



# END OF PROJECT REPORT

## *Strengthening the role of DPOs to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in Vietnam (2013-2015)*

### Introduction

In Viet Nam, the official census in 2009 found that 6 million people live with disabilities of whom over 1.3 million are children.<sup>1</sup> To help the country build an inclusive society, the UNPRPD project, entitled “Strengthening the role of Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in Vietnam”, was designed to substantially increase the capacity and effective participation of DPOs that are fundamental for overcoming the barriers to advance the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. It was the first joint initiative implemented by UNDP, UNICEF and ILO during 2013-2015, under the overall coordination of UNDP. People with disabilities in Viet Nam faced numerous legal, social and economic barriers at multiple levels, and the most challenging were:

- A political system which privileges top-down approaches and has not yet developed an appropriate policy space for civil society and DPOs;
- A legal system based on administrative control and direction rather than on empowerment of rights-holders, and persons with disabilities in particular;
- A widespread misperception around disability with a tendency to regard people with disabilities as objects of charity rather than as bearers of equal rights.

To address these challenges, the joint project was designed to support the key agent of change, in the development context of Viet Nam that were the national institutions and DPOs. Fostering the theory of change that a fundamental transformation in the improvement of policy framework and societal attitudes required direct engagement of and close collaboration with agents of change, the project supported the participation and active engagement of Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) in ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that Viet Nam had signed in 2009, and in their advocacy for building a rights-based legal and inclusive policy framework toward the realization of disability rights. It also supported the empowerment of DPOs to play a strong role in the CRPD implementation, monitoring and claiming for the rights, well-being and dignity of people with disabilities.

## 1. Variations in impact and outcome indicators

Table 1. Variation in impact indicators

<b>Impact</b>
By 2015, People with disabilities, including children with disabilities, enjoy improved access to employment, health, education and protection services.

<sup>1</sup> UNFPA (2009), [Census 2009 Vietnam Disability UNFPA](#)

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline March 2013</b>	<b>End of reporting period December 2015</b>
Number of People with disabilities in employment	6 million People with disabilities	At the time of reporting, there is still a lack of statistics on people with disabilities in employment. A positive trend of more persons with disabilities in employment, however, could be observed. Progress was made in promoting inclusive workplace for persons with disabilities. Network of enterprises support equal employment to persons with disabilities was expanded, the Blue Ribbon Employer Council for example had 273 members by December 2015, while in 2013 their membership was 204.
Number of children with disabilities enrolled <sup>2</sup> in primary education	68,711 children with disabilities (52,771 enrolled to public schools; 16,000 enrolled to specialized schools for children with disabilities)	69,509 (51,523 enrolled to public schools; 17,986 enrolled to specialized schools for children with disabilities) <sup>3</sup>
Number of persons <sup>4</sup> with disabilities received the Government's social entitlement in cash	610,396 persons with disabilities	770,000 persons with disabilities <sup>5</sup>

**Table 2. Variation in outcome indicators** (add a table for each outcome in the approved project document)

<b>Outcome 1</b>
DPOs actively engaged in ratification, implementation and monitoring of CRPD through strengthened policy and legal frameworks.

#### Outcome Indicators

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline March 2013</b>	<b>End of reporting period December 2015</b>
CRPD ratified	VN signed CRPD in 2007, agreed to consider ratification in 2009 UPR.	National Assembly approved the ratification of the CRPD on 28 Nov 2015.
Number of new/revised institutionalized mechanisms and processes for people with disabilities and DPOs to comment on and	No specific institutionalised mechanisms for persons with disabilities beyond the right as all	Prime Minister formed a National Committee for People with Disabilities in October 2015.

<sup>2</sup> This indicator was slightly adjusted given statistic on children finished primary schools was not systematically recorded in Viet Nam. Progress has been measured; using the number of enrollment of children with disabilities (CWD) to primary education, not on the number of CWD finished primary education.

<sup>3</sup> This is the most updated figure on CWD enrollment by end of 2014, according to the 2014 Annual Report of National Coordination Committee on Disabilities (NCCD), published Feb. 2015, [NCCD REPORT](#).

<sup>4</sup> This is a revised indicator, due to unavailability of disaggregated data per adult and children with disabilities who received cash transfer. The initial indicator was "number of children with disabilities receiving cash transfer through the Government".

<sup>5</sup> This is the most updated figure by end of 2014, according to the 2014 Annual Report of NCCD.

