

Vietnam

Update on the context and situation of children

This year saw the full re-opening of Viet Nam following two years of strict controls due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, Viet Nam continued to experience the impacts of the pandemic across a range of social, political and economic areas. Progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remained stalled on many fronts, highlighting the urgent need for improvements in policy implementation, particularly in environment, digital transformation, and poverty/social protection. The 2022-2026 UNICEF country programme will contribute to addressing these challenges, with focus on child-related SDGs.

Viet Nam's political leadership in 2022, brought sustained focus to economic growth and anti-corruption. The economy bounced back; gross domestic product grew an impressive 8.02 per cent, the fastest pace annually since 1997. However, growth has not benefited all equally, creating widening disparities which were already emerging even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The important anti-corruption focus has resulted in significant changes in senior positions and contributes to a Government counterpart that is cautious, at times reluctant to try new approaches or address new challenges.

Poverty has continued to decline, albeit at a slower pace than in previous decades and remains a key concern, particularly for rural and ethnic minority families who experience much higher rates of poverty than other groups. These groups face persistent challenges of lower human capital, and reduced access to finance and public services, including education. Multidimensional child poverty remains high and for vulnerable populations it is more than three times the national average at 46.4 per cent. More and better investments in people for greater equity and economic growth are a key ingredient required for Viet Nam's economic success. [3]

Health indicators have stalled or in some cases reversed. While Viet Nam has consistently maintained over 80 per cent **coverage for routine immunization of children** under one year of age, due to the health system's shift towards COVID-19, there was a marked drop in routine immunization coverage to 67 per cent as of November 2022. **Nutrition continues to be a challenge, with almost one in five children under 5 years stunted.** Especially concerning are stunting rates among ethnic minority children which climb to one in three and one in five are underweight. Severe acute malnutrition continues to impact over 200,000 children annually, with 90 per cent going untreated. The overall under-five mortality rate stands at 21 deaths per 1000 live births reinforcing the need for better access to maternal health care, early childhood health care and nutrition. Sex-selection prior to birth is a significant concern. Access to safely managed water and sanitation is still low in rural areas, especially in remote and climate change-affected areas like the Mekong River Delta. An estimated 7.7 million children still do not have adequate access to clean water and sanitation at school. [4]

Children gradually returned to classrooms during the first half of 2022, with schools focused on recovering lost learning and social-emotional skills, particularly among children living in poorer households with no access to online learning. Despite major strides in improving education, there remain concerns regarding gender disparities and wide differences among socioeconomic groups with regards to education completion rates, the quality of the schooling, and household spending on education. By age 19, only one in five students from the poorest quintile remain in school, compared with 80 per cent of those in the wealthiest quintile. Geographic disparities also exist: Children in the Mekong Delta and Central Highlands have been persistently falling behind in learning outcomes with low net enrollment, high dropout rates, and low progression between educational levels. [5]

A lack of an effective child protection system is contributing to persistent protection concerns. For example, 72.4 per cent of children aged 1–14 years experienced violent discipline (physical punishment or psychological aggression by care givers). A professional workforce, services and adequate budget allocation by government are all urgently needed to protect an estimated 1.7 million children, including child labourers, victims of violence and abuse, children without parental care and children in conflict with the law. Influential in guiding future action and reform are a comprehensive set of recommendations that emerged from the **2022 constructive dialogue between the Government of Viet Nam and the Committee on the Rights of the Child**

Viet Nam remains among the top 10 countries most affected by climate change, the impacts of which disproportionately affect children and the poor. Although Viet Nam was struck by multiple storms and floods in 2022, they were not as catastrophic as those in 2020, which resulted in an estimated loss of 10 billion USD. While significant commitments to achieving net zero emissions were made by the Government at COP26, achieving these targets and building a climate resilient economy will require sustained commitment and investment of approximately 6.8 per cent of its GDP every year. The Government is actively seeking financing and grant support for its green transition, which can open new opportunities for UNICEF.

