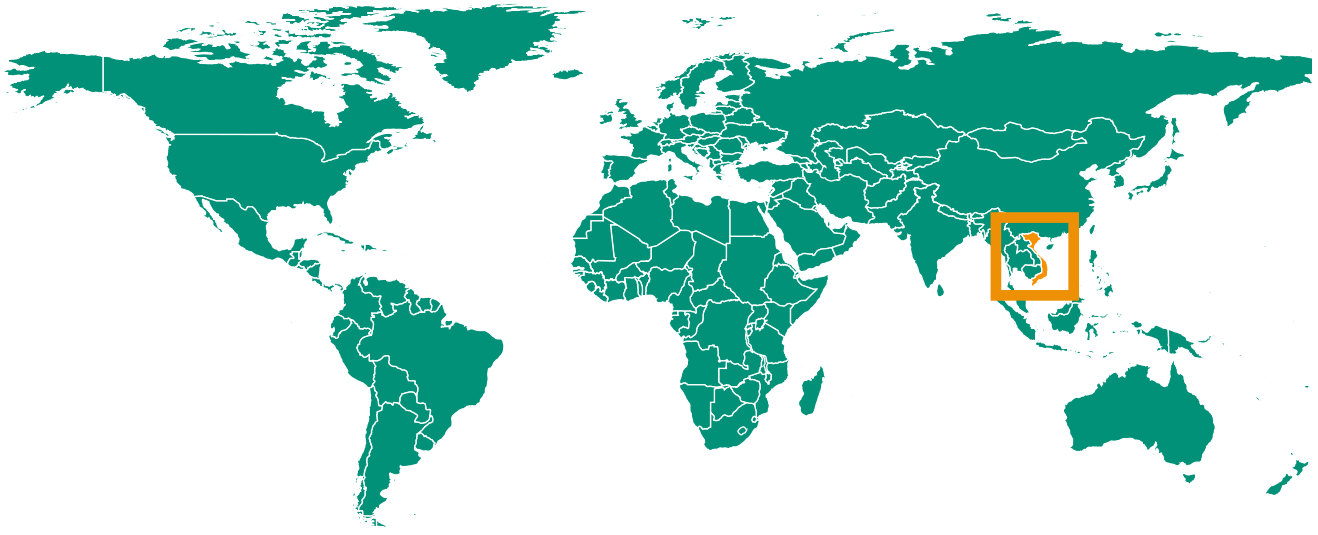


COUNTRY PROGRAMME
DOCUMENT
2008 – 2009

VIETNAM





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FOREWORDS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



In April 2007, the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT approved our 2008-2013 Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan. This plan intends to promote the alignment of UN-HABITAT normative and operational activities at country level.

The UN-HABITAT Country Programme Documents (HCPD) are tangible components of this Plan as well as a genuine endeavour of UN-HABITAT to better coordinate normative and operational activities in a consultative and inclusive process involving UN-HABITAT's in-country focal points, UN-HABITAT Programme Managers, national governments, UN country teams, sister-UN agencies, development partners and all divisions of our Agency. The UN-HABITAT Country Programme Documents are strategic tools meant as a guide for all UN-HABITAT activities over a two-year period. A major dimension of the UN-HABITAT Country Programme Document is to advocate UN-HABITAT's mandate and address the urban challenges facing the world's developing countries.

The UN-HABITAT Country Programme Documents identify national urban development goals and priorities including shelter, urban governance, access to basic services and credit. Important cross-cutting issues such as the environment, gender, responses to disasters, and vulnerability reduction are also addressed. The UN-HABITAT Country Programme Documents focus on UN-HABITAT country programming. They serve as a work plan for UN-HABITAT Programme Managers and a reference tool for national and local actors involved in sustainable urban development. Accord-

ing to the Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Action Plan adopted by the UN-HABITAT Committee of Permanent Representatives on 6 December 2007, twenty UN-HABITAT Country Programme Documents were completed during 2008, including the One-UN Pilot countries where UN-HABITAT is active.

In line with the United Nations reform process, UN-HABITAT Country Programme Documents seek to strengthen the role of the United Nations and to demonstrate our commitment. I wish to thank our UN-HABITAT Programme Managers for their input and dedication and for putting together these documents under guidance of the Regional and Technical Cooperation Division and with support from all branches and programmes of the Agency.

Anna K. Tibaijuka
Executive Director

MINISTER



Vietnam has experienced rapid development during the last ten years with a stable GDP growth rate of approximately 7.5% per year, ranking second in Asia. Thanks to economic achievements, the living standard of Vietnamese people has been improved. Poverty incidence according to the international standard

has been reduced from 58% in 1993 to 14.7% in 2007. International economic integration is bringing about both growth and fast urbanization. The country is urbanizing at the rate of 3% annually, with urban resident rate currently accounts for 27.1% of total population. It is projected that urbanization rate will reach 45% by 2020. With a recent WTO membership in 2006, Vietnam has set for further socio-economic integration into the dynamic world.