influence pending policies and legislation	other citizens to comment on any proposed legislation.	The National Committee on Persons with Disabilities was established in October 2015 with four out of eighteen members are representatives of Disabled People's Organisations.
Number of reports on implementation of disability rights submitted by DPOs to UPR, treaty bodies etc.	0	Vietnam's Initial Report to CRPD Committee is due March 2017.
Number of written submissions by DPOs on draft sub-laws, policies and programs on disability	5 written submissions: IDEA and DP Hanoi on the Disability Law in 2009; 2 submissions from DRD on accessible buses in HCMC and accessible train and subway in HCMC in 2012; and ACDC's submission on Decree 139 on social assistance policies in 2013.	7 (2 new) ACDC and DP Hanoi submission on draft Action Plan to implement the CRPD in 2015. A VDF's submission to recommend measures for improving the quality of care arrangement for children with disabilities in social protection centres is being developed and is forthcoming in May 2016. In addition, most comments and inputs currently provided verbally in consultation workshops/ meetings. For example VDF and ACDC were involved in providing the CSO comments to the Vietnam UPR Action Plan in 2015; and ACDC advocated for inclusion of persons with disabilities in amending the Law on Legal Aid in 2015. VDF and other DPOs joined the participants of Asia and Pacific Disability Forum, November 2014, in a joint "Hanoi Statement" called for collective efforts to strengthen the protection of rights and was used to advocate for the development of the Plan of Action for CRPD implementation. VDF and other DPOs also participated in the consultations for the amendments to the Law on Social Insurance (Law no.58/2014/QH13) and Law on Vocational Education (Law no. 74/2014/QH13)

## Outcome 2

People with disabilities (including children with disabilities) empowered by DPOs to claim their rights

## Outcome Indicators

Indicator	Start level (beginning of the reporting period)	End level (conclusion of the reporting period)
Number of people (including children) with disabilities trained on disability rights under CRPD and national legal/policy frameworks	0	8 training workshops on UN CRPD and Law on Disability with nearly 520 participants, including members of DPOs, persons with disabilities, journalists, employers, and other social actors <sup>6</sup> .
Number of people with disabilities receiving free legal assistance	474 PWD received State-funded legal aid in 2012 according to the Ministry of Justice statistic. Gender disaggregated data is not available.	2,419 persons with disabilities received State-funded legal aid in 2014; 2015 data is not available at the date of reporting.
Number of people with disabilities able to solve legal problems with support from DPOs	0	In two years 2014-2015, ACDC and DPO-led legal aid network provided their services to 3,886 PWDs (1878 women and 2008 men).

## 1. Overall progress

The UNPRPD project contributed significantly to reinforce reform efforts underway in Viet Nam toward respecting and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. The UN agencies in collaboration with other development partners supported the Government and organizations of persons with disabilities to prepare for the ratification of the Convention, which was ratified on 5 February 2015. In synergy with its advocacy for the ratification of the CRPD, the project supported the transformation of international law commitments and obligations into domestic laws and policy, the capacity building of DPOs, and the engagement of public and private sectors at all levels to the implementation and monitoring of the CRPD. Multiple stakeholders were engaged, including business associations, workers' organization, parents of children with disabilities, journalists, and academics, to facilitate exchange of ideas and experience, and to contribute to the compliance assessments in preparation for the CRPD ratification, and the country accession to the ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities. The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provided leeway for changing laws directly related to people with disability for greater compliance with the new requirements. Law on Social Insurance (Law no.58/2014/QH13) and Law on Vocational Education (Law no. 74/2014/QH13) were amended. A number of regulatory documents on social assistance, health insurance, public transport and education were also revised to ensure the full recognition of the rights of people with disabilities in society.

Seizing the momentum around the CRPD ratification, the UNPRPD project supported policy formulation that promoted equal access to opportunities, services and information for people with disabilities, to recognize the right to education, the right to work, and the rights of access and participation. It attributed to improvements in access to social protection, care arrangement, education, employment and vocational training, and access to legal aid for people with disabilities. These successes were in large part the result of DPOs active engagement in CRPD implementation and monitoring. Notably ACDC and DP Hanoi participated in the development of National Action

<sup>6</sup> Gender disaggregated data was not available due to varied forms of data collection and records used by DPOs. A slightly higher percentage of female attendance was observed at various trainings.

Plan to implement the CRPD in 2015; VDF and other DPOs joined the participants of Asia and Pacific Disability Forum, November 2014, in the “Hanoi Statement” which called for collective efforts to strengthen the protection of PWD rights. DPOs such as VDF and ACDC also participated in consultation with other civil society organizations and Government in the development of the Vietnam UPR Action Plan in 2015; and ACDC advocated for inclusion of PWDs in the Law on Legal Aid in 2015.

The project supported breaking through the conventional “charity” approach in law and policy making, and advocated to shift the public attitudes to people with disabilities from being ‘dependent objects of charity’ to being rights holders who can be decision-makers in their own lives. Thus the project focused to strengthen the capabilities of people with disabilities and the identification and removal of obstacles that hinder their inclusion, participation and empowerment. This could not be achieved without the active involvement and engagement of the civil society, especially persons with disabilities and DPOs, in the implementation and monitoring of the CRPD. Direct dialogues were organized between people with disabilities, including children, and policy makers that fostered better understanding about the real needs of the people with disabilities, and the challenges needed to be overcome so that statutory changes would result in the changes that were needed at the grass-roots level. To that end, consultation with children with disabilities and their parents informed the standardization of care arrangement for children with disabilities;<sup>7</sup> dialogues with journalists resulted in public media being more responsive to report on stigma and discrimination to PWDs.<sup>8</sup>

