



Participatory Monitoring for Accountability in Viet Nam

Dialogue on 'Means of Implementation' for the Post 2015 Framework



July 2014

“States must ensure the active, free informed and meaningful participation of persons living in poverty at all stages of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decisions and policies affecting them [...]. Particular care should be taken to fully include the poorest and most socially excluded persons.”

— **UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights**

“Shortfalls have occurred not because the goals are unreachable or because time is too short. We are off course because of unmet commitments, inadequate resources and a lack of focus and accountability.”

— **UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAV:	ActionAid Viet Nam
CECODES:	Centre for Community Support and Development Studies
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIEM:	Central Institute for Economic Management
CISBs:	Community Investment Supervision Boards
CRC:	Citizen Report Cards
CSC:	Community Score Cards
CSO:	Civil Society Organization
GRDO:	Grassroots Democracy Ordinance
GSO:	General Statistics Office
HCMC:	Ho Chi Minh City
HPI:	Health Policy Initiative
IDS:	Institute for Development Studies
INGOs:	International non-government organizations
M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MfDRs:	Managing for Development Results
MPI:	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MSM:	men who have sex with men
NA:	National Assembly
NCPI:	National Commitments and Policy Instrument
NGOs:	Non-government organizations
ODI:	Overseas Development Institute
OHCHR:	Office of High Commissioner on Human Rights
PAPI:	Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index
PCI:	Provincial Competitiveness Index
PETS:	Public Expenditure Tracking Survey
PIBs:	People's Inspection Boards
PLHIV:	People Living with HIV
PM&E:	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
RIM:	Rapid Impact Monitoring
RPSI:	Rural Public Service Index
SEDP:	Socio-Economic Development Plans
UN:	United Nations
UNAIDS:	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCAC:	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNDG:	United Nations Development Group

UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF:	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNODC:	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UPR:	Universal Periodic Review
VFF:	Viet Nam Fatherland Front
VFF-CRT:	Centre for Research and Training of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front
VLA:	Viet Nam Lawyers Association
VNP+:	Viet Nam Network of People Living with HIV
VUSTA:	Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Associations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"People know, people discuss, people do, people verify,"

- motto of Viet Nam's Grassroots Democracy Ordinance

The Grassroots Democracy Ordinance (GDRO)¹ is a cornerstone of the Vietnamese legal system. Its motto *"people know, people discuss, people do, people verify,"* expresses the belief that citizens can play a critical role in helping public and private sector policies to work better.

The Viet Nam national dialogue in 2014 in Ha Noi, organized under the framework of the country dialogues on the 'means of implementation' for the Post-2015 Agenda, was on the theme of 'Participatory Monitoring for Accountability'.

The participation of 42 representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) illustrated the demand for citizens and CSOs to increase their participation in the definition and monitoring of local, national and international policy implementation. This includes the generation of strategic information that can then contribute to policy changes and have a positive impact on their lives. Specifically, citizens and CSOs request formal mechanisms to provide opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Government and communicate evidence on the progress and difficulties in implementing the policies.

"We hope that through dialogues such as this, barriers will be removed and there will be mechanisms in place for NGOs such as us to participate in monitoring. People are looking forward to participatory monitoring for accountability."

- participant at the national dialogue workshop organized in Viet Nam on "participatory monitoring for accountability"

Commitment from all development actors is critical for CSOs and the private sector to engage meaningfully in the implementation of new post-2015 development goals in Viet Nam. At a global level, governments should not only be accountable for achievement of the goals, but also for the participation of CSOs and private sector in their implementation and monitoring. At a national and local level, a more enabling legal, policy and institutional framework for civil society participation in the monitoring of policies and services needs to be developed and implemented effectively. Among other things, this would include: (i) the institutionalization of additional mechanisms for CSOs' participation in monitoring for accountability, (ii) broadening the space for a more diverse range of actors to be engaged in the monitoring of public functions, (iii) simplifying procedures for establishment and operation of CSOs and (iv) creating the legal basis for improved access to information.

Furthermore, the awareness of people's rights by governments, service providers, citizens and the most vulnerable members of society needs to be strengthened and accompanied by capacity building on policy analysis, monitoring and advocacy. Finally, more attention needs to be paid to vulnerable groups' active engagement in all policy process phases, including the design and implementation of monitoring mechanisms.

A better framework for local people and organizations to participate and take the lead in sharing the impacts of Government policies and practices as well as in engaging with Government in the decision-making process will contribute to concrete policy changes that make tangible and positive differences to people's lives and communities.

"We often say: People know, people discuss, people do and people verify. We need to add 'and people benefit from all of these!'"

- participant at the national dialogue workshop organized in Viet Nam on "participatory monitoring for accountability"

¹ In April 2007 the Standing Committee of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam passed the Ordinance on Exercise of Democracy in Communes, Wards and Townships, also known as the Grassroots Democracy Ordinance, to *"ensure the people's rights to know, to contribute opinions, to decide, to exercise and supervise the exercise of democracy at the commune level"*.

I. Introduction

Viet Nam is one of 88 countries selected by the United Nations (UN) to carry out national consultations to help define the development agenda after the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 (Post-2015 Agenda).

Following guidance from the UN Secretary-General, at the end of 2012 and start of 2013 the ONE UN in Viet Nam engaged more than 1,300 Vietnamese women, men, young people and children in voicing their concerns, as well as setting out their hopes and aspirations for the future. The consultations were highly successful, not only in getting voices of marginalized communities heard at several levels, but also in bringing together more than 70 staff from all UN agencies in Viet Nam to work in the true 'Delivering as One' spirit².

The results of Viet Nam's national consultations on post-2015 contributed to the global report "*A Million Voices*" and informed several key reports, such as the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the Secretary-General's recent report on the MDGs and the Post-2015 Agenda "*A Life of Dignity for All*".

Since then, Viet Nam has remained actively engaged in the global post-2015 process. For the second round of national consultations on the implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda, the UN Country Team selected "participatory monitoring for accountability" of the six issues agreed at the global level³. This issue was considered critical for the successful implementation of the next development goal agenda in Viet Nam.

Box 1. Why a focus on participatory monitoring and accountability under the Post-2015 Agenda?

The focus on participatory monitoring and accountability in the development of the definition of the Post-2015 Agenda comes from the recognition that the lack of accountability for progress has been a major constraint in the implementation of MDGs globally.

The MDGs set a number of quantifiable time-bound targets and a range of indicators to measure progress against those targets across countries. The Millennium Declaration affirmed the "shared responsibility" of all States, international institutions, the private sector and civil society, but did not clearly articulate differentiated responsibilities for fulfilling the commitments. Neither did it indicate who should be responsible or accountable to whom. As the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) 2013 paper, *Who Will Be Accountable: Human Rights and the Post-2015 Agenda*, explains, "[...] mutual accountability has been invoked more often as a means of holding developing countries accountable to their donors than of making all States answerable to those facing deprivation within and beyond their borders"⁴. Consequently, the lack of achievement of the development goals "carried little consequence for most States"⁵.

On the other hand, the MDGs failed to focus on "creating conditions in which those living in poverty can meaningfully engage in shaping or challenging policy decisions affecting their lives"⁵.

Upon the recognition of these gaps in regard to accountability in the MDGs, development actors are increasingly advocating for setting up a framework that ensures future commitments are backed by effective accountability mechanisms at every level, with participation from the most affected populations.

2 For further details see: United Nations in Viet Nam (2014), *Our World, Our Future: Consolidated Report on Viet Nam's Post-2015 Consultation Process*.

3 The six themes are: (1) Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, (2) Helping to strengthen capacities and institutions, (3) Participatory monitoring, existing and new forms of accountability, (4) Partnerships with civil society and other actors, (5) Partnerships with the private sector and (6) Culture and development.

4 OHCHR, (2013), *Who Will Be Accountable: Human Rights and the Post-2015 Agenda*.

5 *Idem*.

Box 2. Monitoring of MDGs in Viet Nam⁶

By 2014, Viet Nam had submitted six MDGs reports. The first three reports were produced by the UN Country Team in Viet Nam. The following 2005, 2010 and 2013 versions were developed by the Vietnamese Government with UN support.

The development process of the MDG reports was largely based on a desk review of data and information taken from administrative reports, official statistics, survey data and UN reports.

Consultation meetings were conducted to collect input from different stakeholders, including civil society, for several drafts of the report. During the consultation process, the Government presented the draft report and collected comments in plenary sessions. Without prior information, (draft documents were not distributed in advance to the participants), and with limited time for all participants to provide input, this methodology was not conducive to the achievement of one of the main purposes of the MDG reviews, namely to *“help engage political leaders and top decision-makers, as well as to mobilize civil society, communities, the general public, parliamentarians and the media in a debate about human development”*⁷.

Following global level objectives for dialogues on this topic⁸, the UN in Viet Nam conducted a national dialogue to explore effective ways of monitoring Government performance and fostering responsive governance around a new set of goals in the context of the post-2015 framework. The dialogue also sought to sensitize stakeholders about their role in the implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda.

To prepare this dialogue, the UN commissioned a discussion paper which described the national legal and policy context and documented existing participatory monitoring initiatives in Viet Nam to illustrate how more accountable, transparent and responsive governance is being pursued at country and local levels⁹. On 22 July 2014, the national consultation took place with the participation of 69 people, including representatives from women’s organizations, people living with HIV (PLHIV), sex workers, people who use drugs, people with disabilities, older people, urban and rural poor, migrant workers and young people. Four working groups were formed to allow all participants to add their voices to the discussion. The groups discussed four issues: a) Creating an enabling policy and institutional environment for participatory monitoring, b) Strengthening the participation of the most vulnerable groups in participatory monitoring initiatives in Viet Nam, c) Strengthening CSOs’ participation in monitoring enforcement of Viet Nam’s international commitments and d) Identification of best practices for participatory monitoring in holding the Vietnamese Government accountable.

