

## **Country Case Study: Viet Nam**

### Mainstreaming Climate Change into Urban-Related Policies

**Background of Climate Change and Urbanization in Viet Nam** 



// Image 1. New urban development in Ha Noi © UN-Habitat

Viet Nam is one of the most vulnerable countries affected by climate change. It is experiencing disasters due to flooding, typhoons, droughts, and saline water intrusion, as well as landslides brought about by excessive or prolonged precipitation. The country's population and economic assets will face more risks noting that climate projections for Viet Nam shows an average temperature rise from 1.3 to 1.7°C in middle 21st century and rainfall average increasing by 5-15% in general, with coastal provinces in the North Delta, the North Central and the Mid-Central increasing up to 20% for the same period. Moreover, sea level rise in Vietnam is projected to be higher than the global average. If the sea level would rise up to 100cm and without any adaptation measures, an area of about 16.8% of the Red River Delta, 1.5% of the Central Coast from Thanh Hoa to Binh Thuan, 17.8% of Ho Chi Minh City and 38.9% of the Mekong Delta would be under high risk of inundation (MONRE-IMHEN: 2016). This scenario could

create massive negative effects to the country's economic and social activities as it may reduce GDP earnings, which in turn may limit the achievement of Viet Nam's growth and development targets.

Further, climate change would create pressure to Viet Nam's urban development and growth prospects. Viet Nam is urbanising rapidly with urban population increasing from 14.7 per cent to 34.2 per cent for the period 1960 to 2016, and it is expected to reach 50 per cent by 2025 . The country's urban areas currently grow at a rate of 3.4 per cent annually with the two economic centres of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as the main influx destinations . "The surging urban population has put immense pressure on the existing housing stock, infrastructure, services and social welfare. Over the past years, infrastructure in the major cities has been strained under the growing demands of the urban population and the private sector" (Viet Nam

Habitat III Report). Whilst 70% of the GDP comes from urban areas, urban poverty is still a challenge.

With Viet Nam's vulnerability to climate related events and rapid urbanization, there is a high imperative to ensure that the country has the institutional arrangements which would enable the active preparation for and adaptation to current and future climate change impacts.

### Vietnamese National Urban-Related Policy and Legislative Framework

In general, Viet Nam has an existing urban policy and legislative framework which, in coordination with provincial governments, has the potential to direct and manage urbanization within the country. The urban policy framework in Viet Nam, like other national-level urban policy frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region, is complex, and delineating the boundaries is challenging. There are a number of important, yet tangential, policy documents that influence urban development within the country such as:

i. the Socio-economic Development Strategy 2011-2020,

**ii.** the Viet Nam Sustainable Development Strategy 2011-2020 and

**iii.** the 2002 Comprehensive Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction.

The 2009 Adjustment of the Orientation Master Plan to Develop Viet Nam's Urban System Development until 2025 with a Vision to 2050 is the foundational framework for spatial and infrastructure planning in the country. The legislative documents supporting the implementation of this policy framework are a complex network of laws, decrees and decisions. Certain laws, for example the Law on Urban Planning, the Law on Construction, the Law on Housing and the Law on Land, form the legislative foundation for urban planning and policy within the country. In 2015, a revised Law on Urban Planning was enacted, and is responsible for the implementation of urban planning and management.

The Orientation Master Plan is complimented by two core urban programmes: the 2009 National Urban Upgrading Programme, aimed at upgrading low-income urban areas, and the 2012 National Urban Development Programme, aimed at promoting stronger linkages in planning between the Orientation Masterplan and socio-economic development in Vietnamese urban areas. In addition, the approach to urban management in Viet Nam is based

on a unique system of urban classification. There are 5 centrally administered cities which are comprised of urban districts, rural districts, and towns. Within provinces there are urban areas comprised of cities and towns as opposed to those classified as rural districts. The urban area or city classification is based on thresholds on population, infrastructure, and socio-economic characteristics ranking them into six levels or classes. Each class of city equates with a different level of autonomy from the central government, and differing levels of financial transfers from the national government, which are commensurate with the degree of autonomy.

