling below it due to shocks. Three out of four workers engage in informal employment in the agricultural or non-agricultural sectors, thus lacking formal social protection. Also, the current social protection system is outdated and is not adaptive to offer adequate protection and safety nets especially for those who are not registered as poor but can still be at risk of falling into poverty. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has generated numerous new jobs,



demanding additional new skills, but Vietnam faces the challenge of a low rate of formally trained labour, with only 26.2% holding degrees or certificates as of 2022. The youth population primarily engages in occupations requiring low or intermediate skills, with a higher proportion compared to youth populations in other countries in the region. The labour market survey in 2023 conducted by the General Statistics Office notes that the number of unemployed youth (15-24 years old) is approximately 437.3 thousand, constituting 41.3% of the total unemployed population nationwide.

For SDG2, Vietnam has significantly improved its global hunger ranking under SDG 2, focusing on food security and nutrition for vulnerable groups. Over two decades, the proportion of undernourished people dropped from 19.8% to 6.4%, child wasting decreased from 9% to 5.8%, and child stunting reduced from 42.9% to 23.8%. However, attention needs to be paid to issues of improving the health and physical fitness of children in rural, remote, and remote areas, ethnic minority children, and the problem of children's obesity in rural areas and big cities. Government initiatives, livelihood support, and disaster preparedness played a crucial role. Vietnam aims to maintain achievements, addressing challenges in malnutrition and obesity through tailored policies, especially in rural areas. Agriculture remains a key economic pillar, contributing 2.68% to GDP growth in 2020. Sustainable farming practices, including nanotechnology, are enhancing crop yields and reducing environmental impact. Despite COVID-19 disruptions, Vietnam is on track to surpass targets for agricultural productivity by 2030, emphasising the need for skilled labour and technological advancements. However, there is still a lack of high-quality labour sources, workers staying in rural areas to work in agriculture are mainly older people, and there is a lack of young, qualified workers, so the application of technology is limited, leading to low productivity, and low agricultural labour productivity. Therefore, cross-regional exchanges and youth engagement are vital for ensuring sustainable food production and combating hunger.

For SDG 5, Vietnam has a comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework in place to actively promote gender equality, making it one of the countries with

a strong commitment to this cause. Nevertheless, there are still certain constraints within the present circumstances. According to the General Statistics Office, the rate of early marriage in ethnic minority groups is 26.6%, 18 times higher than the majority ethnic group - Kinh. Among them, the ethnic group with the highest early marriage rate is 59.7%. In 2019, more than half of women experienced violence by their husband or partner, and this rate was higher for women with disabilities compared to those without disabilities. Approximately 50% of married women lack autonomy in making decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights. At the same time, the 2019 Labor and Employment Survey by the General Statistics Office shows that women spend 18.9 hours on household work per week, 2.1 times more than men, and invest significant time in GDP-contributing activities without receiving wages. The rate of women's participation in the workforce in Vietnam is 73%, but women predominantly engage in low-paying jobs with poor job quality, earning 20% less than men for the same work (Household Living Standards Survey, 2012). Due to social norms, women bear a greater share of care responsibilities, limiting their freedom to pursue more labour-intensive occupations and representing a high proportion in the family business and self-employment category. COVID-19 highlighted existing inequalities and differences in coping and adaptation. Women, those in the informal sector, and households in the bottom 20 percent experienced the slowest household income recovery between June 2020 and March 2021. The progression of women in administration and political representation has been characterised by a sluggish pace. Approximately 50% of married women lack autonomy in making decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Vietnam has not managed to make significant strides in decreasing intimate partner violence in the last twenty years. The word "gender equality" mostly focuses on women, sometimes disregarding the inclusivity of the LGBTIQ+ groups. Another significant obstacle to implementing and monitoring SDG 5 is the insufficient availability of gender-sensitive data, particularly in relation to other SDGs. This includes data that is broken down by sex, age, and other factors, as well as a lack of data on the progress of SDG 5 implementation.

Vietnam has made significant strides in addressing SDG 13: Climate Action. Enhancing resilience and adaptation to risks related to climate change, responding to natural disasters and other natural disasters aimed at enhancing resilience and adaptation to climate-related hazards and natural disasters, has seen substantial progress. The government has implemented comprehensive actions, including the issuance of national action plans on climate change and strategies for green growth. Notably, resolutions such as 120/NQ-CP have been introduced to promote sustainable development in the Mekong Delta in response to climate change. Additionally, Vietnam has updated climate change scenarios and conducted flood mapping for coastal provinces, demonstrating proactive measures to mitigate risks. Simultaneously, integrating climate change factors into policies and development plans has been prioritised. However, progress in issuing green growth action plans by central ministries and provinces has been relatively slow, with only 59% having developed and implemented such plans. In addition, raising awareness and capacity for early warning and disaster risk reduction has been a focus. Despite a lack of specific data to evaluate achievements, various educational activities and communication campaigns have been conducted to increase awareness of climate change. Investment in meteorological and hydrological observation networks has also improved, enhancing the accuracy of weather forecasts and disaster warnings.