The inputs from the dialogue and discussion paper have been consolidated in this report, to feed into the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Dialogues on Implementation report as well as support future debate in Viet Nam and globally on the monitoring of new development goals.

II. Conceptual framework

The meaning of the terms “participatory monitoring” and “accountability” differ across disciplines and contexts and there is no consensus in existing literature about what they entail¹⁰. In Viet Nam, the term “participatory monitoring” is not frequently used, while other related concepts such as “supervision” or “oversight” are embedded in the legal framework and referred to frequently. Furthermore, there is no formal definition of “civil society”

6 The MDGs were localized in Viet Nam to reflect national challenges and Government plans, where they became the Viet Nam Development Goals (24 objectives with 16 groups of specific targets).

7 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2003), Country Reporting on Millennium Development Goals.

8 Objectives set at the global level for the dialogues on the theme of Participatory Monitoring for Accountability: (1) Identify and create a multi-stakeholder space for dialogue about existing experiences, information and knowledge regarding Participatory Monitoring for Accountability and Existing and New Forms of Accountability at Different Levels so that this can be fed into and inform the forthcoming key Post-2015 processes and decision-making bodies, (2) Identify experiences of national, regional and global accountability mechanisms as well as specific proposals for effective post-2015 accountability mechanisms, (3) Identify, document and highlight examples of current work from countries that demonstrate innovative local and participatory monitoring activities or initiatives, and illustrating how more accountable, transparent, responsive governance is being pursued at country and local levels. These examples can serve as good practices or lessons learned for when the Post-2015 Agenda is actually implemented at local, national and global levels.

9 The discussion paper was based on a desk review of existing literature on this topic and a small number of interviews with key informants, within and outside the UN.

10 For further information see Callender, T (2014), Participatory Monitoring and Accountability: Conceptualizations and Implementation and the Implications for Post-2015. Literature Review.

or “CSOs”. This section, therefore, aims to provide a common conceptual framework before entering into the discussion of how “participatory monitoring for accountability” is implemented in Viet Nam.

Participatory monitoring

In the framework of the development of the Post-2015 Agenda, the UNDG refers to “participatory monitoring” as “*inclusive and transparent practices used to monitor the effectiveness and usefulness of local, regional, national or international policies, thus providing the evidence to improve upon said policies*”¹¹.

From a results-based management approach, the term “policy monitoring” is understood as the systematic collection and analysis of data/information on certain indicators and targets set in policies and plans, with the purpose of supporting decision-makers to make timely decisions.

This report will use a broader definition of “policy monitoring” to refer to the range of activities describing and analyzing the implementation of policies, identifying potential gaps in the process, and outlining areas for improvement. It includes not only those initiatives that use a results-based approach, but also other methods to appraise public sector performance in meeting obligations.

The conventional approach to policy involves a limited set of stakeholders and does not usually allow citizens and users of services to give feedback on the performance of public programmes and actions¹². Participatory monitoring is a new approach where users and citizens provide regular feedback to decision-makers and service providers. This new approach values the inherent and instrumental value of citizens’ participation in development, largely recognized in relevant literature. In the framework of the UN development agenda, participatory monitoring places people living in poverty at its centre and supports their participation in the monitoring of decisions and policies that affect them.

In Viet Nam, the participation of people in monitoring public sector performance is referred to in the legal and policy framework as “supervision” or “oversight”.

Box 3. Institute of Development Studies: Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Principles¹³

In the late 1990s, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) developed a set of principles, which are at the core of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). Other organizations, such as the World Bank, refer to these principles when designing participatory monitoring tools:

- 'Participation', which means opening up the design of the process to include those most directly affected and agree to analyze data together
- The inclusiveness of PM&E requires 'negotiation' to reach agreement about what will be monitored or evaluated, how and when data will be collected and analyzed, what the data actually means and how findings will be shared and action taken
- This leads to 'learning', which becomes the basis for subsequent improvement and corrective action
- 'Flexibility' is essential as the number, role and skills of stakeholders as well as the external environment and other factors will change over time.

The IDS concludes that PM&E is not just a matter of using participatory techniques within a conventional monitoring and evaluation setting. It is also about radically rethinking who initiates and undertakes the process, and who learns or benefits from the findings.

11 UNDG (2014), Concept Note on “Participatory monitoring for accountability and existing and new accountability mechanisms at different levels.”

12 World Bank (2002) Action Learning Program Dissemination Series No. 1 Voices and Choices at a Macro Level: Participation In Country-Owned Poverty Reduction Strategies, Workshop report.

13 IDS Policy Briefing, Issue 12 (1998): Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: Learning from Change.

Box 4. Successful participatory monitoring and accountability approaches

The global literature review uncovered five characteristics shared by successful participatory monitoring and accountability approaches:

1. They were created with people and the local context at the core, rather than donors or governments
2. They had built-in systems that enabled donors to directly obtain feedback from those affected
3. They featured ongoing and long-term collaboration, rather than just a one-off exercise, with local actors included as co-creators rather than recipients
4. They had a solid foundation in human rights
5. They included and empowered the poorest and most marginalized.

Accountability

The UNDG defines accountability as *“the obligation of those in authority to take responsibility for their actions, to answer for them to those affected, and to be subject to some form of enforceable sanction if their conduct or explanation is found wanting”*¹⁴. Furthermore, it identifies three dimensions of accountability in a public policy context that most relevant literature highlights: responsibility, answerability and enforceability.

The OHCHR 2013 paper refers to accountability as a *“dynamic process of continuous interaction and contestation among the State, the individual and other forces such as civil society and market institutions.”* It emphasizes that accountability relates to *“creating an environment which fosters meaningful democratic participation and people’s active engagement in shaping, monitoring and challenging policies that affect their lives”*¹⁵.

The UNDG distinguishes different levels of accountability regarding development objectives: 1) governments accountable to their people and through their parliaments for delivering on national development objectives, 2) an actor in an implementation role is accountable to the executing agency for the delivery of goods and services and 3) providers of inputs are accountable to implementing agents for the satisfactory delivery of specified items¹⁶.

Civil Society Organizations

The Vietnamese Civil Code (Art.100) establishes the types of organizations the country considers legal entities. These include: a) political and socio-political organizations, b) economic, socio-political and professional organizations, c) social organizations, d) socio-professional organizations, e) social and charity funds, f) other organizations which meet four criteria: (i) being established lawfully, (ii) having a well-organized structure, (iii) possessing property independent from that of individuals and other organizations, and bearing its own liability with regards to such property and (iv) independently entering into legal relations in its own name.

CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation, identifies seven major groupings in civil society: 1) mass organizations under (and including) the Viet Nam Fatherland Front (VFF)¹⁷, 2) umbrella organizations under the VFF, 3) professional associations, 4) Vietnamese non-government organizations (also called Science and Technology Organizations if they register under the Viet Nam Union for Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA)¹⁸, 5) informal groups, 6) faith-based organizations and 7) international non-government organizations (INGOs)¹⁹. This report uses the term “civil society organizations” to encompass these seven sub-groups.

14 UNDG (2014)

15 OHCHR (2013)

16 UNDG (2010), *Results-based management handbook: Strengthening RBM harmonization for improved development results*.

17 The Viet Nam Fatherland Front is an umbrella organization grouping of 29 registered mass organizations, including the Farmers’ Union, Women’s Union, the Viet Nam War Veterans’ Association, the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour and the Ho Chi Minh Youth Union. The VFF, as regulated by Law, “constitutes a part of the political system of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, led by the Communist Party of Viet Nam”.

18 The Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology is one of only three professional unions established during the 1980s in Viet Nam. Its member organizations are mainly professional associations, local unions and local NGOs. Due to the complex legal registration system, registration under VUSTA is common practice by local NGOs to obtain legal registration.

19 Norlund, I. (2006), *The Emerging Civil Society: An Initial Assessment of Civil Society in Viet Nam*. CIVICUS civil society index.

In summary, this paper understands the term “participatory monitoring for accountability” as the involvement of citizens, users of services and CSOs as they assess the implementation of policies, service delivery and public works with the purpose of holding national decision-makers accountable.

III. Viet Nam legal and policy framework on participatory monitoring for accountability

“People know, people discuss, people do, people verify”

- motto of Viet Nam’s Grassroots Democracy Ordinance

Participation in political, social and economic life is a Vietnamese citizen’s constitutional right, enshrined in the Ordinance on Exercise of Democracy in Communes, Wards and Townships, also known as the GRDO.

The legal and policy framework gives citizens and CSOs a role in overseeing the Government and people-elected bodies. Table 1 summarizes the main documents that regulate this function.