Finally, the implementation of this policy framework and the enforcement of supporting legislation is the responsibility of numerous ministries: the Ministry of **Construction** (spatial and infrastructure planning through the Orientation Master Plan to Develop Viet Nam's Urban System until 2025 with a Vision to 2050, the 2009 National Urban Upgrading Programme, the 2012 National Urban Development Programme, the Law on Construction, the Law on Urban Planning and the forthcoming National Urban Development Strategy and the Law on Urban Management), the Ministry of Planning and Investment (the Socioeconomic Development Strategy 2011-2020, and the Viet Nam Sustainable Development Strategy 2011-2020), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Law on Land) and the **Ministry of Transport** as well as various committees, such as the National Steering Committee for Housing and Real Estate Market Policy, established by the Prime Minister and headed by a deputy prime minister, which oversees housing related policies in the country.



// Image 2. Bustling construction work in big cities © UN-Habitat

#### WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

Viet Nam has made progress with the development of dedicated climate change policies and strategies related to addressing climate change, but has seen challenges in mainstreaming the climate change agenda into the urban-related policies and programmes of line ministries. As in other countries which are particularly adversely affected by climate change, climate related challenges should figure prominently in all key Vietnamese national development strategies and plans in the country.

### Development of Vietnamese Climate Change Policies

The 2002-2012 National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change, the 2011 National Climate Change Strategy and the 2012 National Action Plan on Climate Change set out a national level plan to address climate change over a ten-year period and form the basis of the governmental response to climate change in Viet Nam especially on climate change adaptation. Linked to climate mitigation is the Vietnam Green Growth Strategy issued in 2012 and the Vietnam Green Growth Action Plan in 2014. These national climate change policies recognize the need for integrated actions across sectors and ministries hence outlines tasks accordingly. Furthermore, shortly after Viet Nam ratified the Paris Climate Agreement and thus formalizing their Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the government developed and approved the Plan for Implementation of the Paris Agreement (PIPA) in October 2016 referencing the said existing climate policies and action plans detailing 64 tasks, including tasks of localities, to achieve the country's goals and targets on climate change.

### Climate Change Mainstreaming through Local-level Planning and Policy Making

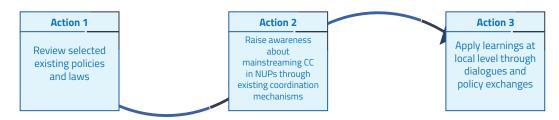
Efforts to mainstream climate change into national urban related policies in Viet Nam focused on three modes of intervention: review and enhancement of selected policies and laws, awareness-raising, and good practice exchange at the local level:

Review and enhancement of selected policies and laws: in 2016, the Project, Strengthening Capacities of Member States in the Asian and Pacific Region to Mainstream Climate Change into National Urban Policies facilitated support and advisory services to the ongoing effort of government and other stakeholders to review both the Law on Urban Planning and the development National Urban Development Strategy in order to enhance the focus on climate change in urban areas in both documents. Technical advisory was also given during the initial processes for the development of the Viet Nam National Urban Development Strategy, with UN-Habitat being part of the Advisory Committee in its formulation. Further, the National Urban Policy Review of Viet Nam, a study conducted jointly by UN-Habitat and OECD, was conducted in 2017 and published in Feb 2018.

Together with the Ministry of Construction, OECD and UNDP, the Project also conducted an international seminar to gather high-level policymakers from relevant ministries on urban policy in Viet Nam in April 2017. Representatives from the Vietnamese national and local governments and the governments of Germany and Japan, and international and national development partners gathered to exchange



// Image 3. Protective Wall 2, Hoi An Vietnam © UN-Habitat



views on Viet Nam's urbanization challenges, policy responses, and practices in managing rapid urban growth and climate change through national urban policy and legal frameworks.

Awareness-raising: focus was also placed on raising awareness of actors of the need to consider the mainstreaming of climate change into national urban-related policies. To these ends, together with the Vietnam Urban Forum, a national dialogue and consultation was conducted in July 2016.