In Vietnam, the progress towards attaining SDG 16, which aims to ensure legal identification for everyone, including birth registration, by 2030, is on schedule and nearing the desired outcome. Still, obstacles and hardships persist. Significant challenges remain to achieve the goal of ending child abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture. The current count of youthful legislators remains rather meagre, with only a handful occupying prominent leadership roles.

Vietnam's strides in international integration, underscored by its active participation in various Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and heightened presence in international cooperation forums across political, socio-economic, cultural, and sports spheres,

exemplify its commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17). The nation's enhanced competitiveness, as recognised by the World Economic Forum (WEF) with a ranking of 67th out of 141 countries and territories, coupled with its remarkable economic growth, positioning Vietnam among the top 20 economies contributing significantly to global growth in 2019 according to the IMF, solidify its role as one of the fastest-growing economies in the region. With such achievements, Vietnam is poised to fulfil SDG 17's objectives of strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development by 2030. However, there are still some issues to be noted: Further promoting youth participation in technology use and international exchange opportunities. Youth are key innovators, users, and drivers of technology development. They play a crucial role in putting digital transformation and innovation at the centre of efforts to accelerate progress on the SDGs and leave no one behind. The World Economic Forum (WEF) estimates that 65% of jobs will require digital skills by 2025. Young people are more likely to be early adopters of new technologies and can help to drive innovation in all sectors. International exchange opportunities can help young people to develop their skills, knowledge, and networks, and to become global citizens. Addressing the challenges of accessing foreign financial support. Financial inclusion is essential for sustainable development. It allows people to access the financial services they need to save, invest, and grow their businesses. However, there are still significant barriers to financial inclusion, particularly for young people and women. The World Bank estimates that 1.7 billion adults are still unbanked. In Vietnam, only 48% of adults have a bank account. The lack of access to financial services can limit people's opportunities and make it difficult for them to escape poverty.

Meeting and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 in Vietnam will encounter numerous obstacles and challenges. Previous achievements, Vietnam's socio-political stability, and the standard institutional and legal framework for socio-economic development are paving the way for the implementation of the SDGs in the future.

OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

SDG 1: No Poverty

- Enhance the participation of communities in the Northern mountainous region, and Central Highlands, as well as the Mekong Delta region in the labour market, especially focusing on employment for ethnic minority youth and women through building digital economic capabilities and supporting the development of sustainable agricultural livelihood models that adapt to climate change.
- Increase public investment in education, healthcare, and social protection, especially in labour quality, salary and well-being of teachers, medical officers, and social workers, and increase incentive to attract young people to work in these fields for the improvement in quality of public services, particularly in remote and rural areas in Vietnam.
- Reinforce resilience capabilities for the poor, especially youth and women, in the face of natural disasters and climate change by enhancing capacity, enabling their leadership and providing financial support to implement initiatives for disaster risk reduction, early warning and sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the community level.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

- To address food insecurity in rural and mountainous areas of Vietnam, it is recommended to strengthen policies and interventions targeting vulnerable groups, such as children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers. Implementing targeted policies and interventions will involve providing nutritional support and improving access to food for these populations. The result of these efforts will be improved food security and nutritional status among vulnerable groups in these regions. Ultimately, this will lead to reduced rates of malnutrition and food insecurity, contributing to the overall well-being and health of these communities.
- To address both undernutrition and overnutrition in Vietnam, it is recommended to enhance nutritional education and promote balanced diets. This can be achieved by developing and implementing educational programs aimed at raising awareness about the importance of balanced diets and nutrition, with a focus on reaching both urban and rural communities. By increasing knowledge about nutrition and fostering healthier eating habits, the result will be a reduction in cases of both undernutrition and overnutrition across the population. This holistic approach to nutritional education will contribute to improving overall health outcomes and well-being nationwide
- To bolster agricultural productivity and attract younger individuals to the sector in Vietnam, it is recommended to invest in agricultural technology and vocational training. This involves providing training programs and investing in modern agricultural technologies to improve productivity and efficiency in farming practices. The outcome will be enhanced agricultural productivity, leading to increased income for farmers and a revitalised agricultural sector. By attracting younger individuals to agriculture through technological advancements and vocational training, this initiative will contribute to both food security and economic growth, ensuring a sustainable future for the agricultural industry in Vietnam.
- To fortify Vietnam's resilience against climate change and safeguard food security from the impacts of erratic weather patterns, it is recommended to implement climate-resilient agricultural practices and infrastructure improvements. This task involves executing initiatives to enhance the resilience of agricultural systems against the adverse effects of climate change on food production. As a result, agricultural systems will become more resilient to climate change impacts, ensuring stable food production and supply despite unpredictable weather patterns. By bolstering resilience in agriculture, Vietnam can enhance its food security, ensuring a steady food supply for its population even in the face of climate-related challenges.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