Table 1: Evolution of the legal and policy framework on participatory monitoring

1999	Law No. 14 of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front	<p>The main responsibility for public oversight falls to the VFF, as set out under Art. 2: <i>“Viet Nam Fatherland Front is tasked to (...) supervise the operations of the State agencies, people-elected delegates, as well as State officials and employees; gather the people’s opinions and petitions, then report and propose them to the Party and the State”</i>.</p> <p>The people’s supervision supports the <i>“State’s supervision, examination and inspection work”</i> (Art.12). The VFF’s supervising activities can take several forms: <i>“a) Mobilizing the people to exercise their rights to supervision, b) Joining the State power bodies in supervision activities, c) Through its activities, gathering and forwarding comments made by the people and its members to competent State agencies to request the latter to commend and reward good persons and good deeds, to consider, solve and handle cases of law offenses.”</i></p>
2002	Prime Minister Decision No. 22 on consultancy, assessment and social evaluation	<p>Decision No. 22 gives VUSTA and its member associations the role of providing agencies, at their own request, with <i>“additional independent and objective scientific grounds for the proposition, formulation, evaluation, approval, or implementation of the schemes.”</i> This provides an opportunity for VUSTA to promote the participation of its member organizations in policy research and dialogue with the Government.</p>
2003	<p>Law No. 05 on oversight activities of the National Assembly</p> <p>Decree No. 88 on the organization, operation and management of Associations</p> <p>Law No. 11 on Organization of People’s Councils and Committees</p>	<p>Article 6 of Law No. 05 mandates the National Assembly (NA) to involve the VFF and its member organizations, relevant institutions and individuals, in oversight activities. These activities include the examination of reports, including those submitted by the State President, NA Steering Committee, Government, Supreme People’s Council and Supreme People’s Procuracy The NA can also examine interpellation replies and set up Provisional Committees to <i>“investigate certain issues and examine reports on investigation results of such committees”</i>. Furthermore, the oversight can take the form of reviews of the settlement of complaints and denunciations.</p> <p>Decree 88 allows associations to contribute opinions to legal documents and provide guidance and criticism on matters <i>“within the scope of operation of the association.”</i></p> <p>The Law No. 11 establishes an obligation for deputies to listen to and consider local people’s concerns. The law assigns the VFF the responsibility of supporting People’s Councils in the collection of petitions and comments. It can also request People’s Committees to <i>“create favorable conditions for the Viet Nam Fatherland Front and other people’s organizations to [...] monitor the work of State organs, elected representatives and State employees”</i>.</p>

2005	<p>Decree No. 99 guiding implementation of some articles of the Inspection Law on the organization and operation of the People's Inspection Boards</p> <p>Decision No. 80 on the regulation for investment supervision by the community</p>	<p>Decree No. 99 and Decision No. 80 provide for the establishment of People's Inspection Boards (PIBs) and Community Investment Supervision Boards (CISBs) in all communes, with a mandate to supervise local Government and public officials.</p> <p>PIBs are responsible for supervising the implementation of all regulations and policies by Commune People's Committees, including those related to anti-corruption and the settlement of complaints and denunciations. The CISBs are given responsibility to supervise investment projects and programmes <i>"that directly affect the community in communes"</i>. This responsibility extends to cover a wide range of investment activities including, but not limited to: efficiency and waste in use of capital, compliance with technical processes and regulations, procurement, land-use planning, resettlement schemes as well as social and environment impacts.</p>
2007	<p>Decree No. 47 detailing and guiding the implementation of a number of articles of the Law on Anti-Corruption, regarding the role and responsibility of society in corruption prevention</p> <p>Ordinance No.34 on grassroots democracy</p>	<p>Decree No. 47 gives PIBs responsibility to oversee the implementation of the Law on Anti-Corruption not only at commune level, but also in State agencies, service delivery units and State-owned enterprises, including the detection of corruption cases.</p> <p>The GRDO strengthens and expands the power of PIBs and CISBs to supervise a broad range of Government activities (Arts. 5, 10, 13 and 19), including commune budgets, commune socio-economic development plans, land use plans and drafts, compensation and resettlement draft plans and investment projects. Some of these activities are decided and managed by the commune governments, but others are decided and managed by higher-level governments.</p> <p>The GRDO also stipulates that citizens' supervision functions can be conducted <i>"through complaints, denunciations or petitions lodged with competent bodies or organizations or petitions via Viet Nam Fatherland Front Committees, the Front's member organizations at communal level, People's Inspection Boards or Community Boards for Investment Supervision"</i>.</p>
2008	<p>Law No. 17 on the Promulgation of Legal Documents</p>	<p>The Law on the Promulgation of Legal Documents provides for mass organizations and other CSOs to be engaged in assessing the impact of legal documents and evaluating their enforcement. Approved legal documents are required to be periodically evaluated and reports reviewing the enforcement of laws must be produced by the competent agency and submitted to NA during the process of submission of a new or amended law, ordinance or resolution.</p>
2010	<p>Circular No. 02 guiding the establishment and operation registration of scientific and technology organizations</p>	<p>Circular No. 02 requires individuals working for science and technology organizations wanting to express comments on guidelines and policies to State agencies to submit these opinions directly to the relevant Party or State agency and not make their views public in the name of the science and technology organization.</p>

2013	2013 Constitution	The 2013 Constitution confirms the VFF's role in supervising the activities of State organs, elected representatives as well as State officials and employees.
	Decision No. 217 of the Politburo on social supervision and regulation of criticism by the Viet Nam Fatherland Front and social and political organizations	Decision No. 217 details the oversight responsibilities of the VFF and socio-political mass organizations, as well as the subjects, objects and principles of such activities. It reconfirms the main role of VFF and socio-political mass organizations in "social monitoring" (Art.1). The content of the monitoring includes the implementation of the Party's directions and strategies, the State's policies and laws.
2014	Decision No. 4448 of the Ministry of Health on measuring citizens' satisfaction of public health services	Socio-political mass organizations must develop monitoring plans and programmes, agreed with the monitored State agency. The monitoring methods include: collection of feedback from members and advisors, studying legal documents, agencies' reports as well as complaints, feedback and recommendations sent by organizations or individuals to the VFF or channeled through media. They can also participate in the monitoring activities of elected bodies.
	Decision No. 4448 of the Ministry of Health on measuring citizens' satisfaction of public health services	Decision No. 4448 requests public health service units to regularly measure people's satisfaction in public health services to identify problems in delivering services, improve quality and strengthen the role of public health services. The measurement tools (a qualitative social survey questionnaire set) on public administration services and basic social services cover indicators of accessibility, transparency of information and administrative procedures, health personnel and results.
2014	Law No. 43 on Public Investment	Law No. 43 gives VFF the responsibility to lead and coordinate "with other socio-political and relevant bodies" the community supervision of public investment projects in their localities. The supervision shall be conducted by members of the CISBs. State agencies can conduct their own assessment of the public investment projects either by themselves or by hiring experts.
	Decision No. 14 on consultancy, public debate and social monitoring of the Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Associations	Decision No. 14 allows VUSTA to undertake consultancy, public debate and social monitoring on the issues related to critical strategies, policies, large-scope projects and programmes on technologies, education and training and think-tank development ² .

Sources: World Bank (2010)²⁰, CECODES, VFF-CRT & UNDP (2014)²¹ and consultant's desk review

(Table Footnotes)

- 1 This role has been integrated into other legislative documents such as the Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control and the Law on the Elderly.
- 2 The decision defines the terms 'consultancy', 'public debate' and 'social monitoring' as follows: a) 'Consultancy' is an activity to provide knowledge, information, data with analysis, evaluation and recommendations to appropriate individuals and organizations, b) 'Public debate' is the activity to provide comments, appraisal, critique and recommendations on the relevance of a particular project with specific objectives, conditions and situations and c) 'Social monitoring' is an activity to assess to what extent a project is practical, feasible and scientific'

The analysis of the legal policy framework (Table 1) reveals that the NA, VFF, PIBs and CIBSs (whose members are often VFF members) have been given the main public oversight role and several mechanisms are foreseen to conduct this role.

This framework also provides a supervisory role to other civil society organizations, such as VUSTA and leaves space for other monitoring mechanisms. However, this role is defined in ambiguous terms. While some regulations support their involvement in assessing public performance (Decision 22, Decree 88), others restrict their role (Circular No. 02). For vulnerable groups, such as children or sex workers, there are no specific strategies to facilitate their involvement in policy monitoring.

Beyond the articles that specifically regulate the public oversight roles and activities, CSOs refer to other provisions that affect any role they can play in monitoring the public function. In particular, they point to regulations that hamper their legal registration and local fundraising. CSOs also find it difficult to comply with some requirements needed to register as a legal entity under existing types of organizations available to them. For example, according to Circular No. 02/2010 the registration of a science and technology organization requires a minimum of five

²⁰ World Bank (2010), *Modern Institutions*.

²¹ CECODES, VFF-CRT & UNDP (2014). *The Viet Nam Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) 2013: Measuring Citizens' Experiences*.

university graduates, of whom 20 per cent shall have professional qualification in the organization's field (Art. 5). As previously mentioned, registration under VUSTA is one of the few options for local organizations to obtain legal registration. Vulnerable population groups are unlikely to include members with high levels of education. Furthermore, the absence of a law on access to information, curtails organizations and citizens' rights to seek and receive information on public programmes or budgets.

A final observation is participation in policy monitoring activities in Viet Nam not being planned under comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks (see Box 4). The National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Strategy programmes is one of the few exceptions, as it gives PLHIV a significant role in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of HIV programmes, including data collection and interpretation, as well as raising recommendations and feedback to policy-making bodies at different administrative levels²².

Box 5. Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework in Viet Nam

The Viet Nam Socio-Economic Development strategies outline the country's strategic vision and goals over a 10-year period. These are operationalized through the five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plans (SEDP), in which specific objectives and targets are set out. In addition, a number of projects and national targeted programmes are designed and implemented. At a local and ministerial level, development strategies, master plans and targeted programmes are also established to address specific development objectives.