This year saw changes to the Government’s **official development assistance (ODA) legal framework** which have resulted in lengthened processes for the appraisal, approval and implementation of all United Nations projects and programmes. Under Vietnamese law, United Nations grant ODA is treated as an integral part of line ministries and agencies’ budgets and must follow all government planning, monitoring and reporting procedures. This adds additional steps to UNICEF’s usual work planning process, particularly at the start of a new Country Programme cycle and has led to delays in multi-year work plan approval. Affecting all agencies, the Resident Coordinator with UNICEF support is leading on a high-level dialogue with Government on the challenges of the current ODA regulatory framework and possible solutions.

- [1] Transparency International, ‘2021 Corruption Index’,
- [2] Asian Development Bank,
- [3] World Bank’s Low Middle Income Country poverty line
- [4] MOET
- [5] The World Bank
- [6] UNICEF
- [7] The World Bank

Major contributions and drivers of results

Throughout the year, **UNICEF contributed to strengthening the health system’s capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.** Provision of vaccines and outreach sessions in hard-to-reach areas enhanced the government’s COVID-19 and routine immunization programmes. UNICEF procured more than 85 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines as well as associated injection devices, and medical equipment for case management of COVID-19 and related infectious diseases. By end-2022, 85.6 million (92.4 per cent) of the total population aged 5 years old and above had received a primary dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Another 963,928 children (67.4 per cent) aged below one were reached during routine immunization. UNICEF’s support directly benefited around 223,000 people, including routine immunization for 14,000 children aged under one year old.

To enhance vaccine uptake, UNICEF supported the ‘Safe Journeys’ media campaign, implemented together with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The campaign reached more than 60 million people *with important information, building their confidence in the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, with the goal of ensuring no one is left behind in these efforts*. It engaged more than 5.3 million people via social media channels and mass media. Importantly, the messages of the campaign were translated into ethnic languages and sign language to increase its reach to ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

UNICEF supported **national and provincial policy and advocacy workshops and community-based communication on maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition services**. As a result, 44,816 pregnant women received antenatal care at least four times during pregnancy, 73,601 mothers were supported by skilled birth attendants, and 67,492 newborns received early essential newborn care in UNICEF’s supported provinces. Implementation of early essential and newborn care and kangaroo mother care (KMC) benefitted about 770,000 newborns and their mothers nationally.

UNICEF provided **intensive technical and advocacy support to the government to increase resources and focus on nutrition at the national and sub-national levels**. With UNICEF’s technical support, the national strategy is implemented through a National Plan of Action, 2022-2025. Sustained advocacy also contributed to specific funding allocations for nutrition under three National Targeted Programmes (NTPs). UNICEF built capacity for planning and implementation of nutrition under the NTPs for 180 officials from provincial Centres for Disease Control in 63 provinces. National and sub-national advocacy for sustainable funding mechanisms to scale up evidence-based, high impact nutrition interventions was prioritized and will continue in 2023. A circular which regulates government and provincial authorities to allocate budget to implement health and nutrition benefit packages at commune health centers was formulated and approved with UNICEF support.

Evidence generation was prioritized, with formative research conducted in ethnic minority populations to better understand water, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition practices.. The first study in the region on the impacts of a Sugar Sweetened Beverages (SSB) tax on non-communicable disease prevalence was conducted with UNICEF’s technical support, providing evidence to advocate for an SSB tax. A model of Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) interventions was showcased to the national government as a sustainable treatment measure for severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

National capacity in implementation and investment in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) has been strengthened towards achieving the targets of the National Strategy on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation and SDG 6 in the climate change context. With UNICEF support, a circular on rural water safety planning was formulated and consulted with national and provincial agencies. More than 100 national and local staff have been equipped with knowledge and skills in approaches to emergency response, risk assessment and appraisal for WASH, gender and behavior change communication, and 7,223 students and teachers were reached by a communication campaign on WASH.

With UNICEF’s support to innovative solutions, national and provincial partners selected four piped water schemes and 14 schools to upgrade their construction with climate resilient technology such as net zero toilets, rainwater capture, and solar power. The interventions are expected to provide clean water and safely managed sanitation for 20,000 people including girls and women by 2023. UNICEF worked with partners, including the Women’s Union, to support women’s empowerment in WASH resulting in a motivated network of 40 female WASH professional staff with enhanced capacity.

