

**Speech of Youssouf Abdel-Jelil**

**Launch of MICS 2014 Report**

**Friday 04 September 2015**

**International Conference Centre, 11 Le Hong Phong Street, Ha Noi**



Mr Nguyen Van Lieu, Deputy Director General of General Statistics Office

Mme Tran Thi Thanh Thanh, President of Viet Nam Association for the Protection of Child Rights

Mme Ngo Thi Minh, Vice Chairwoman, National Assembly Committee for Culture, Education, Youth, Adolescents and Children

Senior government officials,

My fellow UN colleagues, members of the donor community and development partners, Media representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here with you today as we launch Viet Nam's 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey – also known as MICS 2014. Many of you here, have contributed directly to this important initiative and I congratulate all involved institutions and individuals, particularly the General Statistics Office for their excellent leadership and partnership in generating this important report.

MICS is an internationally developed household survey, through which UNICEF assists countries in collecting and analyzing data to monitor the situation of children.

Since 1996, five rounds of MICS have been completed in Viet Nam. The MICS findings are used extensively to inform policy decisions, programme interventions, and more importantly to generate public opinion on how to improve the lives of children in Viet Nam in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As Viet Nam transitions towards the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, MICS 2014 will be a critical source for monitoring national targets as well as for contributing to the country's final Millennium Development Goal report.

We know that rapid economic growth over the past two decades has propelled Viet Nam into middle income status and helped the country achieve considerable progress towards many of the Millennium Development Goals. These include reducing poverty rates by more than half and ensuring nearly universal primary education.

This year's MICS highlights some other modest yet positive trends including a rise in exclusive breastfeeding to six months from 17 to 24 per cent and steep increase in the uptake of the polio and hepatitis B vaccines. These are all major life saving initiatives that give Vietnamese infants a good start towards a healthy and productive future.

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However, MICS 2014 tells another important story about deepening disparities and inequities for Vietnamese children across regions, by gender, income and ethnicity.

Infant and under- five mortality ratios are higher for those living in deep poverty compared to the country average. Similarly, more young women aged 15 to 19 from ethnic minority groups have already given birth to a child compared to the majority Kinh women. Differences in immunization rates show that nearly 85 per cent of Kinh children are fully vaccinated compared to only 69 per cent of children from ethnic minority groups. And there are glaring gaps in access to sanitation and education between urban and rural and poor and wealthy groups.

Today's report also raises alarm bells with regards to violence against children and attitudes towards domestic violence. Nearly 70 per cent of children in Viet Nam suffer instances of psychological or physical violence in the home, while 50 per cent of women feel justified in being hit by their partner under specific circumstances.

These are worrying trends that reaffirm the need for all of us here today to invest more in the hardest-to-reach and most disadvantaged children and women of Viet Nam.

Gaps between rich and poor households, urban and rural communities, boys and girls, majority and minority groups – perpetuate vicious intergenerational cycles of deprivation and disadvantage and deepen rifts in society that harm us all. Hard evidence has proven that inequity today is the groundwork for inequality tomorrow that threatens Viet Nam's human development and economic prosperity.

Every child deserves a fair chance in life. Viet Nam's future depends on it. As Viet Nam gears up for the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to focus our work on reaching the children who have been left behind.

The MICS 2014 report is a breakthrough data collection tool that helps us identify who the most vulnerable and excluded children are and where they can be found. We have an important opportunity to use the MICS 2014 report to set in motion a new cycle of sustainable development by identifying the bottlenecks that stand in the way of these children and strengthen local health, sanitation, education and social protection systems. From there national and provincial programmes, services and investments should be shaped around the needs of these most disadvantaged children.

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UNICEF and its partners stand committed to support the Government of Viet Nam to invest in the well-being of the most vulnerable children, promote inclusive growth, transparency and accountability as the country transitions into a post 2015 development agenda.

Thank you. (XIN CAM ON)