In the past, M&E of these plans relied exclusively on regular administrative reports. In 2006, Viet Nam for the first time adopted the Managing for Development Results (MfDR) approach by issuing Decision 555/2007/QD-BKH on results-based monitoring and evaluation of the SEDP 2006-2010. Mid-term and end-term reviews of the SEDP 2006-2010 were successfully conducted using the MfDR approach. This significant step was followed by other similar efforts in different sectors.

This positive progress has stalled during the SEDP 2011-2015, as it lacks a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework. With a few exceptions, such as the framework to monitor and evaluate the results based on the implementation of the agriculture and rural development sector five-year plan, there are no comprehensive M&E plans and the monitoring of most plans still emphasizes inputs and outputs, rather than outcomes and impacts²³.

The review of Government policy implementation still consists mainly of quantitative data collected and findings from short inspections/missions. Very rarely do its reports refer to other studies carried out by other organizations or independent experts. The quantitative data is obtained from two main sources: the line ministries' data sets obtained under the centralized statistical system model using an administrative method of reporting by the lower level to the top²⁴ and the large-scale national or sub-national population-based survey data produced by General Statistics Office (GSO) (including the Living Standard Survey, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Inter-Censal Population Survey, Population and Family Planning Change Surveys and Labour Force Survey)²⁵. Despite significant improvements over the past two decades in technical and institutional statistical capacity, data availability and credibility remains an issue in Viet Nam.

22 The National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Strategy defines the role of PLHIV as: "i) participate in mapping, developing sampling framework, commenting on methods, being interviewers for research, studies, ii) Encourage PLWH to go forward to health facilities for testing, counselling, and treatment, iii) provide feedback, recommendations on quality of services and intervention programmes to VAAC and provincial AIDS centres at a local level and iv) use of collected data to provide recommendations, prioritized identification, planning on programme and policy development. In addition, universities and experts from international organizations, including NGOs, participate in the national M&E working group, to provide timely and quality technical assistance for national and regional M&E units".

23 Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation (2011), *Managing Aid for Trade and Development Results: Viet Nam case study and World Bank and World Bank* (2011), *Country Partnership Strategy for the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the Period FY12 - FY16*.

24 Data is collected on the agreed indicators at a commune level. Agencies at district and commune levels synthesize the collected data following the indicator system and periodically report the implementation results to provincial level agencies. These provincial level agencies synthesize the collected data following the indicator system and periodically report to central level. Data reporting based on statistical indicators from provincial level to relevant ministry departments is carried out periodically. The frequency of reports varies depending on indicators. Reports can be submitted in papers or in some cases, electronically using tailored software.

25 In most surveys, citizens participate exclusively as respondents with no further role in the process. In only a few cases, is the role of citizens and organizations expanded to cover consultation in the design of the questionnaire, such as consultations for the design of the migration survey organized by the GSO with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support.

IV. Participatory monitoring for accountability mechanisms in Viet Nam

In recent years Viet Nam has experienced an expansion in the use of participatory monitoring mechanisms. This section briefly describes the mechanisms identified through the desk review, interviews with UN agencies and CSOs in country and during the national consultative dialogue.

The mechanisms are divided into two main categories. The first category encompasses the “institutionalized” participatory oversight mechanisms, understood as those set up within and regulated by the Vietnamese legal framework²⁶. The second includes mechanisms implemented in Viet Nam, but not formalized in the Constitution or laws. For analytical purposes, this second group has been subdivided in two sub-categories. The first sub-category is “other mechanisms”, which includes tools that have emerged from elected-bodies, Government, CSOs or donors for collecting data and analyzing information on policy implementation. Some of these mechanisms are in the process of institutionalization. The other sub-category covers tools delivered by the UN or international organizations to monitor the implementation of UN conventions and other commitments. All tools involve citizens and civil society in monitoring of the implementation of local, national and international policies, with the purpose of improving Government accountability. Table 2 lists the participatory monitoring mechanisms.

Table 2: Summary of the mechanisms for participatory monitoring in Viet Nam

INSTITUTIONALIZED MECHANISMS	NON-INSTITUTIONALIZED MECHANISMS	
	Other mechanisms	Under the framework of international commitments
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Petitions and comments through the VFF, mass organizations, PIBs and CISBs 2. National Assembly oversight mechanisms 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Assembly public consultations and VUSTA public debates 2. Citizen’s report cards 3. Interprovincial Indexes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) b. Justice Index c. Provincial Competitiveness Index (PCI) d. Rural Public Service Index 4. Other survey-based tools: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Stigma Index b. Corruption Barometer c. Viet Nam Industrial Investment Survey 5. Participatory socio-economic impact monitoring: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Participatory rural/urban poverty monitoring b. Rapid Impact Monitoring (RIM) 6. Community Score Card 7. Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) 8. Gender audits 9. Investigations by professional associations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AIDS Response Progress Report 2. Shadow/complementary reports: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) b. Convention on the Rights of the Child 3. United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) consultation process 4. Universal Periodic Review (UPR), summary of stakeholders information

²⁶ The understanding of institutionalization is based on the definition used in UNDP and Office of the Viet Nam National Assembly (2012) *Guidelines on the institutionalization of public consultations by the People’s Councils* (Reference material)

1. Institutionalized mechanisms²⁷

The legal framework provides citizens and CSOs wishing to be involved in policy implementation monitoring with several mechanisms, including (1) submission of comments and petitions to the CISBs, PIBs and VFF or relevant agencies as well as (2) participation in NA oversight activities.

1.1 Petitions and comments through the VFF, mass organizations, CISBs and PIBs

Citizens and VFF member organizations can submit comments to the VFF about implementation of Party directions and strategies, the State's policies and laws. Citizens are also given an opportunity to lodge comments via CISBs and PIBs. The VFF collects these opinions through consultations with its network of mass organizations and prepares a report presented annually at the opening of the NA²⁸. As the World Bank states, the report is "instructive both for the concerns themselves and for the weaknesses in accountability they identify"²⁹.

However, a lack of mechanisms for effective policy monitoring are problematic for CISBs, PIBs and VFF. Furthermore, the VFF's close relationship with the Party and partial financial dependency limits its ability to deliver critical assessments of policy implementation³⁰. Finally, according to the VFF, the absence of a law or ordinance on social supervision and criticism restricts its effectiveness in supervising the public function³¹.

Several additional factors have also limited CISBs and PIBs' ability to play a broader supervisory role, which has focused on the supervision of commune level public investment. Low coverage, in particular, is a hurdle. According to the Centre for Community Support and Development Studies (CECODES), Centre for Research and Training of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front (VFF-CRT) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2014), PIBs' coverage was only reported by 36.6 per cent of respondents nationwide in 2013, and across the country just 17 per cent of PAPI's respondents said CISBs existed in their localities. As concluded in the World Bank 2010 Report "Modern Institutions", CISBs and PIBs received limited financial assistance to conduct their supervisory role and capacities for policy monitoring are low. Finally, there is a lack of interest among local officials in empowering the PIBs and CISBs to play their supervisory role³².

1.2 National Assembly oversight activities

As illustrated in Table 1, the Law on the Oversight Activities of the National Assembly stipulates that the NA can carry out oversight of Government activities in a variety of ways, such as reviewing activity reports, questioning, document monitoring, conducting votes of confidence and establishing interim oversight committees. The public, mass media and community groups are allowed to participate in these oversight procedures (according to Art. 6). This participation is, however, often sought at the final stage of oversight sessions of the NA and NA Standing Committee³³, which adversely impacts on their level of engagement and outcomes from participation.

"People are only invited to review policies at the final stage instead of during the policy-making process. Communication is needed for people to know what to monitor and which policies will affect their lives".

**- participant at the national dialogue workshop organized in Viet Nam on
"participatory monitoring for accountability"**

²⁷ Based on UNDP and Office of the Viet Nam National Assembly (2012), *Research Report on Conceptual Differences between Public Consultations and Constituency Relations* (Reference material), constituency meetings have not been selected as a mechanism for participatory monitoring, because they seek to resolve individuals' requests and not improve the implementation of policies.

²⁸ Central Committee of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, Presidium. Ha Noi (19 May 2009), "Report: Synthesis of opinions and petitions of voters and the people." This document reported the collection of 2,446 opinions and petitions of voters and people throughout the country. Source: World Bank (2010)

²⁹ World Bank (2010)

³⁰ CECODES, VFF-CRT & UNDP (2014).

³¹ Nguyen Thien Nha, President of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, said: "The Constitution defines the obligations and authority of the Front on supervision and criticism. But we don't have a Law or ordinances on social supervision and criticism." at <http://vovworld.vn/en-us/Current-Affairs/Enhancing-social-supervision-and-criticism-to-promote-peoples-intellect/229667.vov>

³² World Bank (2010), CECODES, VFF-CRT & UNDP (2014)

³³ UNDP and Office of the Viet Nam National Assembly (2012) research report on oversight procedures of the National Assembly and National Assembly Standing Committee.

2. Other mechanisms

2.1 National Assembly Public Consultations and VUSTA public debates

In addition to the methods stipulated in the Law on the Oversight Activities of the National Assembly, some NA committees using the Law on the Promulgation of Legal Documents (2008) as a framework have held public consultations to collect inputs on the implementation of laws. Consultative meetings, social surveys, oversight missions with mass organizations and local people as well as meetings with experts have been utilized to collect information and evidence to serve their work. These public consultations have broadened the space for engagement of CSOs and citizens in the NA's oversight activities and are regarded by elected bodies as key tools for policy-making and monitoring. UN agencies are supporting the NA to strengthen its capacities to conduct public consultations efficiently and effectively, as well as increase the participation of CSOs and vulnerable people during these NA activities³⁴.