The child protection regulatory framework has been further strengthened through UNICEF’s technical support to government and inter-agency cooperation on violence against children (VAC) and child justice. A new inter-sectoral protocol provides the framework for integrated care and support

to victims of VAC, including child-friendly investigation, health care, mental health, and psychosocial support. UNICEF is supporting the government to improve the legal framework on social work via the development of a government decree to define the roles and functions of social workers, as well as circulars on job codes, professional standards and a salary scale for social workers, and social service costing.

Capacity of the workforce in the social welfare, health and education sectors has been enhanced to provide better child protection services. Some 3,500 social welfare officers, teachers, health workers, mass organization cadres, and NGO staff were trained in foundational knowledge and skills on gender-sensitive child protection, case management, child labour prevention, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as well as Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (PSEA). The scaling up of UNICEF-supported training programmes for frontline workers in the social welfare sector is underway. Guidelines on social work in schools, and a circular regulating the establishment of school counselling positions, are under development to increase psychosocial support and child protection interventions in schools. A guideline on forensic examination for child victims of abuse has been developed by the Ministry of Health. Two child protection courses have been developed for university social work programmes.

The institutional capacity of justice agencies has been significantly strengthened with the aim of increasing access to justice for children. More than 8,500 judges, lawyers, legal aid officers, law enforcement officers, and other legal professionals and practitioners have been trained on basic and advanced knowledge and skills on working with child victims and witnesses of crimes, and children in conflict with the law. Two modules on justice for children in civil and criminal systems for legal aid/lawyers have been developed by the Judicial Academy. Thanks to the increased capacity of these workforces, thousands of child victims of abuse, violence, and child labour, and children without parental care have received UNICEF-supported case management, health care, psychosocial support, and legal aid services.

The public, parents, and communities are more aware of prevention of violence against children and women, and holistic, nurturing care of young children has continued to improve. A United Nations joint public awareness campaign promoting social norm change, and social action to address violence against children and women reached 19 million people with strong engagement of many key opinion leaders and agencies. The Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) Holistic Parenting programme is being scaled up to 15 provinces across Viet Nam and an additional 11 private companies committed to joining this programme to promote nurturing care and safe environments for children.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) to re-open schools with an emphasis on building back better through more resilient and crisis-informed planning. UNICEF collaborated with MOET on a back-to-school awareness campaign to promote the return of children to schools in April 2022 after months of school closures due to COVID-19. Key progress and challenges in building back better were discussed at the National Consultation for the Transforming Education Summit (TES). Adolescent student mental health was a key focus of UNICEF support, starting with a ground-breaking comprehensive national study of school-related mental health risk factors. UNICEF supported MOET to embed **mental health** prevention and programming in schools with training for 150 core school health workers and teachers across the 63 provinces that will support the wellbeing of students. Consultations, workshops and conferences with adolescents and young people were also held to promote adolescents' participation in promoting good mental health.

UNICEF interventions supported the government to ensure more inclusive learning opportunities for children with disabilities, children of ethnic minorities and LGBTI children. Mother tongue-based bi-lingual education (MTBBE) was re-activated with UNICEF support as a strategy to improve learning outcomes and social inclusion of ethnic minority children with UNICEF

directly supporting implementation of MTBBE in eight provinces while working at national level to strengthen education system capacity. MTBBE interventions, which included adaptations for children with disabilities, contributed to the amendment of Viet Nam's Law on Persons with Disabilities to reflect inclusive learning, and the revision of Circulars on operation of boarding and semi-boarding schools for children of ethnic minorities and mountainous areas. These legal and policy improvements will directly impact the learning of 21 million children in Viet Nam, of which 700,000 are children with disabilities, and 14 per cent (almost 3 million) are ethnic minority children.