#### Strengthening the role of DPOs

The project strategy in building DPO capacity, promoting a multi-stakeholder partnership, and ensuring the strong alignment with right-based development approach proved to work well. A primary focus was to involve civil society, in particular adults and children with disabilities and their representative organizations at all stages of its implementation and in the monitoring process. With the project support, the role of DPOs was recognized and their participation was institutionalized. Out of eighteen members of the newly established National Committee for Persons with Disabilities, there are now four DPOs’ representatives.<sup>9</sup> The participation of DPOs in the National Committee for People with Disabilities could be considered an institutionalized mechanism for people with disabilities and DPOs to comment on and influence national policies and legislation. The National Committee’s mandate and responsibilities aim to strengthen the inter-ministerial and sectoral coordination to implementation of the CRPD, and to promote the recognition and protection of the rights of people with disabilities in reality.<sup>10</sup>

Not only helped to shift public attitudes to disability, the UNPRPD project also supported to strengthen empowerment framework for DPOs and people with disabilities, including children with disabilities, to know their rights. Gradually it enabled persons with disabilities, to the gain skills and knowledge that are needed to claim their rights. A network of legal aid for PWDs was established and expanded over the past two years with outreach to provinces in Northern and Central of Viet Nam. During to two years 2014-2015, the DPO-led legal aid network benefited 3,886 persons with disabilities, among them 1878 women and 2008 men.

Gender equality was one of multi-dimensional equality aspects of the UNPRPD project aimed to address. Special attention was paid to the main challenges of eliminating discrimination against women with disabilities such as in, access to vocational training, access to justice for women and victims of gender-based violence. For example, training

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<sup>7</sup> New provisions on care arrangement for CWDs are being developed and will be submitted in May 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Saigontimes posted 9 April 2015, [article](#).

<sup>9</sup> They are representatives of Vietnam Federation on Disabilities, Vietnam Blind Association, Association for Assistance of People with Disability, Orphans, and Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange. Source: Decision no. 1717/QĐ-TTg dated 6 Oct. 2015.

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.*

and advocacy workshops were organized with thematic group discussion on women with disabilities and employment. Gender consideration was integrated fully into the planning and implementation of the project.

## 2. Progress towards specific outcomes

2.1 DPOs actively engaged in ratification, implementation and monitoring of CRPD through strengthened policy and legal frameworks

Capacity building to the most active DPOs including Viet Nam Federation on Disability (VDF), Disability Research and Development Centre (DRD) and Action to the Community Development Centre (ACDC), resulted in changing effectively the ways DPOs represent and voice the issues facing PWDs. They effectively informed the National Assembly and Government institutions about the reality of continued stigmatization and discrimination of adults and children with disabilities, and prompted the ratification of the CRPD in November 2014. By fostering coherence in advocacy message, strategic coalition building and public campaigns, the DPOs have more competence to represent and claim the rights of persons with disabilities, and have greater access and visibility in policy fora.<sup>11</sup> Active engagement of DPOs contributed to policy change and public awareness. Concretely, VDF and other DPOs participated and provided inputs to the development of National Scheme on Assistance to Persons with Disability for 2012-2020;<sup>12</sup> ACDC carried out a training need assessment on CRPD which is being used to develop an online-training on the rights of persons with disabilities.

VDF and three other DPOs are now permanent members of the newly established National Committee on Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) which functions as a focal point to facilitate disability coordination in different sectors and at different levels. In the context of Vietnam, this recognition of the DPO role is a breakthrough from the tradition where engagement with right-holders was often shaped as a formalistic consultation organized by mass organizations such as the Vietnam Fatherland Front and Women Union without participation of DPOs to provide persons with disabilities a voice of their own and be their spokespersons. With the lead role of VDF in the organization of Asia and Pacific Disability Forum (APDP) in November 2014, nearly 1,000 participants had made a joint “Hanoi Statement” calling for collective efforts to strengthen the protection of rights at regional and national levels. Furthermore, key messages of the “Ha Noi Statement” were used to advocate for the comprehensive of the Plan of Action for CRPD implementation. In 2015, VDF received further support to develop its organizational strategy to promote the rights of PWDs, and children with disabilities in particular. The project’s technical support enabled the generation of evidence and development of a proposal to improve the community-based care and service standards in social protection centers for children with disabilities in Viet Nam. A VDF submission to recommend measures for improving the quality of care for children with disabilities in social protection centres is forthcoming in April 2016.

The strengthened DPO network facilitated exchange of ideas and good practices. The successful experiment of respite day care model for children with disabilities-- providing basic education, vocational training, recreational activities and basic rehabilitation for 150 children with disabilities on a daily basis--initiated by Viet Nam Association for Victims of Agent Orange in Da Nang (DAVA) has been piloted in other provinces, including Ho Chi Minh city, Binh Duong, Kon Tum and Dong Nai. DAVA’s initial success built up their capacity and at a fundraising event in May 2015 they could mobilize 2.9 billion VND (equivalent to US\$130,000) for their work to support to adults and children with

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<sup>11</sup> At the Launch of the National Committee on Persons with Disabilities in January 18<sup>th</sup> 2016, representative of a DPO, ACDC, was invited to speak on behalf of the PWDs alongside Vice Prime Minister and UN Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam.