However, as indicated in the *Guidelines on public consultations for the Ethnic Council and Committees of the National Assembly*, "the regulations and procedures of public consultations are not clearly defined in the core legal documents, so that public consultations by NA committees have not yet become regular activities, and furthermore meaning that some committees have become confused about and hesitant in conducting public consultations"³⁵. It should be noted that the participation of vulnerable people in these activities is still marginal.

Decision 14 allows VUSTA to organize public debates, defined as activities "to provide comments, appraisal, critique and recommendations on the relevance of a particular project with specific objectives, conditions and situations" (Art. 2). These are important mechanisms for civil society to raise its voice on problems identified during the implementation of policy monitoring. However, the links between the VUSTA and Government generate concerns among some civil society organizations about the independence and neutrality of their activities.

2.2 Citizens Report Cards³⁶

Citizens Report Cards (CRCs) rely on surveys that provide quantitative feedback on citizens' perceptions of the quality, adequacy and efficiency of public services. The methodology involves surveying the intended users of particular public services to determine the quality, accessibility and overall satisfaction with such services.

The analysis of the initiatives identified through the desk review shows that:

- CRCs have been used in a number of provinces - such as An Giang, Dak Lak, Da Nang, Dien Bien, Dong Thap, Hai Phong, Ha Tinh, Hoa Binh, HCMC, Lai Chau and Nam Dinh - in Viet Nam since 2004³⁷.
- CRCs have been implemented under the leadership of central Government, local governments, People's Councils, NGOs or academia³⁸.
- CSOs have played different roles - as promoters of initiatives, advisors on questionnaires, data collectors or analyzers. However, groups of vulnerable people have had very little input into the process, limited to consultations on survey questionnaires in a few cases. Local governments, State agencies and think tanks have played a more prominent role in the collection and analysis of data.

34 For further information see UNFPA and the Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs of Viet Nam National Assembly (2012), *Review of Legal Documents on Oversight Activities by the National Assembly and Recommendations on Procedures and Tools to Be Developed for Oversight of Selected Laws Under the Responsibility of the Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs*. See also reports from UNDP and Office of the Viet Nam National Assembly under the project "Strengthening Capacity of People's Elected Bodies in Viet Nam (Phase III)".

35 UNDP and Office of the Viet Nam National Assembly (2012), *Guidelines on public consultations for the Ethnic Council and Committees of the National Assembly (Reference material)*.

36 The desk review identified similar surveys conducted to measure people's satisfaction, but were not referred to as CRCs. For example, surveys in Son La and Thai Binh provinces on people's satisfaction with grassroots democracy and quality of public services. In the second case, it was a joint effort between the Department of Home Affairs and VUSTA.

37 The examples analysed include: the CRC implemented in Hai Phong, Da Nang, Nam Dinh and HCMC in 2004 with World Bank support; Survey on Citizen's Satisfaction with Public Services carried out in HCMC, CRC conducted in HCMC and Dien Bien in 2009 with support from UNICEF and the CRC in Dong Thap in 2013 with UNICEF support.

38 Tran BX, Nguyen NPT (2012), *Patient Satisfaction with HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment in the Decentralization of Services Delivery in Viet Nam*.

- In some cases, the sample is selected to collect vulnerable groups' opinions or is randomly selected.
- Multilateral donors (World Bank, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP) and INGOs (such as ActionAid Viet Nam (AAV) and the Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia) have promoted and financially supported CRCs. The only case identified where funds were provided by local authorities was the "Survey on Citizen's satisfaction with Public Services," carried out in HCMC from 2006 to 2008. The financial support to conduct the survey was given by the People's Council.
- Often the CRCs are a one-off exercise, which limits the possibility of undertaking a comparison over time.
- CRCs have been more frequently implemented in the health sector, although they have also been used to assess other sectors and plans, such as services/policies provided under the National Targeted Programme to support the Socio-Economic Development Programme for Extremely Difficult Communes in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for Period 2006-2010 (often referred to as P135-II) as well as under the National Targeted Programme on Sustainable Poverty reduction 2012-2015 (NTP-SPR)³⁹.
- CRC have shown their significant value as a source of information on where and how services are not meeting civil society's expectations, key constraints faced in accessing public services, views on the quality and adequacy of services as well as and experiences when interacting with Government officials.

This mechanism is getting increasing attention and several organizations plan to conduct CRCs in additional locations and sectors⁴⁰. The recent approval of Decision 4448, which includes provisions to regularly measure people's satisfaction of public health services, is likely to further contribute to the expansion in the future use of CRCs.

2.3 Interprovincial Indexes

Interprovincial Indexes are quantitative tools that use surveys to collect people's opinions in several or all provinces in Viet Nam on policy areas, such as in governance and public administration. Several dimensions and sub-dimensions are identified and indicators are built for each of them. The dimensions are then integrated into a single index to facilitate overall comparison between provinces.

Three indexes that have been conducted and applied in Viet Nam:

a) Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index: Carried out since 2009 covering all provinces in Viet Nam, PAPI collects citizens' opinions on six dimensions of governance and public administration: (i) Participation at Local Levels, (ii) Transparency, (iii) Vertical Accountability, (iv) Control of Corruption, (v) Public Administrative Procedures and (vi) Public Service Delivery. It is a joint effort of VFF-CRT, CECODES and UNDP, with data collected by 500 final year university students from across Viet Nam. VFF-CRT and CECODES support the implementation of the survey at a local level. UNDP staff and international experts play a key role in analyzing data. Since 2009, it has targeted 50,000 citizens (13,892 in the latest report of 2013). The sample is randomly selected and represents the different demographic groups across the country⁴¹.

b) Justice Index⁴²: Implemented in 2010 and 2012, the Justice Index appraised the administration of justice and rule of law as experienced by citizens. In particular, it focused on the dimensions of accessibility, equity, integrity, reliability and efficiency, along with the guarantee of fundamental rights. The Justice Index is the result of collaboration between UNDP, the Viet Nam Lawyers' Association and CECODES. As with PAPI, final year university students or graduates with majors in sociology, social work or another relevant field, collect the data, which was then analyzed by UNDP staff and international experts. In 2012, it covered 21 provinces and included the opinions of 5,045 respondents.

³⁹ Nguyen et al. (2009), *Report on results of citizen's report card survey on people's satisfaction with P135-II*.

⁴⁰ Some examples are: UNDP, Centre for Community Support and Development Studies and the Water Integrity Network plan to conduct CRCs in the water sector. Source: http://www.watergovernance.org/documents/WGF/Reports/events/2010_IACC_Vietnam.pdf. AAV plans to use this tool for people to monitor the accountability of public service providers in urban settings. AAV's 2013 report can be found online at http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/aav_annual_report_2013.pdf.

⁴¹ Several tests were applied to ensure the representativeness of the PAPI 2013 sample with the national population (gender, ethnicity, occupation and educational levels). To analyse differences between individuals, PAPI and dimension scores are regressed on individual characteristics of the respondents (age, ethnicity, education, wealth and occupational prestige).

⁴² UNDP, VLA and CECODES (2013), *Justice Index. Assessment of Distributive Justice and Equality from a Citizen-based Survey in 2012*

c) Provincial Competitiveness Index⁴³: The PCI collects the views of enterprises on the ease of doing business, quality of economic governance and administrative reform efforts. It is implemented by the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry with USAID support. The chamber collects and analyzes data with support from an international expert and national consultants. It covers 63 provinces and has been carried out since 2005. Some 8,093 domestic non-state enterprises and 1,609 foreign-invested enterprises operating in Viet Nam were targeted in 2013.

d) Rural Public Service Index (RPSI)⁴⁴: The Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Asian Foundation developed and tested RPSI in three provinces (Binh Dinh, Ha Nam and Vinh Long) on four agricultural and rural services: agriculture extension, veterinary, clean water and commune health. RPSI collects service users' opinions on accessibility, performance and dynamics across eight dimensions: including coverage, availability, facilities, staffing, outcome, accountability and responsiveness. The sample is randomly selected and represents different demographic groups.

The indexes have gained broad recognition in Viet Nam, particularly at provincial level. For example, the PCI has become an important tool to bring economic governance insight to provincial leaders and help them find ways to improve governance and promote local socio-economic development. For businesses, the PCI provides a key channel to voice opinions and expectations to Government. For central Government, the PCI gauges the gaps to be filled between policy design and implementation, between centralization and decentralization, between policy ideas and reality, by businesses and citizens.

The indexes' sound methodology, annual periodicity and ability to make comparisons between provinces are important factors that contribute to this recognition. Citizens' stronger participation in designing questionnaires has been suggested as a way to improve the capacity of instruments to reflect the reality of people's lives.

2.4 Other surveyed-based tools

Similar to the CRC, the Stigma Index and the Corruption Barometer are tools based on surveys that collect information about people's views and experiences. They are not, however, only focused on public services.

a) Stigma Index: The Stigma Index aims to: (i) document the various experiences of PLHIV within their communities regarding HIV-related stigma and discrimination, (ii) provide an evidence base on HIV-related stigma for policy change and programmatic interventions and (iii) measure changes over time as it relates to changing attitudes. It is the result of collaboration between the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Viet Nam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+). The process of conducting the Stigma Index is as important as the result. The survey is conducted "by PLHIV, for PLHIV": PLHIV are managers of the study, data collectors and data analysts with technical support from Viet Nam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control, UNAIDS, World Health Organization and others. In 2011 the Stigma Index was conducted in five provinces. It targeted 1,642 PLHIV, including 150 people who inject drugs, 150 female sex workers and 142 men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM). In 2014, the second round of the Stigma Index is being undertaken.