In collaboration with the Office of Innovation and VNIES, **UNICEF partnered with two digital public goods – the Global Digital Library and VRapeutic – to advocate for equity, digital accessibility and inclusiveness in the digital transformation process of the education system.** The Global Digital Library project has produced 160 quality digital books in eight underserved ethnic languages and sign language. The collaboration with VRapeutic has adapted virtual reality game modules to support children with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) to improve their attention skills. UNICEF supported system reform in early childhood education (ECE) which benefits not only from the development of the **National Digital Competency Framework**, but also from social emotional learning and skills for preschool education. This has been embedded into the new national ECE Curriculum, which will benefit more than 4 million preschool children.

Potential clean energy solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation were recommended by a study on implementing rooftop solar (RTS) power systems in public schools. The report, undertaken in partnership with MOET and the Global Green Growth Initiative (GGGI), analyzed current policies and potential benefits and challenges of installing RTS. It is informing stakeholders – in schools, government and private investment – to build feasible strategies for adopting clean energy and promoting green behaviors and skills in climate-smart and resilient schools. UNICEF also supported a climate risk assessment conducted in the three high-risk, disaster-prone provinces which has also contributed to stronger risk-informed country programming.

UNICEF contributed to strengthened education systems through evidence generation and strengthened use of data to inform planning and decision-making. For example, UNICEF supported a review of the education sector analysis (ESA) 2010-2020 and the drafting of the new Education Sector Plan (ESP) for 2021-2030, with a greater focus on equity. In partnership with UNICEF HQ, the country office collaborated with the Viet Nam National Institute of Educational Science (VNIES) to complete a deep dive analysis on education gaps using the Multiple-Indicator Cluster Survey of Viet Nam to recommend a path to transform the education system.

UNICEF provided technical support and advocated for inclusive social policies and programmes for children, using quality data and research to inform policy reform processes. UNICEF ensured that child-related priorities were included in the 2021-2030 National Financial Development Strategy, the on-going revision of Community Party Resolution No.15 on Social Policies, and the review of Politburo Directive #20 in childcare, education and protection.

To ensure adequate and equitable resources for achieving the SDG targets by 2030, UNICEF and other UN agencies worked with social ministries to conduct costing exercises to inform the planning and implementation of sectoral plans (2022-2025). For example, preliminary analyses indicated that the ideal budget for National Plan of Action on Nutrition (NPAN) 2021-25 is US\$2.3 billion. However, available budget for nutrition in Viet Nam toward 2025 is approximately US\$118 million, only 5 per cent of the required total budget. UNICEF scaled-up engagements on Business and Child Rights in partnership with the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This included efforts to mainstream child related issues and solutions in the draft National Action Plan on Improving Laws and Policies on Responsible Business Practices, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice.

UNICEF continued efforts to generate evidence and inform gender sensitive, child-friendly

planning and budgeting at subnational levels through commencement of budget briefs and development of a roadmap for scaling up integrated early childhood development and promoting the participation of children and adolescents through innovative platforms. UNICEF is partnering with four provinces to enhance sub-national capacity to formulate, budget and implement plans to improve child outcomes.

The 2022-2026 Country Programme of Cooperation began in March 2022. To meet Government requirements, UNICEF worked intensively with its 16 key government counterparts to secure timely approval of Project Documents (ProDocs) and multi-year workplans (MYWP). Advocacy with senior government officials, including Ministers and the Deputy Prime Minister enabled the approval of 10 ProDocs and MYWPs, however others were not approved in 2022 due to the new, more complex ODA regulations. The office sought other implementation mechanisms, including direct implementation, to ensure timely utilization of donor funding for critical activities. The country management team (CMT) reviewed and endorsed this decision, considering VCO's responsibility to effectively execute its mandate in this challenging operating environment. Other UN agencies in Viet Nam, (including UNDP and UNFPA) also shifted to direct implementation.

Under the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026, **UNICEF is co-chairing Outcome 1 on Inclusive Social Development with WHO.** Agencies jointly identified programmatic priorities, a results framework and governance for joint work under this outcome. UNICEF also contributed significantly to the government's second Voluntary National Report on SDGs.