However, those highlights cannot cover the fact that Vietnam is still a poor country with average income per capita of over 835 USD (2007). Though the Human Development Index of Vietnam is being improved yearly, it remains rather low with the country ranked 105 out of 177 in the world. Like other developing countries in the world, urbanization brings to Vietnam both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, cities are engine of the economy, contributing about 70% of nationwide development. On the other, unplanned and incomprehensive urban development is resulting in many difficulties in urban management, for instance, water supply, sewerage and drainage, environment sanitation, wastewater, roads and electricity, etc. The flow of spontaneous rural migrants to cities creates new pressures for destination communities. The poor urban areas with slums without basic living facilities and infrastructure are developing uncontrollably. Urban poverty is lower in percentage, yet higher in density, and is predicted to increase as high as before. There's an increasing gap between the rich and the poor which adds to the danger of instability for the economy with high growth rate, leading to negative impacts on national economy, society, and environment that must be solved by all people and all sectors

in the country. In the past years, municipal authorities have been striving hard to improve the quality of life for urban dwellers, yet with limited results for lack of resources and low management capacity in a fledging market economy. Resources, including state financial resources, have not been used effectively.

Obviously, improved urban planning and management are much needed if Vietnam is to cope effectively with the challenges and to harness opportunities for development brought through rapid urbanization. The Ministry of Construction of Vietnam (MOC), with its mandate to provide state management on urban infrastructure and urban development among other construction related issues, has been putting efforts to update and refine the national system of urban policy and management. In the process, we have received invaluable inputs and technical support from the United Nation Human Settlements Development Programme (UN-HABITAT). The Habitat Programme has also been active assisting a number of cities of Vietnam in building the City Development Strategy and realizing the localized UN Millennium Development, beside several other pro-poor programmes on water and sanitation. I would like to take this chance to renew MOC commitments and pleasure for further cooperation with UN-HABITAT Programme in Vietnam. With such a strong programming tool as this Habitat Country Programme Document in hand, I hope UN-HABITAT will make concrete and considerable contributions to the development of Vietnam in the years to come.

Tran Ngoc Chinh
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Construction of Vietnam
Chairman of Vietnam Urban Forum

SITUATION ANALYSIS

NATIONAL URBAN POLICY CONTEXT

Vietnam is a developing country located in Southeast Asia with a population of 86.2 million (2007) and area of 329.3 thousand km². Since 1986, the country adopted the Renovation policy (Doi Moi) transforming its socio-economic system from central planning to a market-oriented economy. This reform process has brought significant socio-economic achievements with annual GDP growth averaging about 7% over the past two decades. Poverty incidence, according to international standard, reduced from 58% to 14.7% between 1993 and 2007. The country's performance in terms of Human Development Index improved climbing from being ranked 120th in 1995 to 105th (out of 177 countries) in 2007.

However, Vietnam still remains a low-income country with a per capita GDP of US \$ 835 (2007). The country still faces serious social problems with many households living barely above the poverty line and therefore, remaining vulnerable to falling back into

poverty. Growth is also accompanied by an increase in inequality, particularly a widening rural-urban income gap as well as growing disparities among regions and ethnic groups. School completion rates among ethnic minorities and girls remain relatively low. Malnutrition remains high, particularly among children under five, 33 percent of whom are underweight.

This UN-HABITAT Country Programme Document is prepared in the context that Vietnam is one of the first eight pilot countries for implementation of the One UN Initiative following the recommendations of the UN High Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence. It is also situated in the broader context of the Hanoi Core Statement in which the development community committed to simplify procedures, reduce transaction costs and increase the impact of official development assistance. Led by the Government of Vietnam and strongly supported by the donor community, the core of UN reform consists of "five ones", namely, One Plan, One Budget, One Set of Management Practices, One Leader and One UN House.

Significant progress has been made in One UN initiative. On August 23, 2007 the Government of Vietnam and the UN in Vietnam marked a major milestone by signing the "One Plan", a common action plan until 2010. The One Plan brings together in one coherent programming framework the programmes of 6 UN entities - UNICEF; UNDP; UNFPA; UNAIDS; UNIFEM and UNV. The One UN initiative continues to be an open-ended process and by June 2008, the One Plan 2 has been finalised with 14 UN agencies operating in Vietnam including UN-HABITAT.

FOCUS AREA 1: ADVOCACY, MONITORING AND PARTNERSHIPS

URBANISATION

Fast urbanization has been witnessed alongside rapid economic growth. In 2006 the urban population was around 23 million, accounting for about 27.1% of the whole country's population. It is estimated that around one million people per year are being added to the cities, leading to an urban population of 40 million by 2020.