Before the Stigma Index was implemented, the USAID/Health Policy Initiative (HPI) supported a similar citizen monitoring initiative in 2010 to collect information from PLHIV on stigma and discrimination, and access to antiretroviral treatment. The survey was designed in collaboration with members of vulnerable groups (VNP+ and the Northern Network of MSM), local organizations (Viet Nam Civil Society Partnership Platform on AIDS-VCSPA, the Centre for Counseling on Laws and Policies on Health and HIV/AIDS) and the HPI. VNP+ members collected and entered the data, before HPI cleaned and validated it and developed a preliminary analysis. HPI experts then conducted several sessions with VNP+ members to review the data⁴⁵.

⁴³ Edmund Malesky (2014), *The Viet Nam Provincial Competitiveness Index: Measuring Economic Governance for Private Sector Development. 2013 Final Report. PCI Report #9*. Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry and USAID.

⁴⁴ Rudec (2013), *Agriculture and Rural Public Service Index Report*.

⁴⁵ USAID/Health Policy Initiative (HPI) (2010), *Citizen monitoring. Final report Viet Nam*.

b) Corruption Barometer⁴⁶: Conducted in 2010 and 2013, the objective of the Corruption Barometer is to collect the general public's views and experiences of corruption. It is an initiative of Towards Transparency, Transparency International's national chapter in Viet Nam. Data is collected by a local think tank (Indochina Research), which analyzes it with support from Worldwide Independent Network/Gallup International Association. In 2013, 1,000 citizens were randomly selected from 15 provinces to participate in the survey.

c) Viet Nam Industrial Survey: The Foreign Investment Agency, under the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), implemented this survey in 2010 with technical assistance from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. The GSO was selected as subcontractor to implement the survey. It is based on a sample scope of 1,500 enterprises in nine Vietnamese provinces. The questionnaire looked at different aspects of foreign and domestic-invested enterprises' investment activities. Data analysis provided insights into the impact of foreign direct investment in Viet Nam, providing valuable evidence for policy dialogues to facilitate a shift in investment promotion strategy from quantity to quality investment.

2.5 Participatory economic and social impact monitoring⁴⁷

Two main participatory poverty-monitoring tools have been identified through the desk review - Participatory Poverty Monitoring in Rural Communities in Viet Nam and RIM. Both aim to provide information on poverty and establish an "early warning system" on negative socio-economic impacts on poor and vulnerable people. In addition, they seek to enhance people's participation in monitoring, with a view to making poverty alleviation more effective and equitable.

a) Participatory Poverty Monitoring in Rural Communities in Viet Nam: Since 2007, Participatory Monitoring in Rural Communities in Viet Nam has been conducted annually by AAV and Oxfam. In the framework of Viet Nam becoming a World Trade Organization member and the onset of the global economic crisis, this initiative is intended as a longitudinal study of poverty outcomes linked with changes in livelihoods and market access of vulnerable groups. The methodology combines household questionnaires, in-depth interviews for case studies, group discussions, information sheets and interviews with local officials and other stakeholders. A monitoring network of nine provinces was established. One commune in each province was selected for fieldwork, with the exception of Ninh Thuan province where two communes were selected. In each commune two villages were chosen, one near the commune centre and the other in a more remote and challenging location.

A core poverty monitoring assessment group of 15 to 20 people was established in each selected province, comprising representatives of provincial departments, representatives of district divisions, AAV and Oxfam field staff in localities and representatives from communes and villages selected for the survey. Core groups were responsible for monitoring their own locality and were involved in organization as well as data collection and the drafting of field reports. They received technical support from consultants of Truong Xuan (Ageless) Company and AAV and Oxfam programme officers.

b) Rapid Impact Monitoring: With support from UNDP and UNICEF, four rapid assessment exercises were undertaken in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2013 to assess the short-term economic and social impacts of the global economic recession and identify emerging/new forms of vulnerability under-shocks. The methodology included in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with a range of actors.

For the 2013 round of RIM, the Institute of Labour Science and Science Affairs – the in-house research body of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs conducted the most recent assessment focused on "Assessment of the impact of the economic downturn on employment and role of the social protection system"⁴⁸. The sectors most affected by the crisis were identified through available quantitative data and locations were purposively

46 Towards Transparency and Transparency International (2013), *2013 Global Corruption Barometer. Views and experiences from Vietnamese citizens.*

47 Oxfam and ActionAid Viet Nam (2011): *Participatory Poverty Monitoring in Rural Communities in Viet Nam.*

48 Previous RIM was implemented by Centre for Analysis and Forecasting, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences who used RIM to conduct rapid surveys on the impact of the economic crisis (enterprises, handicraft villages, worker groups and population groups) in seven provinces from February to May 2009, to develop programmes on Crisis Impact Monitoring in 12 provinces from August to September in 2009, assess the impacts of the post-economic crisis in eight provinces in 2010 and deployment of Resolution No.11 on assistance for enterprises and employees in 2011.

selected through reviews at provincial, district and commune levels. Group discussions or in-depth interviews were conducted with agriculture and construction sector workers as well as poor, near-poor and migrant worker households. In-depth interviews were also undertaken with enterprises, construction group leaders as well as agricultural input and construction material sellers to understand the relationships and social support between labour groups in society. The number of interviewees participating in the interviews and group discussions totaled 1,698, of which 1,356 engaged in group discussions and 342 were interviewed individually.

2.6 Community Score Cards

Community Score Cards (CSC) are qualitative monitoring tools used to assess the quality of public services through focus group discussions with service users and service providers.

With UNICEF support, the MPI's Central Institute for Economic Management (CIEM) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) implemented CSCs in two districts in HCMC and Quang Nam province. The objective was to assess the quality of health services provided by health stations to children aged under six and migrant families. The methodology included a document review and focus group discussions. Some 45 service users and 24 service providers participated in the initiative. Participants were selected randomly, based on communal office lists (non-migrant) and health station lists (migrant).

2.7 Public Expenditure Tracking Survey

PETS is a review of financial flows, a quantitative survey and interviews that collect information and assess outputs and accountability of service facilities and/or frontline providers such as schools and clinics.

Three examples of PETS were identified through the desk review. The first was conducted in 2009 by CIEM, with support from UNICEF and the ODI in two Tra Vinh province districts to assess whether Programme 167 (Housing for the Poor) was implemented according to regulations. A 300-household sample was selected in the province, with 150 households in each district. The four selected hamlets had the most beneficiaries and random selections were undertaken based on the house support list. All suppliers of construction materials and district contractors were surveyed. The second example was conducted within the Mid-Term Review of P135-II and the National Targeted Programme on Poverty Reduction. With UNDP support, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and Committee on Ethnic Minorities (CEMA) implemented PETS in 2009, collecting data from five provinces, with 10 districts and 12 communes to reflect the flow of public expenditure to different services and policies under these national targeted programmes. The third example took place in Dien Bien province, with UNICEF support, to measure the effectiveness and adequacy of the cash transfer programme implemented under Decision 112 to increase school attendance by poor and ethnic minority children. The 2012 survey was implemented in two out of nine districts in the province to collect information from programme officials at all administrative levels, 65 primary and lower secondary schools and 293 households.

2.8 Gender Audits

The gender audits are participatory assessments that take into account factual data and staff perceptions of the achievement of gender equality through an organization's policies, programmes and internal culture so women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.

A gender audit was conducted by CIEM, with support from UNICEF and ODI, in 2009 to assess the extent of gender mainstreaming in the SEDP of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) and Quang Nam province. The method used a combined review of documents, a self-assessment survey, interviews with key informants and focus group discussions.

2.9 Investigation by professional associations⁴⁹

In addition, some professional associations (HCMC and Kon Tum Union of Science and Technology Associations and the Viet Nam Federation of Civil Engineering Associations) conducted investigations on Government construction projects and were successful in getting local authorities to take some of their suggestions on board.

Associations also reported several obstacles in conducting these activities, especially a lack of information about

49 VUFO-NGO Resource Centre (2008), "Forms of Engagement between State Agencies & Civil Society Organizations in Viet Nam".

Government plans and projects, limited human and financial resources, low expertise in policy analysis and advocacy, lack of an enabling legal environment to establish an association and involvement of some State agencies and officials in their activities⁵⁰.

In addition to these tools, UNICEF is in the process of supporting the implementation of child-based audits during 2014.

3. Participatory monitoring under global processes

The adoption of international commitments, particularly international conventions, often carries with it the obligation of periodic reporting on national level measures to meet relevant requirements and progress in meeting agreed targets.

These processes have become an increasingly important avenue for dialogue between the Government of Viet Nam and different stakeholder groups. The review mechanisms for many international conventions and agreements offer opportunities for civil society voices to be heard in an open, transparent and systematic manner.

3.1 AIDS Response Progress Report

As part of the global review process agreed with the UN General Assembly, Member States submit an AIDS Response Progress Report every two years. One of the report components is the National Commitments and Policy Instrument (NCPI). The NCPI measures progress in the development and implementation of national-level HIV-AIDS policies, strategies and laws. The NCPI questionnaire is divided in two parts, one is administered by Government officials (part A) and other by representatives from CSOs, bilateral agencies and UN organizations (part B).

UNAIDS coordinates contributions to part B, which includes questions on political support and leadership, human rights, prevention and treatment, care and support. To collect inputs from different stakeholders including CSOs (21 organizations in the 2014 reporting process), UNAIDS organizes consultation meetings to review the standardized questionnaire and forge consensus among participating CSOs.

