



United Nations Development Programme
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**Launch of Findings from Research “Citizens' Opinions of
and Experiences with Government Responses
to COVID-19 Pandemic in Viet Nam”**

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Opening remarks

by

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*Distinguished panelists and presenters from Oxfam Viet Nam, the World Bank,
Towards Transparency and Mekong Development Research Institute*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For UNDP it is a great pleasure to welcome you to today's launch of findings from the research "**Citizens' Opinions of and Experiences with Government Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic in Viet Nam**", conducted by the Mekong Development Research Institute and UNDP. This study was done thanks to the financial support from the Australian Government's Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade as part of our research programme 'The Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index' (better known as PAPI).

This survey was commissioned three months after the national lockdown in Viet Nam—and during which citizens across the country experienced the most impact from the COVID-19—and during the second COVID-19 wave in September 2020 which affected a few provinces, especially in the Central region.

Through an intensive telephone survey done during September 2020 with the participation of 1,334 respondents randomly selected from the 2019 PAPI sample, data was collected to understand COVID-19 impacts on their livelihoods, on the accessibility and effectiveness of the Government's relief packages, and on public confidence and trust in the Government's responses to the pandemic.

The Vietnamese government has been praised by citizens and the international community for its effectiveness in curbing the outbreak and protecting the well-being of its citizens. This is what we call “triple A governance: Anticipatory, Agile and Adaptive governance”.

The strong leadership, rapid and transparent measures adopted by the government of Viet Nam, with priorities placed on public safety have been identified as key factors to boost public trust and support in the government and country leaders in these difficult times.

There is no doubt that Viet Nam’s experience has brought forward new insights and lessons on how governments can to address complex and unexpected challenges like the ones posed by the global pandemic in an unprecedented manner. We hope that in today’s discussion we can distill some of those lessons which will be critical to inform future policy and programmatic work in the area of governance not only for Viet Nam but to share with other countries.

To facilitate today’s discussion, allow me to highlight three important findings from the report:

- **First, the Government of Viet Nam’s responses to contain the COVID-19 outbreak have proved to be swift and effective, according to citizens surveyed.** This is evident in **the respondents’ high consensus on and strong support for government policy and actions to contain the pandemic.** More than 96 percent of the respondents rated the responses from the National Steering Committee on COVID-19 Prevention and Control as good or very good, while nearly 94 percent had the same rating for their provincial governments’ responses. As many as 81 percent considers the pandemic as

a “very severe issue” and all population groups are concerned about COVID-19 latest developments. I am impressed with the finding that as many as 99 percent wore masks when going outside and 93 percent washed their hands daily during the peak of the pandemic.

- Second, despite such government and citizen responses, **the COVID-19 pandemic is generating negative impacts on the Vietnamese citizens and the national economy as a whole.** It is striking but not surprising to know that the service sector (for example, traditional retail and household services) is the most affected by the crisis, so were people that are unskilled and working in informal sectors, among the poorest and the near-poor groups. These are also those who reported the largest income loss due to COVID-19.

These findings are in line with what we found from a recent assessment conducted by UNDP and UN Women in Viet Nam. The report “COVID-19 Socio-economic Impact on Vulnerable Households and Enterprises: a gender sensitive assessment” was also a result of a telephone survey on the purposive sampling of 930 vulnerable households and 935 vulnerable household businesses, micro, small and medium enterprises in 58 (out of 63) provinces across Viet Nam.

One key finding from this survey was that COVID-19 has caused income to decline substantially across vulnerable households and workers, resulting in a surge in transient income poverty and pushing chronically poor households further into income poverty. And, the ethnic minority households and households of informal and migrant workers were disproportionately impacted.

We would wish to hear more from the World Bank Group's findings from the on-going waded surveys to track economic implications of the pandemic from Ms. Judy Yang during the panel discussion.

- And **third, the findings of the survey reaffirm an overall positive feedback from citizens of and experience with the government's 62 trillion VND support package.** Among those respondents that have received support from the aid package (21 percent of 1,335 informants), women, ethnic minorities, the poorest and near-poor groups were targeted. We will have more insights from our Oxfam Viet Nam colleague, Ms. Huong Nguyen who will have more to share from what the beneficiaries have to say about their access to the aid package.

However, the survey also revealed that **87 per cent of all respondents heard about the government aid package.** It means that **an estimated 13% did not hear about the aid package, and access to the information about the package was limited for ethnic minorities, the poorest, the rural population and those with lower education levels.** Access to timely and transparent information is very important to build and strengthen trust in governments and avoid corruption. It is more meaningful to mention this, as tomorrow, 9 December marks the International Day for Anti-corruption that we as the United Nations celebrate every year. We will hear from Ms. Nguyen Thi Kieu Vien from Towards Transparency to reflect on this important matter.

This study does have a caveat: It does not reflect the COVID-19 impact on people with disabilities because we did not ask specifically about this group. However, in May 2020, UNDP Viet Nam conducted and launched a rapid assessment of

challenges faced by persons with disabilities during the first wave of the pandemic in Viet Nam. Our colleague Dao Thu Huong will share more about it during the panel discussion.

On behalf of the conveners of the research—Mekong Development Research Institute and UNDP in Viet Nam—I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for their partnership for this study, in addition to their generous support for the Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) towards 2025 together with Irish Aid and UNDP. I would also like to appreciate the sharing from 1,335 Vietnamese respondents from all 63 provinces during the survey month in September 2020. Without their inputs, this study was not possible.

We trust that you will find the findings insightful to understand how the Vietnamese citizens perceive of and experience with government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is on surge again in different parts of the world. We are convinced that Viet Nam will keep its pace in containing the pandemic for the safety and well-being of all Vietnamese people and for us as expats living here.

We wish you all safe and sound!

Chúc sức khỏe! Xin cảm ơn!

Closing Remarks

- Thank you everyone for such an insightful event today. To make this study possible, I would like to thank the Mekong Development Research Institute and our Governance and Participation teams again for all the hard work you have undertaken within such a short time span. We thank Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade again for your generous support for this study and the whole PAPI programme.
- I understand that after today's launch of the key findings, we will publish online the final working paper and will also publish an article internationally to share Viet Nam's experience with the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and citizens' support for such endeavours to make Viet Nam a success story to date.
- We still have not seen when the pandemic will be controlled entirely around the world so that we all can get back to the 'old normal'. However, we have noted that with 'the new normal', we have become more agile in our everyday performance for a better Viet Nam. We have the privilege to work and perform our missions and mandates in Viet Nam where we still can move around, visit our project sites, meet our counterparts and create outputs and outcomes in our development work. This is greatly contributed to the Government of Viet Nam's efforts in containing the pandemic and to the Vietnamese citizens who have been so proactive in joining the Government's call for preventing the pandemic contamination.
- Having noted that, Viet Nam does have lessons to share with other countries in terms of how to make the government's support package information

accessible for all, and how Viet Nam and the development partners can join hands to support individuals and communities that have been badly affected by the pandemic.

- **As a final note, I would like to say that Viet Nam's successful response to COVID-19 pandemic is an inspiring story. It largely depended on swift and effective Government action combined with the trust and willingness of citizens to comply with the Government's preventive and protective measures. I believe that lessons learnt from this success in terms of transparency, accountability, and social cohesion will help the Government in dealing with future crisis and addressing the key challenges that citizens have highlighted as top three issues of greatest concerns for citizens over the past three years, including Poverty, Environment and Corruption, according to the 2019 PAPI report.**
- On behalf of the conveners, I would like to call this sharing to the closure. We hope to continue our conversations during the networking session that follows.

Xin cảm ơn và chúc sức khỏe!