<sup>12</sup> It was approved by Prime Minister according to Decision 1019/QĐ-TTg, dated 5 August 2012.

disabilities. This model of day care primarily serves children with severe disabilities. Simultaneously, inclusion in education was strongly advocated, and integrated in other educational settings.



*Figure 2. DPO leaders and Government official exchanged views on actions toward advancing rights of the PWDs as Viet Nam celebrated the ratification of the CRPD in 2014*

To ensure the meaningful participation of DPOs and persons with disabilities, a first-ever mapping of DPOs in Viet Nam (see “Mapping of policy coordination and services for people with disabilities in Vietnam” 2013) was commissioned. It produced a baseline and overall assessment of the policies and services for persons with disabilities, and identified potential areas for intervention and support. DPOs and persons with disabilities were very active in the preparation for the CRPD ratification, attended roundtable dialogues with National Assembly deputies, TV interviews and talk shows. Their participation was also significant through effective networking and coalition building with like-minded organizations. In partnership with Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), Disability Research and Development Centre hosted thematic discussions and policy dialogues brought together DPOs, trade unions and employers to discuss r access to employment for persons with disabilities.

A rights-based approach to disability inclusive development was promoted in replacement of the ‘charity’ approach. Communication tools were developed to incorporate the principles of participation, equality, empowerment and non-discrimination in disability policy making. Actions to advance the disability rights were not only incorporated into the formulation of the CRPD Action Plan but also integrated into the UPR Action Plan. The latter was approved by the Prime Minister in December 2015 (see Decision no.2057/QĐ-TTg dated 23 November 2015 on approval of the UPR Action Plan). Significant capacity gaps could be observed in the Government and DPOs’ efforts to integrate these principles in practice. It is important to provide further support on human rights education, human rights reporting and enforcement mechanism to government officials as well as DPOs. Human rights education was also a primary target, with focus on law students and journalists through training on disability law and the rights of persons with disabilities. With the project support, 1,000 students at Hanoi Law University attended ‘disability law’ lectures, of which 400 students had their internships with in DPOs in Hanoi. In the near future, these pilot courses would be integrated as part of curriculum for law students. Handbook for Journalist in Disability Reporting was developed for TOT training and also used as their professional manual.

*Figure 1. Vong Minh Nhi’s remarks at meeting with National Assembly deputies in HCMC.*

***“I wish all children in Viet Nam, with or without disability, to enjoy a peaceful childhood, be happy, be loved and have opportunity to go to school and to become useful people in the society.... I believe that when you determine***

***to act, the rights of people with disabilities as set forth in the Convention (CRPD) will be respected, protected and fulfilled.”***

It is worthwhile noting the critical and constructive role of DPOs and persons with disabilities, leading to the ratification of the CRPD. Consulting children with disabilities was and is always a priority. Vong Minh Nhi, a 15 years old girl with vision impairment from Thien An Home for children with visual impairment in Tan Phu district in Ho Chi Minh City, represented children with disabilities (CWD) at a workshop for representatives of the National Assembly. She spoke about the issues faced by CWD including stigma and discrimination, access education, and made recommendations for change. Nhi's remarks were well received, led to all the deputies voted for the ratification. After the ratification, the project supported DPOs' numerous consultations with wide range of stakeholder, at different levels, using innovative ways to build alliance and to raise awareness about the disability rights. For example, "Live and Work" photo exhibition of PWDs were organized in Dong Nai and Da Lat.

The ratification of CRPD was a crucial step to break down the legal barriers since the Government must ensure that its domestic law and practice are consistent with the treaty's requirements. This integration process created opportunities for DPOs to engage and participate in law and policy making, and the follow-up implementation to make the laws work in practice. Concrete actions taken after the ratification include the establishment of the NCPD and the drafting of an Action Plan for the CRPD implementation. These building blocks and actions if effectively implemented can lead to positive changes in the lives of persons with disabilities in the medium and long term.

In relation to employment, rights-based approach was used to engage with key stakeholders such as Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), trade unions and enterprises in advocacy for equal access to employment and inclusive workplaces. Nearly 300 representatives of local authorities, DPOs, trade unions and enterprises from ten provinces in Southern, Central Southern and Central regions participated in public campaign to raise awareness on disability issues in the context of customer services and recruitment process. As promoted and practiced by the ILO, Disability and Equality Training (DET) to change attitudes and practices towards the greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream services and activities was conducted by 20 youth with disabilities to improve their knowledge on disability inclusion, good practices and skills to act and advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. In addition, resource spent on the development and production of creative training and advocacy materials such as, a handbook on "Needed Information for Persons with Disabilities in Vietnam" and two video clips to promote accessibility in vocational training schools for persons with disabilities as well as to raise public awareness on disability inclusion.





