

REPORT

Landscape Study of Inclusive Business in Viet Nam



Co-funded by the European Union



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The shaded areas of the map indicate ESCAP Members and Associate Members.*

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific region. The Commission promotes cooperation among its 53 member States and 9 associate members in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges. ESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations.

The ESCAP secretariat supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in the region by generating action-oriented knowledge, and by providing technical assistance and capacity-building services in support of national development objectives, regional agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Inclusive Business Action Network

The Inclusive Business Action Network (iBAN) is a global initiative supporting the scaling and replication of inclusive business models. Through its strategic pillars iBAN blue and iBAN weave, iBAN manages an innovative online knowledge platform (www.inclusivebusiness.net) on inclusive business and offers a focused Capacity Development Programme for investment seeking companies and policymakers in developing and emerging countries.

iBAN creates a space where evidence-based knowledge transforms into learning and new partnerships. With its focus on promoting the upscale of inclusive business models and consequently improving the lives of the poor, iBAN is actively contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

iBAN is jointly co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Union. It is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

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PREFACE

Inclusive businesses provide goods, services, and livelihoods on a commercially viable basis, either at scale or scalable, to people living at the base of the pyramid making them part of the value chain of companies as suppliers, distributors, retailers, or customers.¹

To meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the private sector will need to play a greater role in supporting development objectives. Inclusive businesses offer the opportunity to address development challenges and leave no one behind. While most private sector firms work with or sell to low-income people in some way or another, only few business lines provide low-income people with enhanced income opportunities or with goods and services relevant to overcome poverty and exclusion.

Governments can encourage more inclusive businesses to emerge and thrive through policies that generate greater awareness on these business models, recognise and reward them with targeted incentives, and facilitate services and investments that enable firms to be inclusive while meeting profit targets.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Inclusive Business Action Network (iBAN) teamed up in 2019 to support governments enhance the policy environment for inclusive business in ASEAN.

To do so, ESCAP and iBAN have, at the request of national governments, conducted national landscape studies and provided policy advice to help design and implement national strategies to promote inclusive business. This study is one of the five studies /advice (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines and Viet Nam) that are being developed. ESCAP and iBAN have also helped sharing policy learnings across ASEAN member states.

The insights and recommendations contained in this landscape study, when implemented, will help Viet Nam maximize the contribution that the private sector can make for more inclusive growth and support the transformation of Viet Nam's economy into higher value-added activities.

Viet Nam's commitment, as chair of ASEAN 2020, to carry the torch of promoting inclusive businesses under the ASEAN umbrella in 2020 is be very valuable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has been prepared by the United National Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in cooperation with the Inclusive Business Action Network (iBAN), following a request from the Ministry of Planning and Investment of Viet Nam.

The work has been carried out by the United Nations ESCAP team of consultants, Armin Bauer and Hoang Mai, under the supervision of Marta Pérez Cusó, Economic Affairs Officer, Technology and Innovation Section, and with the support of Vivian Marcelino, Consultant, ESCAP. Mia Mikic, Director of the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, and Jonathan Tsuen Yip Wong, Chief of the Science, Technology and Innovation Section provided the overall direction.

The study has been conducted in close cooperation with the Agency for Enterprise Development (AED), Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI). The strategic stewardship and support for IB promotion provided by Mr. Le Manh Hung (Director General, AED), Mr. Nguyen Hoa Cuong (Deputy Director General, AED), Ms. Trinh Thi Huong (Director, Policy Department, AED), Ms. Lan Thi Nguyen (Deputy Director, Cooperation and AEAN Division, AED), and the AED team involved in this study, has been extremely valuable.

The study has also benefited from the insights provided by government officials from other ministries and their agencies at central and regional level, in particular the Central Institute for Economic Management (CIEM), MPI; the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT); the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST); the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD); and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLISA).

The information provided by business associations, including the Viet Nam Women Entrepreneurs Council (VWEC), the Viet Nam Association for Women Entrepreneurs (VAWE), the Viet Nam Business Associations for Small and Medium Enterprises (VinaSME), and the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industries (VCCI) has been very valuable.

Finally, this study has also benefited from the information provided by the 42 companies interviewed. Their interest in inclusive business models and their openness to share information about their business is highly appreciated. A note of gratitude also goes to the multiple facilitators, investors and other experts that contributed their insights and helped shape the assessment provided in the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

English

Viet Nam has been very successful in reducing poverty and improving living standards since the mid-1980s when the economic reforms under Doi Moi started. As it continues to develop, Viet Nam's robust economic and social performance of the past two decades will be challenged. To sustain high rates of economic growth, Viet Nam will need to focus on enhancing innovation, productivity growth, and company size (to address the missing middle). To sustain inclusive development, Viet Nam will also need to generate new well-paid income opportunities for low income people, and to provide more affordable and relevant goods and services, especially in housing and education (but also health, financial innovations, and energy).

Companies with inclusive business (IB) models can play a strong role in supporting such structural transformation. IB models promote inclusive growth by investing in innovative, commercially viable, and growing business models that provide, at scale, relevant and affordable goods and services, or enhanced livelihood opportunities, to people living at the base of the pyramid. These businesses promote social transformations as they have a large and deep social impact. Inclusive businesses bring triple wins for companies, the poor, and for the Viet Nam society.

The government of Viet Nam can support its national strategic economic and social goals of promoting innovation and inclusive growth and development at scale, by promoting enabling environments for inclusive business to emerge and develop.

In 2017, the leaders of ASEAN called for greater emphasis on creating an enabling environment for inclusive businesses in ASEAN Member States. Since then, six governments in the region have embarked on establishing IB promotion policies.

In 2019, to support the development of an enabling environment for inclusive businesses in Viet Nam, the Agency for Enterprise Development (AED) under the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) requested the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Inclusive Business Action Network (iBAN) to conduct the present landscape study. The study includes a market study of current inclusive businesses in Viet Nam (with profiles of 18 real and potential IB models) and an assessment of the enabling environment. It also provides recommendations for promoting inclusive businesses.

The analysis of the enabling environment and the policy recommendations are based on interviews with 200 key stakeholders and four briefings and consultative workshops organized from April to December 2019.

The market study is based on structured interviews with business leaders and uses a composite rating

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