Good practice exchange at the local level: local level engagement in mainstreaming efforts is essential in order to help to ensure that efforts towards mainstreaming climate change at the national level can be implemented at the local level. To support learning on how localities can plan in such a way to support the implementation of national level policies targeting climate change, seven secondary cities in Viet Nam were identified and were provided technical inputs through dialogue events and good practice

exchange events on topics such as "Mainstreaming climate change in City Development Strategy development", "Low-Emission Development Oriented Planning, and "Sharing on the Guiding Principles for Local Climate Action Planning."

Other than project activities, the government likewise has taken actions to mainstream climate change considerations into sectoral policies as guided by the existing policy issuances on climate change. While there has been positive progress towards the development of clear and explicit policies and strategies which are targeting climate change within Viet Nam, the process of mainstreaming climate change into other national urban related polices and associated legislation still requires further work. Furthermore, at times a piece meal approach to mainstreaming is applied with, for example, climate change concerns not being fully being integrated into urban planning policies. While adaptation and disaster risk reduction were included, climate mitigation is being considered within other policies in the country but not in the majority of urban related policies.

#### **LESSONS LEARNED OF THE PROJECT**

### Lesson One: mainstreaming efforts must target urban related policies and their associated legislative frameworks

In Viet Nam, a Strategy plays the role of providing policy direction but is not legally binding. Therefore, although Viet Nam has a National Climate Change Strategy and a forthcoming National Urban Development Strategy, in order to be legally binding, adequate laws are needed and a concrete budget, as well as responsibilities, should be in place.

Currently, there is no legally binding framework that enforces climate sensitive related actions in urban areas in Viet Nam. However, laws as an entry point for mainstreaming are rather difficult as they are revised every five years, are very difficult to change and typically are enforced by one Ministry; and therefore are not encouraging the horizontal coordination which should be encouraged to tackle climate change. Decrees or circulars are much easier as entry points, and this is also what international donors

ask the government to do and are more easily modifiable. However, the ongoing process to develop a new Law for Urban Management is an opportunity to consider how to mainstream concerns for climate change into urban related urban legislation in the country.

However, the legislative framework, and its associated laws, decrees and decisions should not be the only entry point for climate change mainstreaming. With the ongoing development of the Viet Nam National Urban Development Strategy through the Urban Development Agency of the Ministry of Construction, there is an excellent opportunity to take advantage of these processes to mainstream consideration for climate change into the new Strategy as they will both undoubtedly form an important component of the urban planning and management framework in VietNam.

# Lesson Two: link urban climate change action targets to existing official target frameworks on climate change including the NDC and PIPA as it offers opportunities for measuring progress overtime and resources (technical and financial) to support implementation

The adoption of the Paris Agreement and the submitted Nationally Determined Contributions, are legally binding targets for the Government of Viet Nam in view of being a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Viet Nam's Plan for Implementation of the Paris Agreement or PIPA thus outlines and opens funding possibilities internally and externally, therefore creating possibilities for strategic linkages of actions with urban development programmes. Synergies of targets between climate change and urban development can streamline the process and approaches towards effective mainstreaming of climate issues and opportunities in urban sector actions.

The achievement of targets set in the Nationally Determined Contributions could be used to align other urban management frameworks, such as the City Classification System, to pre-existing targets on environment and climate change. While the City Classification System has been criticized as inflexible and unable to respond effectively to new challenges such as climate change, including consideration for climate change within the system is an opportunity to ensure policy directives in the classification system are not at odds with legally binding targets for the Nationally Determined Contributions.

### Lesson Three: coordination mechanisms such as the Viet Nam National Urban Forum need to be leveraged to raise awareness about mainstreaming climate change into national urbanrelated policies

In addition to the ongoing processes for the development of the National Urban Development Strategy and Law on Urban Management, the most promising entry point for mainstreaming efforts would be the Green Growth Strategy and the National Target Programme as they both have a large budget for potential mainstreaming actions.