*Figure 3. Free legal consultation for a PWD in Ha Giang province on 10 March 2015 by Ms. Nguyen Lan Anh, director of ACDC, who is a physically disabled.*

## 2.2 People with disabilities (including children with disabilities) empowered by DPOs to claim their rights

Access to legal information and legal assistance are crucial for protection of rights and empowerment. The UNPRPD supported the establishment of the first legal aid network for people with disabilities and by people with disabilities in Viet Nam. ACDC succeed in setting up a first DPO-led network, initially operated in Hanoi. The main advantages of the DPO-led legal aid are their community outreach and insightful understanding of the multi-dimensional issues the adults and children with disabilities encounter, the hidden stigma and direct and indirect discrimination. DPOs such as ACDC and their partners have been very active in reaching out and meeting the needs of persons with disabilities for legal information, advice and representation. Over the past three years, 3,887 persons (1878 women and 2008 men) benefited from legal assistance of the ACDC and its partners. This legal aid network for persons with disabilities expanded from its primary location in Hanoi to other provinces in the Northern and Central of the country, including Ha Giang, Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien Hue.

The success of the DPO-led legal aid network triggered the national authority on legal aid, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), to recognize the demand for legal information and assistance by people with disabilities. In December 2015, MOJ included persons with disabilities as one of the beneficiary groups in their proposed draft Law on Legal Aid. In the draft Action Plan for CRPD implementation, legal aid for persons with disabilities was also set as a target of service delivery and budgetary support.

With UNPRPD support, training the trainers who carry out the legal aid activities was a powerful way to expand the network. More than 60 DPOs were trained to know more about the CRPD, disability law and relevant policies as well as how to claim their rights, in particular, using policy advocacy techniques and human rights knowledge. More than 50 young leaders of DPOs together with media reporters and journalists were trained to cover disability issues from a right-based perspective. Over the past three years, more than 1,000 persons with disabilities benefited from legal assistance provided by lawyers and students of Hanoi Law University.

In Viet Nam, persons with disabilities can access free legal aid. But many persons with disabilities do not know about their rights to legal aid and are unable to approach the legal aid offices operated by the Ministry of Justice. The legal aid network of DPOs helped many persons with disabilities to overcome these obstacles.

Thu from Vi Xuyen District has impaired mobility. She was a chairwoman of the district's association of people with disabilities and a member of a cooperative for tailors with disabilities established since 2014. She came to mobile legal aid clinic because her household had experienced difficulty accessing a loan for the business expansion. She said "Today is the first time that we received legal advice. At the moment we depend on our families for everything but of course we want to be self-sufficient. In trying to access finance we went to many offices to ask for advice but

they said that we needed to have collateral without explaining how and why.” Meeting with the lawyers helped explain the banking requirements and she got to know how to overcome the legal and procedural barriers to access the loan. This DPO-led legal aid model has been sustained with support of the local authorities and self-raised funds.

In addition to free legal assistance, the project supported the provision of free counseling services to children and persons with disabilities. The project also supported Da Nang Social Work Service Centre to strengthen its counseling quality and outreach through capacity building for staff and supervision of case management at the community. By end of 2015 approximately 250 children, parents and people with disabilities received counseling at the Da Nang Social Work Service Centre; and another 300 children with disabilities in the six communes of Da Nang received necessary supports from the community-based child protection system in Da Nang.

### **3. Other results**

**Spin-off effects.** *Positive results generated by the project which were not anticipated in the project document result chain.*

The ratification of the CRPD was the biggest positive spin-off during the year. The persistent policy advocacy throughout the project cycle may have had its impact on the Government. Also, the role of the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Pratibha Mehta, was significant in terms of giving the floor and the voice for persons with disabilities and the visibility for the Ratification, so there are inter-linkages between the project and the ratification of the Convention.

For the project, the ratification of the CRPD played a major role and it now gives further impetus to work on its implementation to guarantee that rights of persons with disabilities are considered effectively. Also, now DPOs and persons working on disability have enhanced knowledge on disability rights and the skills needed to claim their rights. With knowledge and experience sharing cross UN agencies, the project created a common and joint programming platform to promote the rights of disabilities. It helps to inform the UN country team on priorities for further work on the rights of persons with disabilities, crosscutting across areas of social protection, justice and human rights.

#### **Effective management arrangements**

The approach undertaken in this project corresponded to the “broad based programme approach”. Based on its mandate and comparative advantage, each implementing UN agencies was responsible for specific outputs under each outcome. In effect, the joint implementation of the programme was guaranteed by regular meetings of the Country-level Programme Steering Committee. In those meetings UN agencies discussed the planned activities in detail and how each agency contributed to the specific outputs.

#### **National ownership, participation and partnership-building**

The proposal was developed and implemented in consultation with representatives of a State agency and DPOs: the National Coordination Committee on Disability (NCCD) who is also representing the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Viet Nam Federation on Disability (VFD), the Hanoi Association for Disabled People, and the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour.