The responses to the NCPI questionnaires feed into Viet Nam's AIDS Response Progress Report. Civil society is also well represented at the national consensus meeting that validates the national report. Participants at each consultation meeting select a civil society task force made up of PLHIV, people who inject drugs, MSM, sex workers and representatives of faith-based organizations, to represent them at the national consensus meeting.

3.2 UN Convention Against Corruption: consultation process

Viet Nam ratified the United Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2009. As a State Party to the UNCAC and according to the UNCAC Review Mechanism, Viet Nam was selected to conduct self-assessment in 2011. The UNCAC Review Mechanism encourages State Parties to consult broadly with non-State actors (including social organizations, business and academia) when preparing national reports.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as custodian of UNCAC, has promoted CSOs' involvement in the UNCAC Review Mechanism. For example in a training organized for Vietnamese experts - mostly from the Government Inspectorate - in preparation for the UNCAC Review in Viet Nam in 2011, UNODC paid special attention to the engagement of CSOs during this process.

Towards Transparency, in close consultation with the Government Inspectorate and UNDP, held a consultation process with CSOs and experts to contribute to the country self-assessment⁵¹. The process included questionnaires, in-depth interviews and a consultation workshop.

⁵⁰ World Bank (2010), VUFO-NGO Resource Centre (2008).

⁵¹ Towards Transparency and Transparency International (2011), Survey report in support of the Government's self-assessment of the implementation of the UNCAC in Viet Nam in 2011.

The questionnaire and in-depth interview guide were produced in cooperation with UNDP and Government Inspectorate, academic institutions and socio-political organizations experts. The first questionnaire section addressed civil society's engagement in the country's preparation for self-assessment⁵². The workshop aimed to further clarify aspects on which agreement had not been reached or not thoroughly addressed through the questionnaire and in-depth interviews.

On participation of civil society in the process, the UN and key donors to public administration and corruption prevention programmes were invited to contribute inputs on the self-assessment and the draft report. But, CSOs did not participate and a Government coordinating agency supported Towards Transparency in conducting the survey. Specifically, a Government Inspectorate representative attended a workshop jointly held by Towards Transparency and UNDP to share information on the self-assessment plan's implementation and formulation of the country report. At the meeting, the Government Inspectorate representative expressed support for the Towards Transparency initiative. Finally, the Government held a workshop to consult numerous agencies, social organizations, donors and experts on the draft country report.

3.3 Shadow report

a. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The CEDAW Committee encourages NGOs to submit alternative information, a mechanism that has created space for women's organizations to monitor implementation of the Convention by the Government.

With the participation of NGOs, Viet Nam has produced one shadow report to the CEDAW Committee (2006) and is working on a second one. Prior to the 2006 report, NGOs were not involved in shadow reporting to human rights treaty bodies. The Viet Nam Women's Union, a mass organization under the VFF, is in charge of the preparation of alternative reports for global events.

For the 2006 shadow report, a handful of NGOs with the support of United Nations Development Fund for Women or UNIFEM (now UN Women), in partnership with the Embassy of Switzerland and AAV, collected data and drafted the shadow report to provide an alternative voice and perspective to the Government's report. As each NGO had its own area of expertise, they worked individually on an assigned part and later consulted each other to finalize the report. For the first time, an independent NGO network developed a shadow report to point out shortcomings in CEDAW's implementation in Viet Nam and served as a countering argument to the Government report. Despite representing an important step forward, NGOs still faced being under-recognized by the Government and society. Moreover, the NGO network remained weak and lacked coordination, with NGOs better suited to act separately in their individual capacities. Despite forming a network, their voices were not strong enough to influence policy-makers. In January 2013, the Government of Viet Nam submitted its periodic report to the CEDAW Committee. Prior to this, in 2012 and upon the visit of the CEDAW Committee to Viet Nam, the Government conducted an official meeting with stakeholders, including mass organizations and local NGOs to share the outline and draft CEDAW report for comment.

No consultation was organized to present the report and get inputs from CSOs. The NGO networks responded by developing another shadow report that will be submitted to the CEDAW Committee before the session to review the Government of Viet Nam's periodic report in July 2015. Preparations are being coordinated by the Gender and Community Development Network on behalf of two other NGO networks, DOVIPNET (Domestic Violence Prevention Network) and NEW (Network for Women Empowerment). The networks plan to reach out to under-represented women's groups such as HIV-positive women, young women, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender community and groups beyond Ha Noi, to ensure a more inclusive process reflects the diverse perspectives and experiences of different groups of women. Representation of women from a broader range of groups has made the NGO network more credible and powerful in presenting counter arguments to the Government in CEDAW's implementation and monitoring.

⁵² Questions included: a) Did the Government make public the contact information for the country focal point? (Yes/No), b) Were civil society organizations consulted in the preparation of the self-assessment? Yes/No. If yes, who (Mass organizations, Professional and umbrella associations, Local NGOs, Local Academic Institutions, Local Media, Local CBOs, Other (please list)), c) Was the self-assessment published online or provided to the expert assessing? (Yes/No) If so, by whom? d) Was civil society invited to provide input to the official reviewers? Please enter the form of input invited and e) Is the Government committed to publishing the full country report (please indicate if published by UNODC and/or country).

b. Complementary Report to the Periodical Country Report on Viet Nam's Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁵³

NGOs in Viet Nam jointly produced this report, which commented on the government's achievements in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child between 2002 and 2007. The reporting process started in 2007 and four INGOs and two VNGOs were mandated by the Child Rights Working Group at the VUFO-NGO Resource Centre to form an independent NGO sub-working group to produce the report. The group mobilized other Vietnamese civil society organizations to take part in the writing of the report, acting as a forum for discussion and setting up a process to develop the report.

In January and February 2008, six consultations with children on issues in the draft Complementary Report were held in North, Central and South Viet Nam with the participation of 339 children (girls and boys) aged between 10 and 16.

3.4 Universal Periodic Review:⁵⁴ summary of stakeholders' information

The UPR involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. According to General Assembly Resolution 60/251 and Security Council Resolution 5/1, the objective of the review process is to determine the fulfillment by all UN Member States of their international human rights obligations and commitments.

A review of a State is based on three documents: a national report prepared by the State under review, a compilation of UN information on the State under review prepared by the Office of the OHCHR and a summary of information submitted by other stakeholders (including civil society actors), also prepared by the OHCHR.

The review itself takes place in Geneva, Switzerland in a UPR Working Group session. A few days after the interactive dialogue, the Working Group adopts the report of the proceedings. A final outcome document, containing the Working Group's report and position of the State under review on the recommendations put forward, is adopted at the following plenary session of the Human Rights Council, a few months after the review.

Civil society actors can submit information to OHCHR to be included in the summary of stakeholders' information. Information used in the summary will be subsequently posted on the OHCHR website as a background document. NGOs in a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council can be accredited to participate in the Working Group and Human Rights Council session as observers.

Viet Nam has been through the UPR process twice, in 2009 and 2014. Civil society stakeholders were involved in the consultation process at a national level leading to preparation of the national report through consultation meetings.

Furthermore, CSOs made a joint submission with the direct contribution and consultation of 60 NGOs and community-based groups, and several individual experts. The consultation process was conducted through six thematic workshops and group discussions, one field study and three consultation workshops, including one national consultation and one regional consultation. The process was coordinated by a working group of members from three Vietnamese NGOs networks: GPAR, GENCOMNET and CIFPEN, together with academia and independent researchers.

With support from several donors, organizations received human rights training to prepare the submission. Furthermore, during the process an international human rights expert provided close support to the organizations. CSOs engaged the Government throughout the process, including training activities. This involvement gave transparency to the process and opened new opportunities for dialogue between CSOs and Government. After the process, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited several CSOs to consultation meetings on related subjects.

⁵³ The report can be found at: http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/webfm_send/4394

⁵⁴ OHCHR, *Universal Periodic Review: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*.

V. Lessons learned⁵⁵

The participatory monitoring initiatives implemented and assessed in Viet Nam provided important lessons, including:

- a. Adaptation to the local context and local capacities:** Not only goals, but also monitoring frameworks need to be adapted to the local context. There needs to be a balance between indicators that allow for comparison and indicators based on the national situation, policies and programmes. Furthermore, during the adaptation it is necessary to pay attention to the concepts and language used, and clear terms should be found in the local language.

“When Government reports back on policies, it uses very abstract targets and indicators”:

- participant at the national dialogue workshop organized in Viet Nam on “participatory monitoring for accountability”

If data collection instruments are part of the monitoring framework, some should be designed to correspond to the capacities of CSOs so they can be fully involved in data analysis and subsequent development of policy recommendations.

- b. Early engagement of Government or service providers:** Before participatory monitoring, Government officials must be aware it is completely in line with the Party and Government’s declared strategies and it will help them achieve development outcomes. Furthermore, they should receive capacity building on participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation. Awareness-raising actions should be complemented by activities to reduce stigma, for example against PLHIV or ethnic minority people.

If Government officials or service providers are not involved in the collection of information, they should be informed about the monitoring objectives and that collaboration may be required. It is crucial to be allowed to implement field work, access to information and overcome resistance in capturing citizens’ feedback on some areas, such as public finance.

- c. Comprehensive and long-term support and capacity building for CSOs and vulnerable groups is critical for effective participation in policy monitoring:** The starting point to engage CSOs and vulnerable groups in policy monitoring activities is to build a deep awareness of people’s rights and a sound knowledge on the commitments enshrined in local, national and international policies⁵⁶. Policy analysis and monitoring capacities should then be built, including mechanisms available under international agreements.