#### Challenges and gaps

While there were numerous lessons learned and important upcoming opportunities for mainstreaming climate change into national urban related policies, there are several identified gaps which affect both the mainstreaming process itself, and the implementation of associated policies which may already contain a consideration for climate change:

- Capacity at the local government and at the national level are limited. The human resource capacity gap to perform and support mainstreaming actions is challenging the process. With limited financial resources as well as lack of experience to develop such kind of development plans and actions, the objective of mainstreaming is constrained;
- Institutional arrangements to support coordination between Ministries is not fully effective. While cooperation mechanisms are established at the national level, the translation of this at the technical and subnational levels remains relatively weak;
- Awareness of policy makers on climate change and the impact of climate change on urban areas and vice-versa

need to be increased and supported;

- Engagement and clarification of role and contribution of the private sector is yet missing or are weak most of the time;
- Standards/criteria related to climate change in development policies at both sector level and local level as legal document are lacking.

#### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

#### **Next Steps**

There are a number of actions that Vietnamese policy makers could take in order to further address the need of mainstreaming of climate change into national urban related policies:

Consider the scalability of local level "good practices": Viet Nam benefits from several good practices at the local level, which should be used to inspire policy makers both at the national level, in terms of the scalability of these local approaches, and at the local level, in terms of replicability in their context. Some of the notable good practices include:

- Ho Chi Minh city and Haiphong city which are piloting plans to respond to climate change, including both adaptation and mitigation actions;
- Piloting greenhouse gas emissions monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) system in Ho Chi Minh City for mitigation actions registered through an international registry system with support from MONRE and JICA;
- Haiphong is implementing social-economic development plans which consider climate change and flooding issues. Kitakyushu city (Japan) supports Haiphong to implement green growth projects: waste management, power generation from capturing gas in cement company, electric bus, etc.; and
- Support Programme to Respond to Climate Change (SP-RCC) coordinated by MONRE is a channel not just for policy at national level but also implementation at the local level.

Remember that mainstreaming at the national level is not enough: A response to climate change at city level requires technical/experience and financial support from both government and development partners. While the national government may make progress both in the development of climate change related policies and strategies and in mainstreaming climate change into the national urban-related policy framework, the government must also help to ensure implementability by tying strategies and policies to the funds needed for local implementation.

In Viet Nam, most of the strategies mentioned in this case

study are national strategies. Local governments often emphasise that if strategies are developed at the national level, the budget for implementation should also come from the national level. The Action Plan on Climate Change was implemented in this manner, with every province submitting requests each year for financial support from the National Target Programme budget. This could be made more effective if local governments can find financial channels somewhere else, such as from the private sector or international donors, as government budgets are insufficient and as climate change is also not one of the highest priorities in Viet Nam.

The Government should capitalize on the forthcoming development of urban related laws and strategies: Policy makers in Viet Nam should consider taking advantage of the ongoing development of the Viet Nam National Urban Development Strategy and the Urban Management Law to proactively mainstream climate change into this strategy and law. Considering the importance that these two documents will play in coordinating and directing urbanization in the future, it is important that the opportunity to align them to important climate-related policies is not lost. In order to facilitate this process, policy makers should ensure they are using lessons learned emerging from this case study, such as capitalizing on existing mechanisms for cooperation between Ministries, like the Viet Nam National Urban Forum, so that there is opportunity to strengthen institutional coordination between Ministries focusing on climate and those focusing on urban related topics; and ensuring that policies (or strategies) are linked to legally binding implementation mechanisms to ensure implementation.



// Image 4. Hanoi, Haon Kiem Lake © UN-Habitat

In the table below, the content of this case study has been applied to the Mainstreaming Framework introduced in the Regional Guide. Red text indicates completed or ongoing actions from the case study that correspond to individual tasks recommended within the Framework. Blue text indicates possible next steps, per the case study content.