- Empower girls by facilitating their ability to make well-informed decisions that have a significant influence on their lives, such as guaranteeing their access to education and other essential social services.
- Facilitate communication and distribution initiatives to enhance awareness in eradicating detrimental behaviors, such as child marriage, among families and communities.
- Introduce educational subsidies and social protection measures to eradicate poverty in households, which is the primary factor contributing to child marriage.
- Utilise social behavior change communication strategies to eradicate cultural norms and practices that support the occurrence of child marriage and reinforce gender stereotypes.
- Enhance policy lobbying and media advocacy efforts to amplify the representation of the LGBTQIA+ community in Vietnam. Simultaneously, foster young engagement in Sustainable Development and Gender Equality by implementing initiatives aimed at diminishing gender disparities. Rates of gender-based violence among LGBTQIA+ kids
- Comprehensively innovate the content, programmes, and methods of sexual and reproductive health and rights and comprehensive sexuality education both inside and outside the school by integrating it into lower secondary education, upper secondary education, and boarding schools, especially for ethnic minority groups.
- Reduce the burden of child and elderly care and enhancing flexible working arrangements to help women get into more and better jobs and have more time to for themselves by (i) expanding childcare facilities, (ii) enhance the quality of gender sensitive public service,
- (iii) promoting participation in the digital marketplace, and (iv) ensuring that women are named on both agricultural and residential land use rights certificates.
- Increase the accessibility of vocational education services for young women, especially female migrant workers, women working in the informal sector, and other vulnerable groups, and create

a favourable environment to enhance the participation of women in sectors and fields identified by labour market demand.

SDG 13: Climate Action

- To enhance resilience and adaptation to climate change, it is recommended to prioritise local-level skills training programmes tailored to the specific characteristics of each region. These programmes should focus on imparting both technical expertise and soft skills to the youth, empowering them to actively contribute to climate adaptation initiatives. Additionally, fostering greater participation of local youth in existing projects related to climate resilience will amplify their impact and foster a culture of proactive engagement in addressing climate challenges. Efforts should be made to facilitate access to such opportunities and promote collaboration between youth-led initiatives nationwide.
- Education and Awareness: Continue and expand efforts to educate and raise awareness about climate change, disaster risk reduction, and mitigation strategies. This can include integrating climate change education into formal school curricula, organising public awareness campaigns, and providing training for local authorities and communities on disaster preparedness.
- To promote economic shift towards a circular economy, it is recommended to develop capacity-building programmes tailored to youth involvement in climate adaptation and circular economic development. These programs should inspire and equip youth with practical guidance and tools for implementing circular economy models in ongoing projects, alongside continued advisory support and online resources for addressing implementation challenges effectively.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

- Establish an all-encompassing child protection system to enforce strategies aimed at preventing, promptly intervening, and addressing instances of violence against children. This includes enhancing the social work profession, with a particular focus on children.

- Enhance the expertise and institutional capacity of police forces, prosecutors, courts, and legal aid to strengthen children's justice and ensure access to justice while safeguarding the rights of all children participating in legal proceedings.
 - Enhance the provision of life skills education for children, with a specific emphasis on the prevention and management of bullying and violence.
 - Promote and establish strategies and resources for specialised child protection services, such as respite care, assistance for families of children with disabilities, and other forms of support for children with disabilities. Services for children who have experienced violence and exploitation, focusing on disability, psycho-social support, recovery, and rehabilitation must be established.
 - Enforce positive parenting initiatives to proactively combat child violence, foster a nurturing and safeguarding environment for children, and enhance the need for comprehensive early childhood development services.
 - Persist in increasing awareness and fostering societal transformation regarding violence perpetrated against children, with a particular emphasis on addressing domestic abuse, as this matter is being increasingly acknowledged by society.
 - Mass groups should provide young individuals with opportunity to engage in political activities, enabling them to amplify their voices.
 - The process of digital transformation has the potential to enable citizens, particularly the youth, to actively engage in the political process and contribute to the creation of policy decisions.
- cooperation and sharing knowledge and experience with many countries in many fields, especially in the implementation of SDG goals.
- To mobilise and share knowledge, experience, technology, and finance to support the achievement of SDGs in Vietnam, Vietnamese youth need to actively (a) Strengthen global youth relations for sustainable development, and (b) Combine with multi-stakeholder partnerships:
 - To mobilise additional financial resources from multiple sources by young people using digital products to contribute to streamlined, convenient and transparent procedures.

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SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

- Promote the development, transfer, dissemination, and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on mutually agreed favourable terms, including concessional and preferential terms.
- Actively and proactively contributed to the international community through bilateral and multilateral channels in the context of the post COVID-19 pandemic, thereby strengthening

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