“People cannot participate in the monitoring process because they do not have the information they need. For example, we would like women to have more access to land rights, but if you go and talk to the women in rural areas you’ll see that almost none even know that they have rights to have their names next to their husband’s in land registration”.

“People need to be trained properly, equipped with sufficient knowledge to take part effectively in monitoring exercises”.

- participants at the national dialogue workshop organized in Viet Nam on “participatory monitoring for accountability”.

⁵⁵ MPI and UNICEF (2011), Making Social Audit work for Viet Nam: Key Findings and Lessons Learned from a Pilot of Four Social Audit Tools and HPI.

⁵⁶ From February to May 2014 Oxfam in Viet Nam conducted a survey on 40 public investment projects in the provinces of Ba Ria-Vung Tau, Hoa Binh, Nam Dinh and Quang Tri. The report stated that citizens have no information on detailed plans, designs and costs of projects which are 100 per cent funded by the State budget, especially projects whose investors are district or provincial governments. The report found that Viet Nam’s citizens have limited access to information about their provinces’ socio-economic development and public investment plans. Information found at <http://www.thanhniennews.com/business/public-investment-projects-ineffective-due-to-shortage-of-residents-supervision-26612.html>

d. Use of sound methodologies that include a combination of quantitative and qualitative tools: To overcome decision-makers' initial distrust of CSO-collected data, it is important to define a strong methodology and provide a detailed explanation when meeting public officials or service providers.

Triangulation of data, including quantitative and qualitative data, and comparative studies add greater depth to study results. Qualitative tools assist in finding answers to questions not well-supported by quantitative statistical data. A good example is Ho Chi Minh Academy's efforts, following PAPI results, to undertake extensive comparative research in 15 provinces to better understand factors influencing provincial level performance. However, some research teams and Government partners find it more difficult to utilize tools that have a more qualitative focus.

Furthermore, during the implementation of surveys, attention needs to be paid to the training and selection of interviewers to avoid undue subjectivity and conflicts of interest. Moreover, a clear substitution process needs to be designed to avoid discretion of other actors in choosing people and households to be surveyed.

Finally, consultation workshops can only yield good results when measures are taken to assure attendants are provided with related documents prior to workshops and there is enough time for meaningful discussion.

e. Regular and constant efforts contribute to better results: First, periodicity provides an opportunity to improve and expand the quality of monitoring exercises, versus one-off consultations or exercises. Second, cyclical mechanisms also provide an opportunity for feedback on improvements between cycles. Finally, perseverance is essential to yield results. AAV, Oxfam and PAPI poverty rural monitoring and RIM are among the few examples of participatory mechanisms conducted on an annual basis. After five years, an increasing number of provinces see PAPI as an essential monitoring and evaluation tool to help reflect their performance⁵⁷. Communities where AAV and Oxfam monitoring takes place have undertaken policy changes following their recommendations.

f. Resources: The implementation of participatory monitoring mechanisms requires a significant amount of human and financial resources. Focused on the delivery of services and with limited resources, many CSOs in Viet Nam struggle to devote human and financial resources to these initiatives. Those who do engage commonly encounter difficulties in keeping their commitments on a long-term basis. Therefore, taking into account the importance of perseverance to achieve results, CSOs should carefully plan and be selective on engagement in policy monitoring activities.

g. Collaboration with media: Another key element identified as critical for the effective use of participatory monitoring results in holding Government accountable is collaboration with the media. CSOs report good examples of collaboration and recognize the media's role in exposing the Government to the results of their monitoring initiatives.

h. Devolution: Feedback on participation results is vital to encourage people to continue participating.

⁵⁷ To date, more than a third of Viet Nam's 63 provinces have analyzed and/or requested their respective sectoral departments and agencies formulate action plans and directives to improve provincial performance and better serve citizens. In 2013, nine provinces issued specific policy documents to address strengths and weaknesses identified by PAPI. Four other provinces took the initiative to host provincial diagnostics workshops and comparative analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

CSOs' supervision of the public function in Viet Nam is largely integrated in the legal and policy framework and is taken as an essential strategy to improve the effective implementation of policies and programmes.

However, few participatory tools have been institutionalized and only some CSOs, who have strong links to the Party and Government, have been officially given clear roles and mechanisms to monitor the implementation of local and national policies. These mechanisms are insufficient to ensure broad and diverse civil society participation and uncover sound evidence on policy implementation, constraining the ability of organizations to make the Government accountable.

"A system for citizens to participate is absent now."

- participant at the national dialogue workshop organized in Viet Nam on "participatory monitoring for accountability".

In the framework of the Public Administration Reform Master Programme, more attention is being paid to surveys that capture people's perceptions. In recent years, particular interest has been shown in the participation of citizens to assess the performance of public service delivery agencies and CRCs are gaining prominence as a mechanism for downward accountability.

In addition to CRCs, many CSOs, State actors and elected bodies with donor support have implemented other participatory monitoring tools in Viet Nam. These tools have also shed light on where reforms are needed and provide clear signals about how to improve policies. Their implementation has faced some important challenges. First, some decision-makers are still reluctant to use alternative methods of participatory monitoring and the practice of sharing information is neither well rooted in practice nor mandated. Second, the knowledge of many CSOs and decision-makers about participatory policy monitoring is limited. Third, local organizations have scarce resources to devote to the implementation of policy monitoring tools. Fourth, vulnerable groups have often played a marginal or passive role and there have only been limited attempts to develop mechanisms for the participatory monitoring of policies and programmes by vulnerable groups. Fifth, there has been very limited innovation and use of technology. Finally, the ability to influence policy through participatory monitoring findings has proven challenging⁵⁸.

The review mechanisms of international conventions and other global processes have opened a window for civil society in Viet Nam to engage in dialogue with the Government on issues of compliance with international and national commitments. However, the engagement of some CSOs such as local NGOs is often shaped as a formalistic consultation organized after the review has been conducted without civil society participation.

In this context, donors and international NGOs have played an important role in supporting engagement with national and local government to show the benefits of using these tools, building the capacity of decision-makers and local organizations, supporting the methodological design, as well as analysis of data collected and provision of financial support to implement initiatives. They have also, jointly with local NGOs, helped bring the voices of vulnerable groups to decision-making spaces.

"People are not confident enough to have a voice in these issues. NGOs help bring people's voices to district and province levels. People haven't been aware and haven't got adequate knowledge to find what they need to participate in the use of the State budget. NGOs are bridging the gap between people, especially poor people and vulnerable groups, and policy-makers".

- participant at the national dialogue workshop organized in Viet Nam on "participatory monitoring for accountability".

⁵⁸ The VUFO-NGO Resource Centre (2008) report, Forms of Engagement between State Agencies & Civil Society Organizations in Viet Nam, identified that civil society in Viet Nam is not well able to hold the State and private sector to account. Participants in the consultation confirmed that the situation a few years later was similar, and the impact in particular at national level, was limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At a national level

- i. The participation of all CSOs in policy monitoring should be further politically and institutionally integrated. The creation of an enabling framework implies the development of regulations that facilitate the registration of civil society groups, promote independence of CSOs as well as guarantees access to information.

"We need to create an environment where people have access to information".

"Accountability implies disclosing information, that enhances accountability.

"Monitoring must be independent. We need a law to protect the independence of whoever is doing the monitoring".

"NGOs haven't got a role as a stakeholder independent from the Government in reporting. There haven't been national mechanisms in place yet to ensure that independent monitoring role of NGOs is carried out".

"Institutional framework needs to be improved, provide the channel to provide feedback and enhance transparency and dialogue with people".

"Without transparency, how can we ask for accountability?"

- participants at the national dialogue workshop organized in Viet Nam on "participatory monitoring for accountability".

It also requires the institutionalization of new and diverse participatory monitoring mechanisms, including channels for CSOs to engage in constructive and meaningful dialogue with decision-makers on findings obtained through implementation of these mechanisms.

- ii. More attention should be given to improving M&E systems, so all policies and programmes include clear indicators, timeframes, roles and responsibilities as well as describe the different ways community-based monitoring will be conducted so opinions by those affected by programmes or policies are fully taken into account. More descriptive and representative data should be collected to holistically measure and evaluate the extent to which policies, programmes, and services reach poor and vulnerable people. The use of information and communication technology, including social media, for monitoring activities should be further explored.

- iii. Capacities of all actors on how to monitor the compliance of local, national and international commitments should be further strengthened. In particular, more efforts are needed to build the capacities of marginalized groups to be fully engaged in the implementation of participatory monitoring tools. This can include training and practice to utilize data collection tools, how to analyze data and use data for advocacy purposes.

- iv. The engagement of a broader range of CSOs and vulnerable groups should be promoted from the development of policies and monitoring mechanism to the end result, so a diverse range of actors can provide inputs to draft reports, assessment plans and tools.

For designers of Post-2015 Agenda monitoring mechanisms:

- i. Advise and encourage Member States to increase publicity of future development goals and their assessment process through a broad range of mass media and through thematic workshops or press conferences. These will all contribute to informing the public in the broadest possible manner so it can contribute inputs to the process at each stage.

- ii. Encourage Member States to work closely with civil society from an early stage by setting up mechanisms for regular dialogue where organizations are given real power to decide on the processes, methods and analysis to conduct assessments.
- iii. Require governments to integrate participatory methodologies for monitoring progress towards international development goals and specifically report on the participation of civil society during the review process. List a number of questions that distinguish different levels of participation, revealing the true extent to which participation in the process has been achieved.
- iv. Promote a cyclical mechanism to ensure regular monitoring and provide an opportunity for feedback on possible improvements between cycles.

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