	I) Substantive process	II) Resource & Capacity Assessment & Development	III) Urban & Climate Related Policy Alignment	IV) Institutions & Stakeholders
	✓ Identify drivers (WHY) you want to mainstream climate action into urban policy - make your case for mainstreaming	diagnosis, formulation, implementation	✓ Identify relevant national, sectoral & sub- national <b>urban</b> - related documents, including stage of National Urban Policy development, sources of financing & check if climate change mainstreamed	of country's institutional landscape ( <b>government)</b> & identify potential mainstreaming
Phase A: Feasibility & Diagnosis	urban policy - make your case for	& M&E phases of mainstreaming	stage of National Urban Policy development, sources of financing & check if climate change mainstreamed  **Action Taken - Identification of relevant urban-related policies and legislation, as well as review and enhance of selected policies and laws  **Action Taken - Identification of good practices at the local level  **Identify relevant national, sectoral & sub-national climate policies, strategies & frameworks that have relevance in urban context & check if urban-related concerns sufficiently covered  **Action Taken - Identification of relevant climate-related policies and legislation, as well as review and enhance of selected policies and laws	landscape (government) & identify potential mainstreaming champions  Action Taken - Identification of institutions involved in the implementation of the Orientation Moster Plan to Develop Viet Nam's Urban System until 2025 with a Vision to 2050, as well as enforcement of supporting legislation  ✓ Map & analyze relevant key stakeholders (outside government) & identify potential mainstreaming champions  ✓ Determine potential means & level of engagement of relevant institutions & key stakeholders based on capacities & interest (HOW, WHAT) & agree on Participation Strategy for mainstreaming process, including forming a Reference Group (WHO)  Next Steps - Recognition of the need for coordination mechanisms, including the Viet Nam National Urban Forum to raise awareness of the need to mainstream climate change into national-level urban related policies  Action Taken - Identification of institutions involved in the implementation of the Orientation Master Plan to Develop Viet Nam's Urban System until 2025 with a Vision to 2050, as well as enforcement of supporting legislation  Action Taken - Exchange of good practices at the local level
			- Green Growth Strategy and National Target Programme	

	I) Substantive process	II) Resource & Capacity Assessment & Development	III) Urban & Climate Related Policy Alignment	IV) Institutions & Stakeholders		
Phase A: Feasibility & Diagnosis		The necessary (human, financial)	Next Steps - Take advantage of the ongoing processes of development of both the Viet Nam National Urban Development Strategy and the Urban Management Law to proactively work to mainstream climate change into this strategy and law  The urban policy document(s) into which to mainstream has/ have been	Consensus has been reached with institutional partners & other		
	The goals, substance & main step of the mainstreaming proces (including M&E) have been clearl articulated in the Diagnosis Paper	commitments for the mainstreaming process have been	identified & an annotated outline drafted (or a new climate responsive NUP outline drafted) as part of the Diagnosis Paper	stakeholders on content & process for mainstreaming policy formulation & implementation as proposed in the Diagnosis Paper		
	Output Phase A: Preparation: DIAGNOSIS PAPER, the content of which has been agreed by key institutions & stakeholders, containing:  Goal & objectives of the mainstreaming process  Annotated outline of content to be mainstreamed into a certain policy or set of policies  Apreliminary strategy for mainstreaming process is outlined in broad terms, including general roles, resources & M&E					
ormulation	✓Conduct periodic M&E as per plan developed in Phase A:  ✓Undertake Implementation Analysis to understand legislative Institutional & administrative	activities of Core Team or reference group if needed	<ul> <li>✓ Formulate Policy Proposal, including clear indication of what other documents need to be aligned &amp; estimation for budget needs &amp; other resources to implement the mainstreaming objectives.</li> <li>✓ Align national policy targets with international framework targets indicators as well as review and reporting requirements as far as possible.</li> </ul>	s stakeholders in formulation process  & Implementation Analysis  h		
Phase B: Formula	planned and executed & an Implementation Analysis has been included in the Policy Proposal	The Core Team & the Reference Group has clear assignments & capacity to complete them in time & with high quality, including periodic M&E LICY PROPOSAL (i.e. mainstreamed n	Text of policy proposal has been eithe newly formulated or adapted to include:  a) climate responsive language, b) evidence on climate change status quo & trends impact of planned climate actions, & c) concrete mainstreaming objectives climate actions – by sectors & at national sub-national levels	e & Participating institutions & & stakeholders support formulation		

