



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Gender equality and women's empowerment in Viet Nam - Mid Term Joint Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: *Vietnam*
Mid-Term Evaluation: *01/2011*
Mode of Evaluation: *Independent*
ILO Administrative responsibility: *CO-Hanoi*
Technical Area: *Gender*
Evaluation Management: *MDG Achievement Fund*
Evaluation Team: *Tony Beck*
Project Code: *VIE/09/52/UND*
Donor: MDG-AF (US\$ 4,500,000.00)
UNFPA: USD 2,746,655.00
FAO: USD 90,000.00
ILO: USD 424,960.00
IOM: USD 52,803.00
UNDP: USD 215,367.00
UNESCO: USD 215,875.00
UNICEF: USD 2,995.00
UNIDO: USD 127,311.00
UN Women: USD 242,681.00
UNODC: USD 209,083.00
Keywords: *Gender equality, women empowerment, national legislation on gender equality.*

Background & Context

The three-year UN/Government of Viet Nam Joint Programme on Gender Equality (JPGE), funded by the Millennium Development Goal Fund (MDGF) with a grant of US\$4.5 million, started in March 2009. In August 2010, JPGE

reached its half-way point, and under MDGF funding was required to undergo a Mid-term evaluation (MTE).

The JPGE MTE was carried out between September and December 2010, with a mission to Viet Nam by the evaluator from the 3rd to the 16th October. The main users of the evaluation findings and recommendations were identified as the Component Project Management Units, the Programme Management Unit, the National Steering Committee, Participating United Nations Organisations (PUNOs), and the MDGF Secretariat. Main data sources were document review and interviews.

The JPGE aims to provide strategic, coordinated and multi-sectoral capacity building and technical assistance for national and provincial duty bearers for implementation of relevant national legislation. It has three joint outcomes:

- Improved skills, knowledge and practices for the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control.
- Enhanced partnerships and coordination around gender equality within and outside government.
- Strengthened evidence-based data and data systems for promoting gender equality.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance and coherence. A majority of evaluation respondents thought that the JPGE

is making satisfactory progress in terms of completion of activities, but has not achieved intended levels of coherence, and remains a loosely connected set of activities.

The JPGE is highly relevant given Viet Nam's development challenges vis-à-vis gender equality. The three main focus areas of the JPGE – capacity development, networking and partnership, and support to data systems – are recognized strategies for promoting gender equality, and are central to the UN's mandate and comparative advantage. Some evaluation respondents raised concerns about the geographical focus of the JPGE, and noted that future work should extend to the provincial level and below, while at the same time ensuring that an enabling environment is maintained at the national level.

According to most evaluation respondents, the JPGE has produced significantly more coordinated programming on gender equality. Most respondents noted that the UN had achieved a higher level of communication and coordination, and had clarified key messages, and that there was also enhanced communication between the UN and government. While this increased coherence within the UN is to be commended, it should be noted that this was not a primary objective of the JPGE, which is capacity development of government and other counterparts. And much remains to be done for the JPGE to meet its planned objectives in terms of coordination and coherence.

Almost all evaluation respondents noted that attempting to include 12 UN agencies, three main government partners, 16 Co-implementing Partners, and three joint outcomes, was over-ambitious. Involvement of some of the specialized UN agencies in the JPGE was due to concern that they be included in the One UN process. There was therefore a trade-off in the JPGE between coherence and inclusion, with the balance veering towards the latter. Nevertheless, the JPGE could have worked better as a joint programme if there had been a stronger strategic planning process, development of a shared vision for the JPGE, and greater UN senior manager leadership in strategic planning and coordination.

The JPGE lacks an adequate overarching conceptual framework to link its three main joint outcomes, and there is no shared vision for the joint programme. This is reflected in respondent perspectives on coherence. A majority of respondents (about 70 per cent) thought that the JPGE more closely resembled a loosely connected set of activities than a joint programme. A minority of respondents (about 25 per cent) thought that the JPGE was adequate as a joint programme, and the remaining 5 per cent thought that the JPGE was highly coherent. Part of the reason for the discrepancy in views is that there were different perspectives on what a joint programme should achieve.

The JPGE results framework demonstrates many of the problems facing UN agencies implementing results based management.

The third joint outcome - "Strengthened evidence-based data and data systems for promoting gender equality" - is the most problematic in terms of coherence. The missing element is a plan for the UN to support capacity development of the GSO so that it can adequately mainstream gender. This has meant for example that the JPGE has not provided input into the National Strategy on Statistics, which will be the overarching framework for national statistical work for the next five years.

Efficiency. The JPGE is well managed, with meetings, reporting and other management functions taking place on a regular basis and as required by the MDG-F. The evaluation also found that there had been under-investment in management and coordination functions, which constrained the JPGE's ability to provide support to the government.

Several respondents suggested that there needed to be greater clarity concerning the roles of the PMU and CPMUs. Government staffing appeared to be adequate for implementation of individual outcomes, but despite increased coordination between government departments, challenges remain in this area. The lack of a designated coordinator for the JPGE as a whole has been problematic. The JPGE has relied from the UN side to a

large extent on junior staff, particularly interns and UN Volunteers in the specialized agencies, among whom there is relatively high turnover, meaning a lack of consistency in dealings with the government. Some UN Heads of Agencies could have been more engaged.