The programme promoted a key role for DPOs throughout:

- The programme worked directly with selected DPOs to build their capacities in policy advocacy, monitoring and evaluation and legal empowerment

- The programme worked with State actors to support the systematic inclusion of DPOs in consultations about law and policy making, in mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of implementation of CRPD and the National Action Plan for disability, and in ensuring a role for DPOs in legal empowerment

DPOs and government partners were actively involved in the implementation of the aforementioned outputs. Every year a consultation took place with the Country-level Programme steering committee, the DPOs and governmental counterparts to report on progress, to evaluate the achieved results and to decide on the way forward. The said consultations and planned activities ensured linkages between governmental and non-governmental organizations and improved coordination among different stakeholders and reduced the distance for further partnerships. By end of the project, all partners benefited from more visibility and from a stronger network and by finding ways to collaborate with each other. The UN agencies were given opportunities to find out about new entry points and identify new leverages that will make a difference. More opportunities to create platforms for dialogue between all stakeholders involved in the process.

### **Knowledge generation and potential for replication**

The monitoring of the proposed indicators conducted during quarterly meetings of the Country-level Programme Steering Committee (UNDP, UNICEF and ILO). Each UN agency reported on the progress made. Those meetings allowed us to discuss synergies, challenges and specific activities that could be carried out jointly.

Viet Nam as a pilot country for the One UN has established Joint Programming Groups (JPGs) which are coordination mechanisms to ensure coordinated and effective implementation of the One Plan results. The JPGs for Governance and Social Protection were fora to share experiences, good practices and lessons learnt and to mainstream our work among the other UN Agencies in Viet Nam on the thematic programming areas. This enabled the other UN Agencies in Viet Nam to benefit from our experiences and replicate the good practices into their programmes.

UNDP, UNICEF and ILO worked closely together, using their comparative advantages, to achieve greater results for all People with disabilities. The efforts of UNDP, UNICEF and ILO brought their respective partners together to catalyze the effect of advocacy on the ratification of the CRPD, the implementation laws, decrees and circulars and the empowerment of DPOs to claim their rights.

## **4. Life stories and testimonies**



Equality for All - Vo Thi Hoang Yen is at the forefront of the human rights movement for persons with disabilities in Vietnam. She is both the founder and director of the Disability Research and Development Center (DRD)\*, and

lecturer at Ho Chi Minh City Open University for future social workers in Southern Vietnam. In 2010, she received The President's Call to Service Award of the U.S. government (2010), in recognition of those individuals who make a difference through volunteer service and in 2009 was named winner of the Kazuo Itoga Prize for her outstanding work in developing resources to enable persons with disabilities in Vietnam to participate in society and promote their equal opportunities.

She was a born fighter. Neither the polio she contracted at the age of 3 nor the obstacles she confronted while growing up in Vietnam could keep her down. Unlike most people with disabilities, she completed high school in Vietnam and then earned her master's degree abroad. Since then, Yen has been at the forefront of the human rights movement for persons with disabilities in Vietnam.

Established in 2005, DRD provides leadership training, job counseling and scholarships for young women and men with disabilities. It also links job seekers with disabilities to mainstream job placement centers and employers. In addition, DRD helped to set up a women's entrepreneurs club and provide technical support with a marketing strategy, business development and networking with clients. Today, DRD has over 3,500 beneficiaries and welcomes new people every day. Vo Thi Hoang Yen, Director of the Center shared "injustice comes from misconception of people towards people with disabilities. Some think that people with disabilities are useless, others worry that people with disabilities cannot do anything, and view us as in need of protection and care for. Stigma and misconception are causes that make people with disabilities invisible."

In Yen's view, to achieve a more equal and inclusive society, "policymakers should be more aware of the barriers facing persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities, and make the proper adjustments to meet their needs". Her advice to peers is to believe "that you are just as capable as other people, be more confident in expressing yourself and be insistent in asking for what you deserve."

***"You are just as capable as other people, be more confident in expressing yourself and be insistent in asking for what you deserve."***

At the training on Disability and Equality for 20 journalists came from different media agencies based in Hochi Minh city and Southern provinces, in an interview for "Phap Luat Thanh Pho Ho Chi Minh" online newspaper (The Law Journal of Ho Chi Minh city) Yen voiced concerns of people with disabilities and asked for media awareness "Crying for help of media to persons with disabilities exists for a long time. However, I hope journalists should report honestly on disability issues. The most important thing is the roots of reporting problems should be clarified as much as better. If a person with disabilities cannot contribute his or her capacity and abilities to the community it means that not because of his or her impairments but barriers in the society lead to inaccessibility of persons with disabilities".

Yen's dream is to have an inclusive, barrier-free society where people with disabilities can participate in all activities equally and equitably and be able to enjoy a quality life.

Know your rights - "Today is the first time that we receive the legal aid. On behalf of the people with disabilities in my district, I come here to ask information on how we can get loan for our business to reduce families' burden. Since last year, we have just established a cooperative of tailors who are people with disabilities and depend mostly on families for everything. We went to many offices to ask for loan but they said that we need to have collaterals without explanation on how and why", said Nguyen Thi Thu, chairperson of DPO in Vi Xuyen District, Ha Giang Province.

The occasion of the free legal consultations was the first time ACDC conducted free legal aid services for persons with disabilities in Ha Giang province with the support from the DPO of Ha Giang Town

“[O]ne of the most positive impact[s] [of being involved] in my opinion, is the acceptance of disability in society and persons with disabilities themselves. For persons with disabilities, acceptance is a vital step towards developing positive self-image and self-confidence and thus this will encourage them integrate into society.” said Ms. Do Huyen, a representative of a DPO from Thu Lien District, participated in a talk show with National Assembly members (the talk show is accessible at [link](#) ).

