



Interoffice Memorandum

To: John Hendra
UN Resident Coordinator
Viet Nam

Date: 28 December 2007

From: Bruce Jenks [redacted]
Assistant Administrator and Director, Partnerships Bureau
UNDP New York

Extension: 6005

Subject: Subject: MDGF-1694 Viet Nam Joint Programme on Gender Equality

File: MDGF 1694

I. Approval Status

On behalf of the MDG-F Steering Committee I am pleased to inform you that your Joint Programme 'Viet Nam Joint Programme on Gender Equality' is approved with an allocation of USD\$4.5 million over three years. This figure includes 7% for indirect costs incurred by UN Participating Organizations. Please note the 1% AA fee will be reimbursed directly to the MDTF Office and need not be included in your allocation.

II. JP design comments

No substantive changes are required to the design of your Joint Programme and you may proceed with signature of the Joint Programme document. The UN Resident Coordinator and all Participating UN Organizations should each sign the Joint Programme document in addition to the Government (including primary national counterparts). We would encourage you to ensure some visibility for this event and for the launch of activities.

We note that the programme is intended to intervene primarily at the policy and institutional level which we appreciate is appropriate in the Viet Nam context and particularly in light of the recent law on Gender Equality and imminent law on Domestic Violence and the Government's important decision to strengthen the institutional arrangements for gender issues in Viet Nam. Given this 'upstream' emphasis, we trust a special effort will be made to ensure the programme's analytic work targets the situation and needs of vulnerable women and girls in particular; this issue was remarked upon by the Convenor of the Technical Sub Committee after reviewing the original Concept Note and was perhaps not as thoroughly addressed as it might have been in the draft Joint Programme document itself.

We note that at the time of formulation, the law on domestic violence and the naming of the SMA to follow up on the July 2007 Law on Gender Equality were both pending and that interim arrangements have been made and decisions expected shortly. Please confirm with the Secretariat when these two important mile stones have been passed.

We note the special role of UNFPA in this programme as the sole conduit for resources intended for Government management (a role described as 'Management Agent' in the document). This arrangement makes a lot of sense especially from the perspective of facilitating the Government's reporting responsibilities and while UN agency NEX-type procedures are not as seamless as they should be. We would nevertheless recommend that in order to avoid any potential ambiguity vis-à-vis fiduciary accountability, the (UNFPA administered) Programme Management Unit should not be identified



separately to the other UNFPA components; if UNFPA is handling this portion of the budget it should be clearly identified as such.

As the key oversight mechanism for the Joint Programme, we request that you not deputize your role as Co-Chair at future meetings of the National Steering Committee and particularly not to Participating Organizations involved in the implementation of the Programme itself.

Finally, please note that the Fund Secretariat may revert to you with comments on your Monitoring Framework in the first half of 2008. While the proposed Monitoring framework is very thorough, it focuses primarily on output-related indicators and does not include indicators touching on broader development outcomes nor indicators relating to UN reform or the Paris Declaration. This has been a common feature across many submissions, and the Secretariat has been tasked with investigating what is feasible within a three-year programme and developing Fund-wide M&E standards.

III. JP re-design requirements and/or recommendations

The following minor changes are required to the Joint Programme document before finalization:

- Indirect costs – All references to the AA fee (1%) should be removed as these will be administered separately;
- Budget presentation - 'Total for PMU' should be incorporated as a separate entry inside the table 'Total for UNFPA';
- Budget total – should be adjusted to \$4.5 million.

IV. Management arrangements and delegation of authority

On receipt of a copy of the signed document, the Fund Secretariat will transfer the full three-year allocation to the custody of the Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) Office pending further instructions from you.

Please note the MDTF Office will pass-through funds to Participating Organizations on instruction from you as Resident Coordinator and Co-Chair of the National MDG-F Steering Committee.

As reflected in the Fund's Framework Document (Section 9 'Formulation Process & Release of Funds) and the global MoU with Participating Organizations (Article I, 2-c) the MDTF Office will release resources on an annual, advance basis. For the first advance, these funds will be transferred on the basis of receipt of the first year Annual Workplan and the signed Joint Programme document. Subsequent annual advances will be released on instructions from you and on the basis of a) receipt of the next annual work-plan approved by the National Steering Committee; b) evidence that a formal review of the programme's progress has been undertaken not more than three months earlier, either in the form of an annual progress report (if the timing coincides) or through the minutes of a National Steering Committee where this has been discussed; and c) only when combined commitments against the existing advance have exceeded 70%. Please review the initial year budget requests carefully with participating organizations in order to ensure realistic delivery targets in this regard. The annual agency apportionment projected in the final budget



attached to the signed Joint Programme document should also be reviewed and can be revised up to the time of your first funds-advance request. This is important for the reasons outlined below.

In order to allow the implementation team some flexibility to adapt the strategy to unexpected challenges and opportunities, and to empower Resident Coordinators in their oversight responsibilities, this memorandum also provides you with the authority over the three year duration of the programme and with the agreement of your National Steering Committee to (a) transfer up to \$1,000,000 or 20% of the total value of the project budget – whichever is lowest – *between Participating Organizations* identified in the original Joint Programme budget and (b) re-phase up to \$1,000,000 or 20% of the total value of the project budget – whichever is lowest - *between years*. The base-line against which these ceilings will be measured is the annual budget projection (by year and by participating organization) confirmed at the time of your first funds-advance request. The MDTF Office must be informed of any revisions of this kind, decided locally and is responsible for tracking these delegation ceilings for each programme. Any changes that fall outside these parameters will have to be referred back to the (Global) MDG-F Steering Committee for approval.

The success of the MDG-F activities will depend on your ongoing leadership and engagement. We count on you to exercise this leadership and to ensure this Joint Programme remains an ongoing, integrated effort by the UN system in support of national priorities. Please also use the National Steering Committee mechanism to help ensure national ownership by the Government in particular and involve it in important financial and programmatic oversight decisions.

The Executive Coordinator of the MDTF Office, Bisrat Aklilu, will be in contact with any specific documentation requirements to ensure the programme meets compliance requirements for UNDG pass-through arrangements.

With best wishes.

cc.

Mr. Bisrat Aklilu, Executive Coordinator, Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office
Mr. Hafiz Pasha, Assistant Administrator and Director Bureau for Asia and Pacific, UNDP New York
H.E. Mr. D. Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations
H.E. Mr. Le Luong Minh, Permanent Representative of the Socialist Republic
of Viet Nam to the United Nations
Ms. Milagros Hernando, Director-General for Planning & Evaluation, MFA Madrid
Ms. Sally Fegan-Wyles, Director, Development Group Office
MDG-F Secretariat