The JPGE appears to have been designed without adequate attention to the capacities needed to carry out its objectives. Between 30 and 50 per cent of JPGE funds are being used to hire consultants. All government departments and UN agencies (with two exceptions) noted that finding appropriate national and international consultants in a timely fashion was a major constraint to JPGE implementation. This has led to delays, work of a lower technical quality than anticipated and significant problems for most stakeholders. Evaluation respondents noted that agencies were reliant on the same small number of consultants, so that there has been competition rather than coordination in this regard.

A number of respondents noted that the time-scale was likely to be too short to meet many of the JPGE objectives. The JPGE was subject to various start-up delays, including hiring of the international gender specialist. Decision-making involving a large number of partners, and staff turnover in the UN, have added to the delays. Even if a full three years is available, changes to the national culture related to gender equality, as well as full implementation of national legislation with far reaching consequences, is likely to take at least 10-15 years. Respondents thought that there had been reduced transaction costs in relation to management. In particular the government receives and reports on funds from one source. But at the activity level government still has to deal with individual agencies.

Effectiveness. A majority of JPGE activities are likely to be successfully implemented. Almost all training activities are being carried out as planned, four out of five study tours have taken place with the last tour planned, data gathering systems are being made more gender-sensitive, and reports, monitoring systems and other documents are being produced. Some of the output targets which are meaningful measures will be met on time,

and some of these activities are likely to provide medium-term benefits to the government. A number of respondents pointed to the study on domestic violence, the first such country-wide study, as a major contribution of the JPGE. These are significant achievements and have been produced as a result of the work of committed government, UN, and other counterpart staff. However the evaluation concludes that as yet the JPGE does not add up to something greater than a series of activities, and that these activities will not jointly feed into meaningful and measurable results at the outcome level.

A capacity assessment of government counterparts was carried out in late 2009, but the capacity assessment report was not completed until September 2010, almost half way through the JPGE. Ideally this capacity assessment would have been completed before the start of the JPGE, and with 1.5 years remaining it will be challenging to implement its recommendations. Of the JPGE activities, about 25 per cent involve training. The capacity assessment noted that most training in 2009 has not been successful. Assessment of training results could be strengthened.

The weak JPGE logical framework makes it challenging to assess whether longer term results are being or are likely to be achieved. National Implementing Partners rated the likelihood of JPGE Joint Outcomes being achieved as good (4 out of 5 on a five point scale). The evaluation has a more negative perspective. Progress towards Joint Outcome 1 on capacity development is considered unsatisfactory, mainly because of the late development of a capacity development plan. Progress towards Joint Outcome 2 on coordination and partnerships is considered partly satisfactory, in that there is increased participation and coordination, but the target of effective coordination of the gender mainstreaming function by empowered government partners is unlikely to be met by the end of the JPGE or within the foreseeable future. Progress towards Joint Outcome 3 on data is also partly satisfactory. There are a number of activities that the JPGE has undertaken which will lead to a strengthened

data base, but there is no strategy for systematic and coordinated capacity development for the GSO.

Sustainability and ownership. A number of respondents noted that follow-up to JPGE activities needs to be strengthened. There were concerns as to what would be left in terms of improved capacities after the JPGE was complete. The evaluation found that while there was considerable government involvement with the JPGE, government ownership and leadership could be stronger. One of the planned benefits of the JPGE in terms of coherence, and one area that would support sustainability, was involvement of donors and other partners. Donors and INGOs working on gender equality currently had only partial knowledge of the JPGE, although in the past it appears that they were regularly informed through the Gender Action Partnership, and greater efforts could be made again towards their inclusion.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Relevance and coherence

Organize a planning workshop for all JPGE partners to:

- Clarify expectations of what the JPGE can achieve, using Gadjia's typology as a basis for discussion. Promote development of a shared vision for the JPGE.
- Redefine the JPGE's outcome level targets, based on a capacity development results chain.
- To promote coherence, discuss moving some JPGE activities to one or two pilot provinces so as to develop a plan for implementing the GEL and DVL, including required resources to develop adequate capacities for this.
- Set up Results Groups for each of the three Joint Outcomes to clarify the objectives of each outcome and how they fit with the overall objectives of the JPGE. Seek information from the MDG-F as to the functioning of these groups in other countries.

Efficiency

UN Heads of Agencies should have a dedicated meeting on the JPGE every three months to assess progress and results.

Consider options for streamlining hiring practices, for example pre-qualifying consultants, or working through one or more consulting company with expertise in capacity development which can bring in relevant consultants.

Amend the international staff member's job description to reflect her actual responsibilities, which include supporting the PMU in coordination. During the planning workshop, clarify the roles of PMU and CPMU.

Effectiveness

Prioritize the recommendations of the capacity assessment report, develop a capacity development plan, and determine resources and timelines for recommendations. Ensure that the focus of the capacity assessment plan is at the institutional level. Training and study tours should make up one part of this capacity development plan.

Draw on expertise on capacity development from the UN Regional Office in Bangkok if required.

Develop a common methodology for the UNCT for assessment of training, based on the commonly used four point typology developed by Kirkpatrick. <http://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/> Review methods for assessing results of training in government institutions and determine if they are applicable to JPGE training activities.

Sustainability

Determine how capacities to be left with government and other counterparts at the end of the JPGE will be sustained, and develop a handover plan for all activities to the government.

Meet regularly (e.g. every 4-5 months) with donors and other international stakeholders such as the World Bank and Peace and Development, to discuss progress of the JPGE and potential interest in building on JP activities.