Worker access to labour rights in innovative way - “Viet Nam has achieved impressive economic growth over the past ten years, but Viet Nam’s justice services have struggled to keep pace with such rapid changes. While there are many reasons why the justice sector is not meeting their needs, one problem is that there are not enough lawyers with the practical skills and knowledge needed to help the poor. Law School graduates often enter the workforce without having any experience of working with and listening to people who have legal problems. Teaching students how the legal theories they have learned can make a real difference in the lives of vulnerable people is an important aspect of their education. Through an Innovation Initiative programme, UNDP Viet Nam is helping to make law students better able to serve the public when they graduate, while providing residents living near an industrial zone essential awareness of their rights under the law.”

The story was shared on UNDP Viet Nam Facebook site ([link](#) ); and UNDP Viet Nam Youtube channel (published on 14 October 2014 at [link](#) ).

Multi-stakeholder collaboration and strong commitment to overcome the barriers in implementation of the Convention – The approach for multi-stakeholder—the government, DPOs and civil society at large—and cross UN collaboration described in this report has proved an effective way to tackle difficulties in implementation of the CRPD, especially when these barriers embedded within longstanding governance structures and societal attitudes. In recognition of the project support to promotion of the rights of people with disabilities and implementation of the CRPD in Viet Nam, Ms. Pratibha Mehta, UN Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam said

“The UNPRPD project in Viet Nam has supported the UNCT to better respond to the multifaceted nature of disability rights by integrating the expertise of various UN agencies. It has improved synergies across UNCT thematic areas of intervention and programme on disability rights. Importantly, it has strengthened the role of organizations of persons with disabilities to engage with policymakers at the highest level, the Parliament and the Government, particularly in the processes and discussions leading up to the CRPD Ratification. The newly established National Committee for Disability, which is tasked with coordination functions for CRPD implementation, has 4 representatives of disabled persons organizations. In promoting access to justice for persons with disabilities, the UNPRPD project strengthened the role of persons with disabilities not just as beneficiaries of legal aid but also as active providers of it in their own communities.”

Also see “Connections: Building Partnerships for Disability Rights”, UNPRPD, An overview of results from UNPRPD funding round, 2016, p.94.

## **5. Challenges, lessons learnt and recommendations**

### ***Improved coordination and communication:***

- Work needs to be done in a more coordinated way in order to be effective and efficient
- This has its challenges but it is indispensable if the project aims to be more results-oriented

- The project provides a very good opportunity to strengthen our capacities in the areas of coordination and communication
- The roles of ONE UN Communication team is very important to ensure the consistency in having the One UN Viet Nam branding, the joint project branding, visibility and key messages

***Increased understanding among participating agencies:***

- Increase understanding of the work of the other agencies
- Very good opportunity for exchange of best practices and knowledge
- Members of the team learn new ways of working and all the time withdraw lessons learned during working progress for further improvement

***Strengthened partnerships:***

- The partners will benefit from more visibility.
- The partners benefit from a stronger network and find ways to collaborate with each other.
- More opportunities to create platforms for dialogue between all stakeholders involved in the process
- 3 agencies give 3 times more opportunities to find out about new entry points and identify new leverages that will make the difference

***Increased quality of work:***

- Working on the joint programme on the promotion of the rights of people living with disabilities is very challenging but exciting. We feel that our project has a lot of potential and that for different reasons: It is ONE project with many partners; the project speaks from one voice and therefore its messages always are stronger.
- Working together could maximize the advantaged of each member of the team and of the three agencies
- Quality of the work is higher as there are always three peer reviewers
- A stronger network of UN disability practitioners has been being created

## **6. Next steps and potential for scaling up**

The UNPRPD over the past three years supported to build a solid framework for joint UN actions to support the DPOs and create a platform for the DPOs themselves to advance disability rights in Viet Nam. Fourteen months after the CRPD ratification, the Government has established a National Committee for Persons with Disabilities, a due consideration to establish a coordination mechanism on national implementation and monitoring. A comprehensive Action Plan to implement the CRPD is being developed. A study to develop disaggregated database on disability is being commissioned to address the data gap and discrepancy on disability. Along with the Government efforts, there are ongoing discussions among DPOs and other civil society organizations (CSOs) toward launching a coalition to raise public awareness and address discriminatory policy and practice in Viet Nam. DPOs have had greater visibility as they reach out to the public, and media have reported on discriminatory practices in their protection. While these are encouraging steps, the media and dialogues with DPOs and DWPs<sup>13</sup> revealed that people with disabilities continue to face obstacles access to social protection, care arrangements and education, employment and vocational training for people with disabilities, and access to justice. The DPOs and other stakeholders also considered the continued support from the UN partners critical in order to consolidate the achievement made thus far, and to ensure their sustainability beyond the UNPRPD project.