UNICEF increased its engagement with the private sector growing the UNICEF Next Generation (NextGen) from 30 members in 2021 to 427 members by the end of 2022. These young leaders, influencers, entrepreneurs, and innovators are committed to offering their expertise and acting as advocates for UNICEF's priorities. The Friends of UNICEF community also expanded with a 188 per cent increase in supporters. Eight companies joined UNICEF in celebration of World Children's Day by organizing child-takeover activities and turning their physical landmarks and digital platforms blue.

Innovative approaches and the power of digital media were harnessed through UNICEF public advocacy campaigns such as the Blue Heart, Safe Journey, Back OnTrack and World Children's Day (WCD). This helped strengthen the reach and influence of key advocacy messaging through timely outreach to media for interviews and opinion pieces. In particular, the Back OnTrack campaign set the foundation for consistent, evidence-based advocacy and trust-building pushed through different campaigns. Its narrative and key messages were embedded in speeches delivered at high-level advocacy opportunities, including during an address by Viet Nam's Prime Minister.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

Strong collaboration between UNICEF and other United Nations agencies continued in 2022.

UNICEF enhanced its partnership with UNFPA and UN Women to end violence against children and women through stronger prevention strategies and multisectoral responses with the support of the Government of Australia. Together with UNDP and UNFPA, UNICEF implemented a Joint Project on Inclusion of Persons with Disability with support from the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD). UNICEF led the 2022 UN Free and Equal Campaign, partnering with UN organizations, the Viet Nam National University and LGBTI community-based organizations, to promote safer schools for LGBTI people.

UNICEF also **completed two joint Programmes** under the SDG Fund to accelerate Viet Nam's transition toward inclusive and integrated social protection in collaboration with ILO, UNFPA and UNDP and partnering with UNDP and UN Women to support Viet Nam towards the 2030 integrated Finance Strategy.

Collaboration continued with development partners, such as WHO and PATH, on **COVID-19 responses and on maternal, newborn and child health**. UNICEF continued its strong partnership with the Governments of Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Japan, as well as with Gavi, and was able to leverage further funding support, in addition to vaccines, for COVID-19 and strengthening routine vaccination.

UNICEF chaired or co-chaired several sectoral and humanitarian working groups, including the rural water and sanitation working group, the WASH in emergency working group, the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) and the Education in Emergency Working Group. Through these groups, partnerships have been strengthened with other UN agencies, the World Bank and ADB, NGOs and the private sector.

In 2022, UNICEF developed **several new partnerships**, including with the Israeli Embassy to promote climate resilient WASH technology; and with a Thai company to pilot energy and water efficient “net zero” toilets. A new partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) began to strengthen justice for children and enhance national capacity to combat human trafficking and smuggling, with support from the United States Government.

Academic partners, including the Ha Noi Law University, the Ha Noi National University of Education, and the National College of Education, continued to play a critical role in the generation of evidence as well as the sustainable mainstreaming of child rights-related curricula.

Partnerships with the media, key online influencers, the National Committees as well as through key high-level visits, including by the UNICEF Executive Director, UNSG and SRSG on Violence Against Children were instrumental in enhancing UNICEF's brand and visibility as a key partner of Government on issues impacting children, including in emergencies and the ongoing recovery from COVID-19.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

To be effective in advocating and influencing government policy reform processes, UNICEF must analyze and understand the complex and rapidly evolving socioeconomic and political context of Viet Nam. This requires timely analysis of the context, as well as agility and adaptive programming approaches to address the changing context. Leveraging partnerships to deliver consistent, evidence-based and timely key messages increases the chances of government uptake of

proposed reforms.

One example of this was UNICEF's 2022 **advocacy for increasing access to and securing sustainable financing for treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM)**. Each year in Viet Nam over 200,000 children under five years suffer from SAM - 90 per cent of whom do not receive any treatment. UNICEF used the opportunity of the review of the Law on Medical Examination and Treatment (LET) to advocate for inclusion of SAM treatment to be covered by health insurance. The Office supported evidence generation, studies on coverage and cost estimates, learning visits for National Assembly (NA) members, sharing of experiences from other countries, development of policy briefs, using of media for public awareness, and targeted advocacy with key Government leaders at both national and sub-national levels.

