

# Viet Nam



## Executive Summary

# Civil Society Spotlight Report on the SDG 4 Implementation Status in Viet Nam

### COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES



<b>TOTAL POPULATION:</b>	95.541 million (UNESCO, 2017)
<b>POPULATION AGED 14 YEARS AND YOUNGER:</b>	22.032 million (23%) (UNESCO, 2017)
<b>GNI PER CAPITA:</b>	US\$ 2,160 (World Bank, 2017)
<b>INCOME GROUP:</b>	Lower Middle Income Status (World Bank, 2018)
<b>HDI VALUE AND RANK:</b>	0.694, 116 out of 189 (UNDP, 2017)
<b>POVERTY HEADCOUNT RATIO AT NATIONAL POVERTY LINES (% OF POPULATION):</b>	9.8% (World Bank, 2016)
<b>ENROLMENT RATE:</b>	Primary - 99.4% Lower Secondary - 92.3% Upper Secondary - 63.3% (MoET, 2017)
<b>EDUCATION BUDGET:</b>	21% of the State Budget (MoET, 2017)

### Country and Education Context

Viet Nam has experienced major reforms and strides in the last three decades that resulted in remarkable impacts in its economy and society.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) report in 2017, Viet Nam is one of the two countries expected to lead growth among the ASEAN-5 (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam). The GDP growth is 6.2 per cent, 6.3 per cent and 7.08 per cent respectively in 2016, 2017, and 2018. In the next five years from 2018 to 2022, the average growth is expected to reach 6.2 per cent.

With these economic gains, the country's social protection policies have also expanded to consist of five (5) elements covering social insurance, health insurance, unemployment insurance, social relief, and social assistance aimed at preventing, mitigating, and supporting recovery from risks associated with economic growth.

Viet Nam has been maintaining policy commitments to the universal provision of education and health care as rights embedded in its 2013 Constitution. These commitments have been backed by public resource allocations.

Over the past two decades, Viet Nam has made impressive progress in expanding access to education and health services. However, there is still a need to improve early childhood care and education, especially for children under 5 years old, build on strong primary and secondary schooling system, expand vocational and higher education, strengthen non-formal education, and improve education quality at all levels.

### Country Implementation of the SDGs and SDG 4

*The issuance and enactment of the National Action Plan on Sustainable Development (NAP on SDGs) followed by the National Action Plan on the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal on Education (NAP on SDG4) is the first step towards securing an official*



*commitment and engaging different sectors and stakeholders for the achievement of the SDGs and targets in Viet Nam.*

The commitments of the Government of Viet Nam in achieving the SDGs by 2030 is evidenced by the NAP on SDGs that was approved by the Prime Minister's decision number 662/QĐ-TTĐ 2017 in May 2017. In June 2017, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) issued the Plan of Action on the Sustainable Development Goal on Education until 2030 (NAP on SDG 4). Among the 17 SDGs, the NAP on SDG 4 was the first sector plan on the SDGs to be finalised in the country. By June 2018, 29 out of 64 provinces in Viet Nam have developed their provincial SDG 4 Plans of Action based on the NAP on SDG 4. Among the 14 national indicators of SDG 4, MOET is responsible for 11 indicators, the General Statistics Office (GSO) is responsible for two indicators, and the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) is responsible for one indicator. In January 2019, the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) officially issued Circular No. 03/2019/TT-BKHDT on the 158 SDG indicators of Viet Nam to monitor the progress of the 17 goals and 115 targets in the NAP on SDGs. The Circular assigns responsibilities to relevant ministries and agencies in terms of reporting on specific indicators and its required frequency.

The MPI has been assigned as the focal point on the implementation of the NAP on SDGs, while the Planning-Finance Departments of other ministries and related agencies and provincial Departments of Planning and Investment are the focal agencies tasked with implementing the NAP on SDGs. Some ministries and related agencies and provinces have also established steering committees, sustainable development offices and/or supporting units on sustainable development. The NAP on SDGs and the NAP on SDG 4 are also in line with Viet Nam's 2011- 2020 Social and Economic Development Strategy and the 2016-2020 Social and Economic Development Plan.