#### III) Urban & Climate Related **IV) Institutions** II) Resource & Capacity I) Substantive process Assessment & Development **Policy Alignment** & Stakeholders √Facilitate the process of having √Create detailed implementation work √Oversee, encourage or assist √Facilitate delegation of roles & plan on support/ coordination/ oversight by the Policy Proposal sanctioned/ sectoral ministries or government responsibilities to sectoral sub-national implementation bodies adopted or agreed by the respec-Core Team & Reference Group agencies to align existing policies tive oversight / decision-making & plans, or develop new ones in bodies in line with country-specifwith **√**Support resource mobilization for line implementation ✓ Define roles & responsibilities for ic requirement implementation of mainstreamed climate objectives of the newly stakeholders& facilitate mainstreamed national level actions, considering domestic & internainstitutionalization of coordination tional, private & public financing sources & processes (e.g. development of **✓**Continuously monitor process urban policy/ies & outcomes of implementation, & mechanisms & support measures to & standards procedures create feedback mechanisms to channel financial resources to sectoral & ✓ Mandate, encourage or assist stakeholders) if possible inform future policy cycles sub-national implementing bodies, local governments to align existing (responsibilities defined, clear policies & plans, or develop new progress indicators, analysis of Next Steps - Consider the scalability of local ones in line with implementation downstream policy documents, level good practices were proposed for objectives of the newly mainstreamed national level regular meetings with reference financing local climate action (e.g. local group & key stakeholders) governments to seek funding from private urban policy/ies **Phase C: Implementation** solely on the national government Next Steps - Consider the scalability of local level good practices ✓ Develop capacities of sectoral & sub-national implementing bodies if mandated & needed (including on how to access climate financing) & support institutionalization of capacity building processes where possible Action Taken - Assessment system under development Next Steps - Provide technical/experience and financial support to cities from both national government and development partners linked ("downstream") All relevant government bodies & documents have been aligned with other stakeholders actively inclusively contributed to policy All necessary resources & capacity new climate responsive national urban policy, enabling actors to start implementation of urban-readoption & operationalization; their The process of adopting and development for successful implemenroles were clarified & if appropriate operationalizing the policy has tation have been provided to all key been completed implementers lated climate actions institutionalized Output Phase C: Implementation: POLICY ADOPTION & OPERATIONALISATION ✓ Implementation plan with clear timelines, tasks & roles, confirmed resources & covering capacity development needs; Mainstreamed National Urban Policy/ies Document has been ratified (if legally binding according to country's legislative process), its directives & recommendations have been transcribed into respective laws & regulations, & operationalized in sectoral and sub-national policy documents, & plans & budgets have been aligned accordingly ✓Evaluate if capacity building had √Evaluate if institutional roles, √ Evaluate if mainstreaming process ▼Evaluate if mainstreaming process has been effective & inclusive desired impact & reached the right of national urban policy/ies fully responsibilities, coordination clear & considering existing sectoral & people process is functioning **√**Evaluate if policy proposal sub-national policies & legislation Phase C: Implementation sanctioned/ adopted or agreed by ✓Evaluate if climate responsive ✓Evaluate if all key stakeholders were respective oversight national level urban policy aligned with ✓ Evaluate if mainstreamed urban meaningfully involved throughout, their decision-making bodies local, national & global financing policy/ies aligned with targets, resources were effectively incorporated opportunities indicators, monitoring & review of & their needs met ✓Evaluate if climate-responsive international frameworks national urban policy has been operationalized with follow-on policies, legislation, plans etc. √Plan or encourage evaluation of whether the mainstreamed/ new national urban policy has enabled implementation of urban-related climate actions Evaluation process has been implemented & institutionalized including all relevant government bodies & stakeholders Output Phase D: Evaluation: EVALUATION REPORT, whose content has been agreed by key institutions & stakeholders

🗸 Institutionalisation of periodic evaluation & review of policy impacts with feed-in of learnings into subsequent policy processes