



Transparency, accountability and social cohesion key to successful COVID-19 Response

Ha Noi, 8 December 2020 - *“Viet Nam’s successful response to the 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 deal with future crisis and address the key challenges that citizens have highlighted as top concerns over the past four years - poverty, environment and corruption (PAPI reports)”*.

UNDP Resident Representative **Caitlin Wiesen** highlighted this today as she launched the Report *“Citizens’ Opinions and Experiences with Government Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic in Viet Nam”*.

With the generous support and partnership from the Australian Government’s Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), UNDP and the Mekong Development Research Institute (MDRI) conducted a sociological survey to understand how Vietnamese citizens have perceived and experienced the measures to contain the coronavirus adopted by central and local governments.

“I have been extremely impressed by Vietnam’s determination to control COVID-19 this year. But it isn’t my impressions that really matter for public policy. It is the impressions of the people for whom those policies are designed that matter. This survey shows clearly that the commitment to contain the pandemic is shared throughout the whole community - this is a testament to the efforts of all of those involved,” shared Mr. **David Gottlieb**, Counsellor, Economic and Development Cooperation, Australian Embassy Viet Nam.

On public confidence and trust in the Government’s responses to COVID-19, the survey shows high consensus of respondents 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 99 percent wore masks when going outside and 93 percent washed their hands daily during the peak of the pandemic.

Regarding COVID-19 impacts on the national economy and citizens’ livelihoods, 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. Twenty-four percent of respondents reported job losses and 65 percent reported income reduction.

On the accessibility and effectiveness of the Government’s 62 trillion VND (approximately 2.6 billion USD) relief packages, findings of the survey reaffirm overall positive feedback from citizens. 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.

However, **Dr. Phùng Đức Tùng**, President, Mekong Development Research Institute, shared this information from one of the respondents: *“I myself and my teammates who are wounded soldiers and*

people with meritorious services to the revolution, have not been affected by COVID-19 in terms of income as we receive monthly pensions and social assistance. However, we are supported by the aid package while people who have suffered from job loss and income reduction are not. I feel ashamed when receiving the support; the policy needs adjustments”.

The survey also revealed an estimated 13 percent of the respondents 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.

During the launch workshop, experts from the World Bank, Oxfam Viet Nam, Towards Transparency, and UNDP also shared findings from other surveys and reflected on relevant matters, including economic implications of the pandemic; impact on people with disabilities; and transparency.

Using the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) method, this intensive telephone survey was conducted during September 2020 with the participation of 1,334 respondents randomly selected from the 2019 PAPI sample. The Australian Government’s Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade provided financial support for this survey as part of UNDP research program ‘The Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index’ (PAPI).

Link to the presentation: <http://papi.org.vn/eng/category/thematic-research-reports/> (English) and <http://papi.org.vn/category/bao-cao-chuyen-de/> (Vietnamese). The full report to be published on 1 January 2021 at <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding.html>.

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