This advocacy effort was innovative and agile - finding solutions in real time, based on the evolving situation as the law progressed through its review process. This included using national and NA media channels immediately prior to NA sessions to highlight the issue of SAM and the need for its treatment to be included in LET; utilizing the visit of the UNICEF Executive Director to Viet Nam to highlight the issue with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Vice-Chairman of the NA and the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the UN – sharing her personal reflections after visiting SAM children in a rural hospital; and timely engagement of NA members from provinces with high levels of SAM, raising their awareness and enabling them to speak out during NA sessions.

Despite these efforts, LET was adopted without UNICEF's proposed revisions, in part due to changes in leadership in the Ministry of Health. Nevertheless, the process has laid a strong foundation for continued advocacy on expanding access to SAM treatment and set a high bar for other advocacy campaigns in the future.

Gender-responsive and transformative programming advanced in 2022, with an important focus on workforce strengthening. In the justice sector, UNICEF supported the Committee for the Advancement of Women of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to develop an e-learning course on gender mainstreaming and gender-based violence. Launched in June, the e-learning course attracted a significant enrollment (more than 2,100, 75 per cent were female) of justice officers, law school students, and others interested in the topic. Thanks to this stronger focus on gender mainstreaming, UNICEF and its partners identified that almost none of the male-only forensic specialists within the health sector had received specialized training on skills and techniques in working with child victims, mostly females. Based on this critical insight, UNICEF will provide capacity building for this target group to prevent revictimization and promote the best interest of the child.

In WASH, UNICEF, in partnership with the Regional Office, is working on an **innovative approach with partners for empowering women in the WASH sector** to contribute towards a more gender balanced cadre. Increasing gender diversity in the WASH sector workforce will expand the talent pool and strengthen water and sanitation utilities' financial performance, innovative capacity, operating efficiency, and customer relations. To help achieve this goal, UNICEF Viet Nam co-developed the Network for Women's Empowerment in WASH network, with government partners. The network aims to promote women's leadership and solidarity in this male dominated sector and will act as an important platform for women to come together and share their initiatives, good practice, personal skills development and motivation to enhance the career development for female professionals in the WASH sector.

New forms of partnership demonstrated excellent potential and revealed some challenges to UNICEF systems. UNICEF Viet Nam proactively sought to expand partnerships with **education technology companies (EdTech)** in 2022, revealing several lessons learned. Firstly, stronger engagement with universities and research institutions is important to strengthen and promote education technologies and innovation. Secondly, increasing engagement and collaboration with for-

profit EdTech solution providers requires further thinking around UNICEF's position on open-source products to ensure sustainability of interventions at no cost to the end-user. Thirdly, UNICEF's internal procurement processes for digital solutions would benefit from greater agility and clearer guidance on data design and handover and on open-source licensing requirements. As UNICEF moves rapidly towards expanding such partnerships, operational solutions will be essential.

Other new partnerships included the UNICEF Next Generation (NextGen), which grew from 30 members in 2021 to 427 members by the end of 2022. These young leaders, influencers, entrepreneurs, and innovators have committed to offering their expertise and acting as advocates for UNICEF's priorities. The "Friends of UNICEF" community also expanded, witnessing a 188 per cent increase in members. The rapid expansion of these networks demonstrates the public's growing interest in partnership with UNICEF and sets a solid foundation for future advocacy and campaigning. Looking forward it will be critical to sustain these partnerships with regular information, opportunities for engagement, and motivation for further growth.

Lengthy government approval times for new project documents delayed project implementation in 2022, the first year of a new programme cycle. More stringent new policies by the Ministry of Finance related to ODA, led to significant delays in annual workplan signing. To ensure implementation and utilization were reasonably on-track by year-end, a cross-functional troubleshooting team between Operation and Programme facilitated out-of-the-box thinking to find solutions. For example, UNICEF undertook direct implementation of critical activities and implementation of remaining activities was compressed into quarter four of 2022. Adaptive adjustment, based on cross UN agency learning, is needed and important to ensure that UNICEF Viet Nam stays effective and relevant in the country's new context.