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<sup>13</sup> In April 2015, Thanh Nien newspaper reported about a PWD was refused boarding by a domestic airline, [link](#). Comparative Discrimination Law in Viet Nam, Maleiha Malik, Forthcoming report commissioned by UNDP.

Consequently, UNDP, in consultation with UNICEF, ILO and other UNPRPD partners in Viet Nam, has developed a proposal for Phase II of the joint project, as a way to consolidate and upscale the achievements made. The focus of Phase II will continue to strengthen the capacity of DPOs to ensure the participatory and inclusive process in the CRPD implementation and monitoring, and support to develop policies responsive to the rights of people with disabilities in particularly on the right to education, the right to work and legal empowerment to combat discrimination. The project will coordinate with the activities of other development partners in the National Disability Partnership Group (NDPG).<sup>14</sup> Overall, the Project will contribute to accelerate the positive trend and reform agenda underway to:

- Strengthening the capacity of DPOs to scale up their advocacy and to expand their network;
- Addressing stigma and discrimination to persons with disability at school and the workplace; and
- Strengthening the legal and policy environment to advance the disability rights.

These objectives can be achieved through targeting the Project's outcomes below.

- Outcome 1: Strengthened national policy and legal framework to implement the CRPD
- Outcome 2: Improved capacity of DPOs to involve and participate in the CRPD monitoring process

Leveraging from this project's results, future support and programme to persons with disabilities would benefit from the strong partnership with the National Committee for Persons with Disabilities, and the leading DPOs of the Phase I.

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<sup>14</sup> The NDPG is established in 2014, co-chaired by UNICEF and USAID in Viet Nam, to promote knowledge sharing, coordination in the implementation of the CRPD.

# Annex 1.

## List of reference documents

### Legal document

- National Assembly' Resolution on the CRPD ratification, 28 November 2014, [link](#).
- Law on Vocational Education and Training, 14 November 2014, [link](#).
- Decision no.2057/QĐ-TTg dated 23 November 2015 on approval of the UPR Action Plan.
- Decision no. 1717/QĐ-TTg dated 6 Oct. 2015 on establishment of National Committee on People with Disabilities.
- Decision 1019/QĐ-TTg dated 5 August 2012 on approval of the National Scheme for Assistance to Persons with Disability period 2012-2020.

### Report and other material

- "Access to justice for persons with disabilities", ACDC, 2014.
- "Formative Review of the One Plan 2012-2016", Angelica Arbulu et al, Draft report, January 2016, Case study 2 (p.46-53).
- Handbook on necessary information for persons with disabilities, ILO, 2014.
- Hanoi Statement, APDF, 2014.
- List of National Committee for Persons with Disability (NCPD) members.
- "Mapping of policy coordination and services for people with disabilities in Vietnam", Caitlin Wyndham, 2013
- Media pocket guide to reporting on disability in Vietnam, ILO, 2014.
- News coverage, UNDP website, 2015, [link](#).
- National Coordination Committee on Disabilities (NCCD), Annual Reports: 2012, 2013, 2014.
- Vong Minh Nhi's remarks at the National Assembly workshop, 29 September 2014, in Ho Chi Minh City.
- "Connections: Building Partnerships for Disability Rights", UNPRPD, An overview of results from UNPRPD funding round, 2016 ( [link](#) to MPTF Gateway )

## Project's activities and events covered by media and social network

### Community legal aid

"Worker access to labour rights in innovative way" - The story was also shared on UNDP Viet Nam Facebook site ([link](#)):

### Legal aid to people with disabilities

[link](#). News coverage in DP Hanoi's webpage about a workshop on legal aid policy to PwDs.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL6e\\_kVtCCU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL6e_kVtCCU)

### Mobile legal aid in Ha Giang province

<http://hagiangtv.vn/thoi-su-toi-11032015.html>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzs\\_qG5qSds&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzs_qG5qSds&feature=youtu.be)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_OD-2H4RL8M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OD-2H4RL8M)

<http://hagiangtv.vn/thoi-su-toi-0932015.html>

<http://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/presscenter/articles/2015/03/09/free-legal-aid-helps-people-with-disabilities-understand-their-rights.html>

**UNDP Viet Nam Youtube channel** (published 8 November 2014 at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Y4QfererUU&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Y4QfererUU&feature=youtu.be)). "UN Talk on Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" - This talk with the UN Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam Dr Pratibha Mehta was broadcast on the National Digital



Television on 7 November 2014.

**UNDP Viet Nam Youtube channel** (published 30 November 2014 at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm1uWeIMT0o&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm1uWeIMT0o&feature=youtu.be)). “The Significance of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” - This video was the first talk in the series and broadcast on the national digital television on 8 November. The talk focused on the significance of the Convention and featured a discussion between Mr. Ngo Duc Manh, Vice Chairman of the NA External Relations Committee, and Ms. Do Thi Huyen, Chair of the Association of People with Disabilities of North Tu Liem district.

**VTC10 (HTV) Interview** (Policy Advocacy: Training and meeting with decision makers) at <http://bit.ly/1EcsbwP> (no longer accessible online, website check on 28 April 2015).