Rapid urbanization is showing both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, it is undeniable that Vietnamese cities and towns play the role of a locomotive for development, accounting for about 70% of total economic output. Most FDI is directed toward cities. Economic opportunities in urban areas are propelling rapid growth in the urban population

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

Urbanisation (2008)

- Total population: 88 m
- Urban population: 25 m (28%)

Annual growth rates (2005-2010)

- National: 1.3 %
- Urban: 3 %

Major cities (2008)

- Hanoi City: 4.4 million
- Ho Chi Minh City: 5.4 million

Source: UN DESA

Slum indicators

- Slum to urban population: 41 %

% urban population with access to:

- Improved water: 78 %
- Piped water: 76 %
- Improved sanitation: 91 %
- Sufficient living area: 78 %
- Durable housing: 95 %

Source: UN-HABITAT, 2002

with significant rural to urban migration. Urbanization is in turn fuelling further economic growth.

However, urban poverty poses as a big challenge. Poverty reduction achievements are more profound in the rural than in the urban areas. Though the absolute poverty rate in urban settlements is lower, the poverty density is much higher. Accompanied with urban poverty are other urban social problems such as unemployment, crime, disease and deteriorated infrastructure. Poorly planned urbanization and urban mismanagement have also complicated the situation. It is urgent that a solid strategy of urbanization for Vietnam is developed based on learning from world practical experiences, together with strong support from the international community.

FOCUS AREA 2: PARTICIPATORY URBAN PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

URBAN PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Under the past central planning system, cities were seen as centres of production and were planned and managed as production resources without regard for secondary impacts. The urban master plan and its co-related investment strategy was essentially a wishing list of public works projects approved by Government. There was little evaluation of the cumulative effect of decisions and no strategic development framework for a city, or cities, in general. Cities in Vietnam have entered the 21st century without the appropriate urban policy, management, governance, and/or infrastructure to fulfil the role cities typically play in a market economy.

The responsibilities for urban planning in Vietnam are fragmented between ministries and also between the different levels of government. Three types of plans, each under the responsibility of different ministries, are prepared for cities and provinces: socio-economic development, for which the Ministry of Planning and Investment is responsible; spatial (also called construction or master plans) for which the Ministry of Construction is responsible; and sector development, for which respective line ministries are responsible. The intended sequence of planning with spatial plans following socio-economic plans and sector plans does not always occur. Most master plans are prepared by state planning institutes. They tend to promulgate official political ideals and Government mandated production targets, rather than responding to measured demand



and market signals. There is very limited public participation, or even consultation, in the process.

Most entities with planning responsibility have a dual reporting relationship to the central ministry and a horizontal relationship to the appropriate People's Committee, the executive level of city and provincial governments. The Government and the Party also have parallel policy guidance and reporting requirements. Almost all planning ideas and decisions are formulated by the government, but without effective cross-sector coordination. It is a very top down process. The widely dispersed responsibility without clear procedures and the decision making authority to bring the various views together to form a broad consensus makes effective urban planning, as understood in Western countries, a challenge in Vietnam.

Spatial plans are prepared in four levels of detail: orientation plans (national policy), regional plans (introduced in 2005), master plans (province or city), and detailed area plans (ward, industrial zone or project). Most are prescriptive for specified land uses in specific locations, rather than permissive as in Western land use planning. It is widely acknowledged that the current master plans prepared for Vietnamese cities are not effective. There is a large disconnect between the beautifully drafted idealized plans that hang in the offices of People's Committees and the reality of urban development on the ground. They tend to be representations of what the planning experts and city administrators would like their city to become if there were unlimited resources. Current master plans approach lack the phasing and the incremental development mechanisms neces-

sary to translate them to the reality of a market economy where development is likely to occur on a more piecemeal and unpredictable basis governed by the availability of land and capital to the developer.

Regarding the planning and management process, there is no mechanism to evaluate the consequences or impact of any form of urban redevelopment. Approvals of all major public and private development/investment projects are still conducted as if they were components of a public works program. Thus the project's appraisal is based largely on the appropriateness of the proposed (or assumed) investment of government resources rather than a set of criteria taking into account the economic, social, financial and environmental implications. Therefore, the official approvers are often unsure whether the proposal is economically and financially feasible or compatible with the existing and/or future infrastructure or does not cause social and/or environmental problems.

Given the weakness of the urban planning and management, particularly in the city periphery, frequently informal urbanization takes place in ad hoc, unregulated manner. Rapid and unplanned growth is in many instances leading to serious environmental degradation.

The weakness of urban management in Vietnam will need to be overcome to enable more effective planning to contribute to better urban development. Thus, to promote more effective urban development, it will be necessary to delegate more authority to local governments for urban management, as well as urban planning, and to give Peoples Committees clearer



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