In 2018, Viet Nam was among the countries that produced the Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDGs. In its VNR 2018 Report, the Government of Viet Nam provided a thorough review of all the 17 SDGs instead of just reporting on the specific goals that were reviewed for that year.

To maximise the resources to implement the NAP on SDGs, the Government of Viet Nam expressed that funding will be mobilised and drawn from diverse sources which include the state budget, investments from businesses, private sector, local communities, as well as external resources such as official development assistance (ODA), foreign direct investment (FDI), and others. Specifically from the State budget, funding for the NAP on SDG 4 will be integrated into the annual estimated budgets of ministries, sectors, institutions, organisations, and localities; integrated into the budgets for the implementation of the Five-Year and the Annual Socio-Economic Development Plans and in the national targeted programmes.

### CSO Spaces and Engagement with the Government in Implementing the SDGs and SDG 4

In contribution to the implementation and achievement of the SDGs in the country, Vietnamese civil society organisations (CSOs) are actively engaging in diverse areas ranging from poverty alleviation, health, and education to gender equality, environment, and social welfare. Vietnamese CSOs play crucial roles in (1) delivering social services to contribute to social-economic development; (2) capacity building and incubation of sustainable development initiatives; (3) policy advocacy and representation; (4) promoting national solidarity and external relations; (5) monitoring and working out standards; and (6) fostering partnership among stakeholders (state agencies – international organisations – business – communities).

Although they have not been formally recognised by the government as a partner in the implementation of the NAP on the SDGs, CSOs and their contributions have been indispensable to the rollout, implementation, and monitoring of the SDGs in Viet Nam. CSOs have made the best out of the available opportunities at various levels, including local, national, regional, and international, to come together to strengthen their coalition and voices as they advocate for



■ Sign language class in an Continuing Education Centre for Deaf and family members by VAEFA

the rights of the marginalised groups in SDG 4 and the SDGs. Out of 17 SDG goals, Vietnamese CSOs have made significant indirect contributions towards the implementation of 13 goals and direct contributions to the implementation of three goals. Nevertheless, there is a lack of an official mechanism in the NAP on SDGs for the cooperation between CSOs and the government.

For monitoring the implementation process of SDGs, CSOs were invited to participate in the VNR consultation process and a number of inputs made by civil society organisations have been reflected in the national VNR report. The Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA), along with members of the United Nations and non-government organisations in the education sector, and other international organisations, participated in the consultation process hosted by the Ministry of Education and Training to finalise the National Plan of Action on SDG 4. These have been recognised as examples of good practices.

### SDG 4 Achievements and Challenges

With the efforts of the government and active participation of CSOs and other stakeholders, Viet Nam has made significant progress in the universalisation of preschool (5-year-old kindergarten), primary and lower secondary education, expansion of higher education, the rapid development of the continuing/non-formal education system, and the increased support in strengthening inclusive education. The enrolment rates of higher education for young people from rural, remote, and mountainous areas and children of underprivileged families have increased rapidly, while the number of out-of-school children and youth has declined. From 2011 to 2016, the dropout rates showed a downward trend from 0.3 per cent to 0.1 per cent in primary; 2.1 per cent to 1.7 per cent in lower secondary; and 3.1 per cent to 2.7 per cent in upper secondary education. Out of seven targets or expected outcomes of SDG 4, notable progress has been made towards targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.6

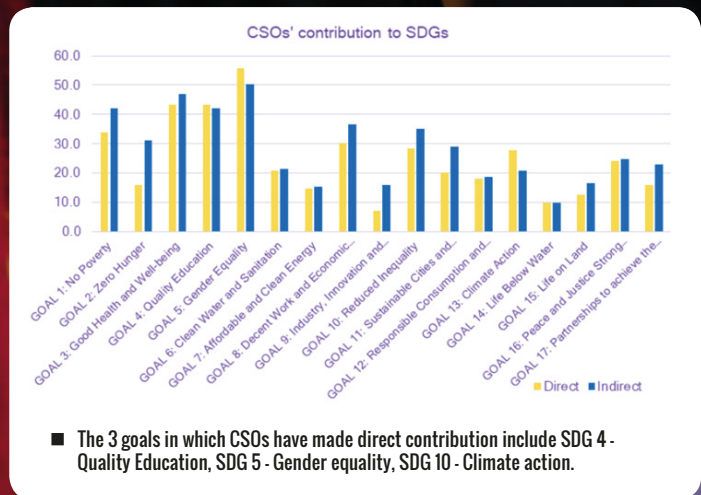
Despite these extraordinary achievements in the realm of education, Viet Nam still faces challenges in ensuring equity and inclusion in education. Although the rate of enrolment is high in general, the same rates are much lower in specific vulnerable groups which include children and persons with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities, children from migrant families and children age 0 to 3 years old. There is also a lack of attention, strategy, and investment from the government to early childhood care and education, especially for children from 0 to 3 years old due to the prioritisation given to 5-year-old kindergarten and the lack of understanding on the importance of this age period on developing people's full potential. The right to education of persons with disabilities remains unfulfilled due to inaccessible schools, inappropriate programs and methodologies, the lack of trained teachers, and discrimination. Ethnic minorities have less access to schools than others mainly because of transportation difficulties, language barriers, poor school infrastructure, and economic constraints. Children of migrants face difficulties in accessing formal schooling resulting from the lack of necessary documents and the shortage of public schools. While these



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■ Consultation meeting VAEFA Focus Report on SDG4 implementation in Vietnam (Mar 2019)

children could have enrolled in school, it is possible that the school does not provide a safe and enabling environment for them, particularly for students who identify as LGBT and experience some of the worst cases of stigmatisation, discrimination, and bullying from their peers.

## Recommendations

To address the key challenges that stand in the way of SDG 4 implementation and progress in Viet Nam, the following key strategies must be taken into consideration. The first strategic consideration is investing in and ensuring sufficient infrastructure, safe school environments, and quality and inclusive teaching and learning curricula.

The second strategic consideration is effective financing for education with a specific budget for vulnerable groups. This will help increase educational opportunities and bridge the gaps created by vulnerability. Given that 20 per cent of the state budget has been allocated for education, this expenditure level should not only be maintained but also increased in absolute value and allocated efficiently for education in general and for the SDG 4 targets in particular. It is also highly recommended to study successful practices in other countries in increasing States' budgets through tax reform and in advocating for allocating incomes from a specific source of tax to education sector, for example, charging an additional one thousand Viet Nam Dong tax for every litre of beer or alcohol and allocating that additional tax amount to the education budget. In addition, a mechanism to manage socialisation in education should be put in place to avoid the abuse of socialisation as well as to limit the inequity caused by it.

The third important strategic consideration is building coherent educational policies with clear purposes that contribute to the common goal of education in Viet Nam. The policy system must explicitly identify, target, and respond to the circumstances of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, especially those who face discrimination based on their age, class, race, ability, ethnicity, gender identity, and other social, economic, cultural, geographic factors. The government should also consider establishing a specified unit to manage educational-related issues faced by vulnerable groups. Further investment and effort should also be placed to make use of the well-developed system of Continuing Education institutions in the country. This will help reach out to the hardest-to-reach population as well as supplement what the formal education system fails to cover. The Committee on Social Issues and the Committee on Culture, Education, Youth and Children of the National Assembly need to strengthen the monitoring of the implementation of supporting policies and programmes for vulnerable groups. Only with adequate resources and commitment to delivering it can equitable education for all learners be achieved.

Finally, to ensure transparency as well as effectiveness in the planning and monitoring of the SDG 4 process, the involvement and engagement of CSOs should be increased, formalised, and systematised. Data and findings from these organisations must be utilised in the policy-making related to and the monitoring of SDG 4. A unified evidence-based system needs to be developed to strengthen the comprehensiveness of data so emerging issues can quickly be recognised, problems can promptly be tackled and consequently, the goal of leaving no one behind can be fulfilled. •



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The Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA) is a network of civil society organisations, non-government organisations, and individuals striving to achieve quality education for all and to protect the rights of children, women, ethnic minorities, and other vulnerable groups. With the vision "Equal, inclusive, and quality education for all people of Vietnam," the coalition also aims to unify and uplift the voices of civil society organisations advocating for education. VAEFA is a member organisation of ASPBAE.



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